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## **Higher Education Admissions Policy**

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## **1. Scope and Purpose**

This policy states Wiltshire College and University Centre's position on admission to all applications for full time, part time, and distance learning courses considered under the Higher Education course classification (this includes Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, Degrees, Top Up Years and Degree or Higher Apprenticeships). It complies with relevant legislation and takes into account the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, any relevant accrediting professional bodies and SPA's good practice guidance and principles.

## 1.1 Strategic Aims

The College's Admissions and Recruitment aims are to;

- Minimise barriers to access for prospective students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Prepare students for successful participation in their chosen careers and roles.
- Recruit students who we believe have the potential and motivation to succeed on their chosen course.
- Ensure fairness, transparency and equal opportunity to all applicants in line with the legal requirements for the United Kingdom.
- Provide accurate information and advice to all prospective students concerning Higher Education opportunities to enable them to make informed decisions about their future study

Wiltshire College and University Centre will achieve these aims by:

- Encouraging applications from all students, regardless of their backgrounds.
- Ensuring that each application is assessed equally and in line with College, and/or Partner University policies and procedures.
- Selecting students based on their individual merits, based on their ability to succeed in both their chosen profession and course.
- Providing students with points of reference and contact to obtain further information advice and guidance when a decision not to offer a place has been given.
- Providing useful feedback to unsuccessful applicants to support their progression into their chosen field.

## 2. Accountability

Recruitment and Admissions activities and responsibilities are the combined work of a number of teams within the college for example,

- The Senior Management Team (SMT) is responsible, on behalf of the College, for approving Higher Education Admissions Practices and Policies.
- The Higher Education Strategy group are responsible for ensuring that this policy best serves the both the institution and applicant's needs
- The Admissions Team provide admissions related reports to the senior management, HE Board of Studies and the HE Strategy Group to assist with the monitoring of all Higher Education Admissions Policies and Procedures
- The Higher Education Admissions Team is responsible for ensuring that any policies and procedures are operated in line with the College's strategic aims and objectives, and ensure practice is compliant with relevant legislation

- The Higher Education Admissions Team work with a variety of HE Providers and is responsible for ensuring compliance with Partner University Admissions Policies and Procedures.
- The Admissions team check applicants meet UCAS requirements and ensure that exceptional entrants are reviewed fairly on a case by case basis

All staff with designated admissions responsibilities must be familiar with this policy and any associated procedures relevant to their areas of responsibility. The College will provide these staff members with relevant support, training and guidance.

### **3. Transparency of information for Applicants and Enquirers**

The College is committed to providing pre-entry information, advice and guidance to enable prospective students to make informed decisions regarding any application they make to Wiltshire College.

All Higher Education Admissions Policies, Procedures and Selection Criteria for each programme will be clearly displayed in both printed publications and on the College website, enabling easy access for applicants, partners, agents and staff. Advice will also be made available on the website on how to contact the College for specific queries regarding applications. Each individual programme is required to publish a course profile to be displayed on UCAS and the College's own publications.

We make every effort to ensure that information published is accurate. Many of the publications that are provided are produced more than 12 months prior to the start of a course. Prospective students should therefore refer to the website or UCAS for the most up to date information. Where changes to courses occur following receipt of applications, we will communicate with applicants at the first opportunity.

For further information, please refer to the College Information, Advice and Guidance Policy.

### **4. Process/Procedure**

#### **4.1 Fair Admissions**

The College is committed to providing a fair admissions system that admits students that show clear evidence of ability to succeed onto their chosen programmes, irrespective of their backgrounds. We are committed to the five key principles of fair admissions as outlined in the Schwartz Report:

- Transparency
- Minimising barriers to entry
- Selecting for merit, potential and diversity
- Professionalism
- Using assessment methods that are reliable and valid.

