

ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR FURTHER EDUCATION COURSES

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1. Introduction

The guiding principles for The University Centre Somerset College Group's approach are:

- To provide accurate and timely information and advice to new applicants to enable them to make the right choices for their future
- To build a college community which celebrates inclusivity, diversity and the contributions of a wide range of students and apprentices
- To operate open, transparent and consistent admissions procedures
- To ensure procedures are guided by a sense of 'fairness', with the aspiration that applicants are placed on the programmes that meet their long-term career aims and interests.

2. Aims

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Further Education (FE) applicants including full time, part time and apprenticeship programmes of all ages, who are seeking admission onto a college programme including those who are already at The College Group and wish to progress from one programme to another.
- 2.2 The College Group will ensure that applicants receive information and advice from Student Services and / or Curriculum Teams in order to help them decide on the course of study to best suit their needs.
- 2.3 The College Group will work with other agencies such as schools, universities, employers and specialist support services to develop appropriate information sharing and referral processes and ensure that the information and advice provided to potential students and apprentices is accurate.
- 2.4 The College Group will offer applicants the opportunity to view the College and its facilities prior to the commencement of a course by holding open days, taster events or by arranged visits.
- 2.5 Applicants with additional support needs can access appropriate support from The College Group's Additional Learning Support team and will be given the opportunity to disclose their support needs at application, interview and enrolment so that their needs can be assessed and responded to from the earliest stages in the student journey.

- 2.6 The College Group will ensure they follow Safeguarding responsibilities as defined in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedure.

3. Scope

This policy outlines the Further Education Admissions procedures applicable to all applicants from within the United Kingdom.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The College Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy demonstrates The College Group's vision of culture and society where diversity is celebrated routinely, equality of opportunity is advanced, and good relations are fostered between different groups of people. The College Group strives to eliminate all forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Director of Marketing and Student Recruitment has the executive responsibility, strategic oversight and review of the Admissions Policy for Further Education courses. The Student Recruitment Manager is responsible for the implementation of the policy and procedures alongside the day-to-day administration. The Curriculum Team and other relevant support staff all have a responsibility to give full and active support to the policy by ensuring the policy is known, understood and implemented.

6. Further Education (FE) Admissions

The admissions process for FE students is overseen by the Student Recruitment Team who work closely with Curriculum Teams to ensure that each applicant is supported in a timely manner to meet their individual requirements and provide them with experience that supports their admission into The College Group.

7. Apprenticeship Admissions

- 7.1 All applications relating to The College Group Apprenticeships are facilitated through the Future Skills and Growth Team (FS&G) and the relevant curriculum area who will undertake initial screening interviews and assist with securing suitable employment opportunities, although it remains the responsibility of the apprentice to secure employment.

7.2 The principles outlined in this policy apply to Apprentices. However, admissions processes are designed around the needs of apprentices and employers and so engagement will take place within each workplace on a flexible all year-round basis and be led by the FS&G Team who will undertake skills matching, initial assessment and work placement checks as required.

7.3 For learners with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) – See Section 13

8. Recruitment, Promotional and Marketing Materials

8.1 The College Group is committed to ensuring that applicants and potential applicants have access to high quality information, opportunities to view facilities and the ability to speak to curriculum teams. This will be facilitated through Open Events, Taster Days, School Visits and other arranged visits.

8.2 The College Group has a Schools Liaison Team who work in partnership with local schools to ensure that young people understand the wide range of options available to them. Supporting school staff are responsible for transition and careers, is also a key part of this area of work. The College Group has a Transition Team who will support identified students transitioning from school to The College Group.

8.3 The College Group works to ensure it meets the requirements of the Matrix framework a UK quality benchmark for organisations that provide impartial information, advice and guidance.

8.4 The College Group is committed to ensuring that course guides, prospectuses, The College Group website, and other publicity materials contain accurate, reliable, current and comprehensive information that is designed in a market-appropriate and accessible way. The website contains the most up to date and accurate information, as the printed materials reflect only the information available at the time of printing.

9. Entry Criteria

9.1 The College Group publishes academic entry criteria for all full-time courses in the course guides and on the website. The criteria is guided by a commitment to ensure progression through levels of learning and to ensure that applicants have the academic ability to achieve and succeed on their chosen course.

- 9.2 Exceptions to the stated criteria may be made for some applicants, including those who are identified as being home schooled or Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). In these instances, assessment of core competencies displayed at the interview will be used.
- 9.3 Adjustments to the stated criteria may be made:
- For applicants who are assessed as having a disability or learning difficulty
 - For adults who can demonstrate relevant prior learning or experience.
- 9.4 Existing College Group students applying to undertake a further programme of study or progress onto an apprenticeship are required to fulfil the relevant entry criteria and follow the admissions procedure for internal applicants.
- 9.5 Applicants for whom English is a second language may be asked to complete an assessment of their reading, writing and comprehension as a condition of entry onto the course.

10. Course Interviews

- 10.1 Course Interviews are a two-way process to ensure that applicants can find out more about the specifics of the course / programme. The interview is typically held by telephone or Microsoft Teams. On occasion, there may be an in-person interview arranged. The student is required to attend the interview and may have an accompanying adult present. The student is expected to take the lead in the interview to the greatest extent possible.
- 10.2 All full-time applicants (and some part-time applicants) will be invited to an interview to discuss their application and ensure that the course content, assessment, attendance requirements fit with applicant's expectations.
- 10.3 Applicants who do not attend their interview and who do not contact The College Group, will be given one further opportunity. If the applicant fails to attend on the second date or does not contact The College Group, their application will be withdrawn. The College Group will endeavour to take opportunities to contact the individual either directly or via their school to ascertain the reasons for withdrawing their application.

11. Internal Progression Applications

Applicants who are progressing internally from courses will be contacted by the relevant curriculum staff and offered course places (subject to relevant conditions being met).

12. Initial Assessment of Applicants

Applicants may be asked to complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy prior to the start of their course. The information from this assessment will be used to indicate potential learner support needs.

13. Supporting Applicants with Additional Support Needs and Learners with an EHCP

13.1 The College Group welcomes applications from people with special educational needs, disabilities and learners with an EHCP.

13.2 Where an applicant is identified as declaring a disability or a difficulty, which may impact on their learning, the student will be referred to The College Group's Additional Learning Support (ALS) team. If an applicant declares a need prior to, or during, the interview, the curriculum team will refer the applicant to the ALS team for a support interview, where the ALS team will identify whether support is required on the study programme. If a disability or a difficulty is identified once the student has started their programme, the curriculum team will refer the student to the ALS team for an assessment for support.

13.3 The ALS team will provide:

- Support for applicants at interview as required by the applicant
- An individually designed transition programme where the need is identified
- Curriculum staff with guidance on appropriate strategies to support individual students through the application and interview process as required.
- Support to ensure that applicants are able to access all areas of The College Group as required.
- Due regard will be given the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Conduct 2014, The Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act

2014, to ensure that best endeavours have been made to provide for applicants with SEND and learners with an EHCP.

14. Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) Checks

The College Group requires applicants who apply for specific courses to undertake a mandatory enhanced DBS check prior to starting the course. All offers for courses where there is a DBS check requirement will be conditional to the successful DBS clearance.

15. Fees Assessment

If an applicant declares a non-UK nationality on their application form, or that their normal country of residence is outside the UK, or that they have not been living in the UK for the last 3 years their application will be referred to the International Team.

16. Criminal Convictions

Applicants are asked to disclose 'relevant' and 'unspent' criminal convictions or court proceedings on their application form. Further information will be sought from applicants who disclose and risk assessments will be undertaken. For further guidance on this please contact The College Group's Safeguarding team. A panel to review the application will be held if the risk rating within the risk assessment exceeds the appropriate thresholds (see also section 13 above, Suitability to Study).