#### **4.2 Selection Criteria**

Applications will be assessed against academic and non-academic selection criteria specific to the course for which an applicant has applied. The College will publish, annually, its selection criteria for all programmes and applicants are advised to check the College's publications or UCAS for course specific selection criteria. For many courses, these entry criteria will exceed the minimum institutional requirements which are;

- Applicants should demonstrate acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, equivalent to at least GCSE grade C/4 in English and Mathematics.
- Applicants whose first language is not English should be able to demonstrate English Language proficiency in Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Listening to the standards required by either the College, or Partner Institution and to the course for which the applicant has applied.
- Academic entry criteria are set jointly by the Awarding Organisation and the HE Strategy Group who also annually review entry criteria and consider any implications which may arise as a result of a proposal to alter any typical admissions selection criteria. Considerations will take into account any partner or awarding organisation's specific requirements. Changes to entry criteria would not normally take place during an admissions cycle.
- Selection criteria represent the usual level of academic attainment that an applicant is expected to attain prior to being admitted onto a Higher Education course. These criteria are not intended to provide a guarantee that all applicants who meet these basic selection criteria will be offered a place. Admissions staff with the Academic team can use discretion when considering applicants for a specific programme when applying 'weight' to levels of prior experience and academic achievement.

#### 4.3 Assessing Applications

The College receives many more applications than it has spaces for, and as such the admissions process is competitive.

All applications are assessed against the agreed entry criteria and UCAS tariff points on an individual basis. Where places are limited, we offer places to those applications whom the admissions staff consider to best evidence their potential to benefit from their chosen programme. Methods of assessing applications vary between courses but may include;

- References
- Personal or supporting statements
- Interview
- Portfolios
- Aptitude tests/entry assessments
- Previous relevant employment and experience
- Previous non-academic achievement

We understand that, on occasion, the standard procedure for assessing an applicant's suitability for a course may not provide the admissions staff with an accurate understanding of an applicant's suitability and, in such cases, we may require applicants to submit additional evidence in support of their application. Applicants will be contacted directly by the admissions team with clear guidance on what is required.

Each course will have its defined entry criteria which will provide applicants with a clear idea of what the admissions criteria is for each programme. Each of these can be found on the course specific pages of the Wiltshire College website and are designed to complement this policy.

#### **4.4 Entry Qualifications**

The College will accept students from a range of different qualification backgrounds and will give fair consideration to any applicant presenting a relevant academic qualification. Individual courses reserve the right to judge the relevance and acceptability of any qualification presented for entry. Where any qualifications or subjects are less favourable this will be made clear within the published criteria on the course specific pages.

Wiltshire College is happy to accept students who are currently re-taking all, or part of their previous qualification and will accept re-sit grades when assessing entry qualifications.

### **5. Overseas students**

#### i. Non-UK qualifications

Any applicant presenting non-UK qualifications for entry onto a programme will be considered against the standard entry criteria, and will still need to show English and Maths within their curriculum.

All Applicants with non-UK qualifications where English is not the first language will be required to provide evidence of English language proficiency in Speaking, Writing, Reading and Listening. The College minimum language requirement is IELTS (Academic) at grade 6 overall, and must not have a score below 5.5 in Speaking, Listening, Writing and Reading. Applicants should be aware that some courses may have specific English requirements that are higher than the College basic requirements. Where this is the case, details will be provided on individual course information sheets. A number of equivalent qualifications are accepted, and applicants are welcome to contact the HE Admissions Team with specific queries related to Non-UK Qualifications and Language requirements.

When comparing non-UK qualifications from Non-UK backgrounds the College will refer to NARIC, the designated United Kingdom national agency for the Recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills. Applicants are required to provide officially translated transcripts of their qualifications prior to starting their course, students who have conditional offers, or require Tier 4 visa's will not be issued with relevant documents prior to receiving this.

#### ii. Tier 4 Visa

The UK Government operates a points based immigration system within the UK, with which the College is compliant. Any student requiring a visa to Study within the UK are advised to look at the UKVI pages for further advice and guidance. Certificate of Sponsorship (CAS) will only be issued to students who have met their conditions of entry, provided the required documentation and paid 50% of their overall tuition fee.

### **6. Mature Applicants, Prior Learning and Students returning to education.**

For the purpose of this process, mature students are individuals considered to be over 21 years old. The College welcomes applications from all mature students, as well as students returning to education after employment, or other such experiences.

Admissions staff will ensure that these applicants are not disadvantaged by participating in the selection process. The applications will be considered against the advertised course specific selection criteria. We are aware that with such applicants the selection

process may not always evidence the full suitability for the chosen course. Where appropriate, the admissions staff will seek and consider alternative evidence to ensure that applicants are given equal consideration. Where this additional evidence is deemed to meet entry criteria fully, an applicant may not be required to meet the standard academic entry criteria.

Applicants who do not have formal qualifications may be able to be considered through the APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) which may be based on prior experiences and/or qualifications. Students seeking entry through the APL route will be assessed against specific learning outcomes on specifically designed assessment.

## **7. Students with Additional Support Needs.**

The College welcomes applications from prospective students with disabilities or Additional Support Needs. All applications from students are considered against the set selection criteria for each course, with consideration being given during this process to any impact this may have on attainment. Upon receipt of application where a disability, health condition or learning difficulty has been declared the admissions team will request additional information from the applicant to ensure that full consideration to the applicants needs has been considered during the selection process.

Where it is apparent that an applicant will require reasonable adjustments to enable them to undertake the course, and are considered academically suitable for the course, it is the applicant's responsibility to apply for Disabled Student's Allowance (DSA).

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>. This government funding has specific requirements which may mean that you need to contribute to assessments and support.

Where the needs of the applicant are complex, the College may issue an offer based on academic and other eligibility criteria which remain subject to investigation as to whether the College is able to make such adjustments. In the event that the College is unable to provide the support required to the applicant, the College will contact the applicant directly to advise, and where possible, support the applicant in making further decisions relating to this.

Students with Additional Support Needs are welcome to contact the College in advance of an application to discuss their requirements.

## **8. Applicants seeking Deferred Entry**

The College allows applicants to be considered for deferred entry and this is only usually granted for one year. In exceptional circumstances applicants may be able to defer their application for two years, at the discretion of the admissions team. Deferred applications will be considered against the published entry criteria at the point of application and will, as a result, be treated equally to all other applications up to the point of confirmation.

Students wishing to defer this application halfway through an admissions cycle will still be required to meet their conditions of entry within the admissions cycle in which they have applied. Where this concerns a Disclosure and Barring Service check, or Health check, students will be required to repeat this process within six months of the course start date, to ensure that the checks are as up to date as possible. For Disclosure and Barring Service Checks, students registered to the update service may not need to reapply. Students are advised to contact the HE Admissions team to discuss.

Deferred students who fail to meet their conditions of offer will not be able to defer their application and will instead need to re-apply to be considered

## **9. Applicants who re-apply and re-admittance of excluded students**

Applicants can re-apply for their chosen courses following a reject decision, providing that they are able to demonstrate an improvement from a previous application.

Applications will be considered against the advertised selection criteria for the specific course that an application has applied for. We may draw upon information provided within any previous application or registration with the College when assessing suitability for a course.

Any student previously excluded from the College will require permission from the Principal prior to commencing a Higher Education course and are encouraged to contact the College before applying to discuss.

## **10. Minors**

Applicants who are under eighteen on the first of September at the year of entry are considered to be 'minors' under UK Law. The College will welcome applications for Higher Education courses from such applicants providing that they have managed to satisfy the course specific entry criteria.

## **11. Use of Contextual Data**

'Contextual data' is the context in which an individual's academic attainment to date has been achieved and also takes into account other social contexts. When assessing applications for the suitability of their chosen course, the College uses contextual data to supplement and support in admissions' decisions. Publicly available datasets from the government and other agencies are used to provide information to admissions staff and course leaders during the selection process. No decisions will be made on the basis of this information alone, and applicants are still expected to demonstrate their ability to succeed on their chosen course.