17. Course Offers

17.1 Course offers may have conditions in addition to the standard academic entry criteria.

17.2 Course offers will be sent via email by the Student Recruitment team normally within 10 working days of the interview subject to relevant support information and references being received.

17.3 If a course is not thought to be suitable, or the applicant does not meet the required course entry criteria, they will be advised at their interview and offered an alternative or invited to meet a member of the Careers Team for support in looking at alternative courses.

17.4 Reasons not to offer an applicant a place would normally include:

- Applicant not having the (predicted) academic requirements to meet the published entry criteria.
- Applicant being supplied with a poor reference from their previous school or college. In some instances, an applicant may be asked to complete a Code of Conduct as a condition of entry if a reference causes concerns about an applicant's behaviour. Alternative provision or support may well be recommended.
- Applicants not displaying the core competencies expected for a programme of learning at The College Group at the interview.
- Concern that the applicant could not meet the specific work placement requirements of the course.
- Applicants assessed under the Suitability to Study process (see Section 13) with the outcome being that The College Group is unable to meet need at this time.
- All course offers are made under the condition that a successful EHCP consultation has taken place and The College Group is able to meet the needs of the student.

18. Course Closure

Where a course is under-subscribed or there is a significant change to how a course is funded, The College Group reserves the right to withdraw the course. In such cases, applicants will be offered advice on the availability of alternative courses, both at The College Group and with other local education providers. However, the offer of a place cannot be guaranteed.

19. Course Acceptance

Applicants must accept or decline their place at The College Group by replying to the email or by contacting the Student Recruitment team. Students may accept verbally during their interview.

20. The College Group Reserved Rights

The College Group reserves the right to:

- Request references and/or school reports for applicants.
- Require a mandatory enhanced DBS check prior to entry on courses that lead to careers or work experience where this is a requirement. Certain convictions may lead to a refused course offer.

- Review and refuse admission to an applicant who has previously been excluded from this or any other educational institution. This will be subject to a course review meeting with the relevant The College Group Manager to assess suitability to study in a college environment and duty of care to other students, apprentices and staff.
- Conduct risk assessments, review and refuse admission for applicants where there is evidence that they could be a threat or danger to themselves or others. This relates to The College Group's duty of care to students, apprentices and staff. See Section 13, Suitability to Study.
- Review and refuse admission to an applicant/learner who has any outstanding debt to The College Group.
- Require that students and apprentices are funded by a government body, themselves or another body in order that The College Group receives payment for the cost of studying.
- Refuse admission to applicants who fail to provide valid and up to date documentation required for international checks. Refer to the International Policy.
- Review and refuse admission to an applicant who has repeated applications and withdrawals without demonstrated intent to commit. Those engaging in such behaviour may be required to provide justification or obtain special approval before reapplying to a course. Exceptions may be granted under extenuating circumstances with appropriate documentation.

21. Joining The College Group

Every effort will be made to ensure that joining The College Group is a positive experience for applicants. All applicants starting a course will be sent information about joining The College Group prior to their start date (for apprentices at time of appointment) and information on financial support, services available for students and any other relevant information about life at The College Group.

22. Appeals and Complaints

- 22.1 If an applicant wishes to appeal against a decision made by The College Group with respect to an application to study at The College Group, an email should be sent to the Complaints Team at Complaints@UCSCollegeGroup.ac.uk. An acknowledgement of an appeal will be sent within 3 working days. This appeal will then be presented to the relevant College Group Principal or Assistant Principal. The applicant should expect to

receive a formal response regarding their appeal in writing within 20 working days (please see Complaints Policy).

22.2 Any dissatisfaction with any aspect of the admissions process can be addressed using The College Group's published Complaints Procedures. Link to The College Group Policies:

- Student / Complainant Complaints Guidance and Procedure
- Equality, & Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- International Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Suitability to Study Policy

23 Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or earlier where procedure changes or need arises.