When considering applications the college will consider the following datasets;

- i. Length of time in Local Authority Care
- ii. The relative performance of the school or college from which the applicant is applying
- iii. Whether the individual is applying from an area with low participation in Higher Education

Applicants who display at least one of these markers will receive further consideration of their application form.

## **12. Applicants with criminal convictions**

Wiltshire College is committed to prioritising and promoting safeguarding and protecting children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm. The College also has a responsibility to all its students, staff and visitors to provide a safe community. In accordance with this, it reserves the right to deny admissions to applicants declaring an unspent criminal conviction which suggests that they might pose a danger to the community. Any applicant declaring a criminal conviction will be contacted in the first instance by a member of the College Safeguarding Team and may be required to attend an interview.

Programmes of study which require students to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults will require students to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (Formerly the Criminal Records Bureau) check prior to commencing their course of study. Applicants are usually expected to pay for this check. Where an enhanced DBS check reveals any prior criminal behaviour which gives rise to concern, the College reserves the right to refuse admission.

### **13. Fraudulent and Misleading information**

It is expected that all applicants will provide full, honest, reliable and accurate information in their applications and supporting evidence when seeking admission to one of the College's Higher Education programmes. Where there is reason to suspect that this may not be the case the College reserves the right to investigate the matter fully. If, via such investigations, the College finds that the Applicant has been fraudulent, or has provided misleading information to the College, the College reserves the right to reject an application without further consideration, or where an offer of a place has been granted, withdraw the offer. Where a withdrawal or rejection decision has been made based on the information above, the College reserves the right to notify any relevant professional bodies and/or third parties. Similarly, any student found to be admitted on the basis of fraudulent information may have their studies terminated.

### **14. Financial Information and Fee Assessments**

The College expects applicants applying to their chosen courses to evidence that they have considered how they will finance their course. Information about funding is requested in the application to College. The College provide further information regarding funding and payment options on our website, or alternatively applicants can contact our HE Admissions team directly.

As part of the admissions process the College uses information provided on the UCAS application forms to assess whether a student is eligible to pay Home (UK/EU) or overseas fees. Where the Admissions team do not feel that they have enough information to determine which category a student falls into, they may request the applicant provides additional information. It is the responsibility of the applicant to advise the College if they feel the assessment for fees is incorrect prior to enrolling onto their chosen course.

Overseas students should be aware that the College may request payment of fees upfront, prior to commencing study at the College. Students are advised to refer to the fees policy for further information.

### **15. Implementation**

#### **15.1 UCAS**

Students applying for all full time Higher Education courses delivered at the College will be required to register with UCAS when making applications. This includes all Higher National qualifications, Foundation Degrees, Bachelor's Degrees and Top up Degrees. This may be done in advance by the applicant themselves, or directly with Wiltshire College via a Record of Prior Acceptance.

Part Time applications are not currently supported via UCAS and as a result students should apply online directly to Wiltshire College.

## 15.2 The Admissions Cycle

The College complies with the UCAS published admissions cycle and will consider all full time applications received before the 15<sup>th</sup> January in the year prior to commencing their course on an equal basis. Where space allows, the College will accept late applications for its Higher Education Courses.

The Admissions Process for Wiltshire College starts from the first Monday in October, applications received prior to this date will be acknowledged and considered after this date. Part time applications can apply until course starts or becomes full, whichever comes first.

## 15.3 Applications after the start of a course

The College will consider applications on a case by case basis after the course has commenced where space allows. Responsibility for making decisions on such requests are made jointly between the Course Leader, Head of Higher Education Quality and Partnerships, Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Quality and the HE Admissions team.

## 15.4 Timescales

The College recognises the importance of keeping applicants informed and will provide effective updates throughout the admissions process. Communications will only be sent directly to the applicant, or nominated representative as stated on the UCAS application form. The majority of our communications are electronic via email or through UCAS Track (full-time only).

All applicants will usually be able to expect correspondence within the following timescales;

- i. **Acknowledgement of Application;** Auto acknowledgement from Partner Universities or 3 days auto email from receipt of part time or Wiltshire college HE.
- ii. **Application Specific Response;** 7 working days from receiving an application.  
*Please note, a response may include a request for further information, invitation to interview or a final decision.*
- iii. **Response to application following a submission of further information** (i.e. Portfolio), : 7 working days from submission.
- iv. **Response to application following attendance at interview;** 7 working days.
- v. **Confirmation of meeting entry conditions** – usually within 5 days of receiving exam results.
- i. **Joining information** – Sent in August

The College works to the UCAS admissions timescales when making decisions, students who apply before the 15<sup>th</sup> January are guaranteed a full decision on their application by the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Students who apply after the 15<sup>th</sup> January will receive their decisions by the 14<sup>th</sup> July.

## 15.5 Interview, Auditions, Admissions Tests and Portfolios

For some of our courses, it may be applicable for an applicant to have additional selection measures to aid decision making. Specific entry criteria for each course will detail whether this is applicable for each individual programme of study, and details of what the selection criteria involves.

All interviews, auditions, admissions tests and portfolios will be reviewed equally with consideration given to applicants' individual circumstances. Where it is impractical for an applicant to travel, or provide specific requirements the College will aim to provide a reasonable alternative where possible including the use of Skype or Phone interviews.

#### 15.6 Feedback, appeals and complaints.

Applicants will receive final decisions on their applications via UCAS Track (Full Time) or email (part-time). Successful students will usually receive either a conditional offer, where some of the selection criteria for the course is yet to be achieved, or an unconditional offer, where the applicant has demonstrated that they adequately meet the advertised selection criteria for the course. Any application receiving an offer from the College will receive a copy of the Student Agreement (Terms & Conditions) and further information about additional course related expenses that the applicant can expect during their studies.

Unsuccessful applicants will also receive confirmation of their decision via UCAS Track (full-time) or letter (part-time). The College feels it is important for students to have the opportunity to receive feedback on the reasons for such decisions. Feedback can be requested in writing by contacting the Admissions team via letter or email. The Admissions team will aim to respond to any requests for feedback within 10 working days of receipt of the request. Following feedback, if an applicant feels that they have any grounds for a formal review of the admissions decision they can formally appeal by writing to the Head of Higher Education Quality and Partnerships.

Academic appeals will be dealt with in line with the College's Academic Appeals procedure or that of the partner University depending on the programme of study.

Students wishing to make a formal complaint should refer to the College's 'Comments, Compliments and Complaints' procedure. Any complaint will be dealt with through this process. An anonymised summary of complaints is reviewed by senior managers on a regular basis. This information is used to inform and develop policies and procedure and subsequent curriculum planning to enhance the student experience.

Both of these procedures are available on the College website, making it widely available to all stakeholders.

#### 15.7 Confirmation

Confirmation is when the College receives exam results for GCSE, A Level and other such qualifications. This usually takes place during July and August each year. Decisions will be made on the basis of these results to confirm students who have met their conditions of offer. Any student who has not met their conditions of offer will be reviewed, and where it is judged as appropriate and space allows, will still be confirmed on their chosen course. Where possible, Wiltshire College and University Centre may offer an alternative course to students who have not met their conditions of entry to their first choice.

#### 15.8 Enrolment

Enrolment into the chosen course will take place at the conclusion of the admissions cycle, only students who have satisfied the full selection criteria will be able to enrol onto the course. The College only permits students to enrol on one full time course at any one time.

## **16    Applicant Data**

All data submitted to the College during the Admissions Process is used to assess the suitability of an applicant for study at the College. Data may also be used by the College for statistical and reporting purposes. The application data forms part of a student's record when they are admitted to the College, and where relevant, partner universities, personal data of applicants who are not admitted to the College are archived and removed after one academic year.

The College complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 in its use of applicant data. Further information about Data Protection at the College can be found on our website, under our Data Protection Policy.

## **17    Associated Documents:**

- IAG Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Fees Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Compliments and Complaints Procedure
- Academic Appeals Procedure