

ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The College is committed to offering a fair and transparent admissions policy and process. It serves to underpin the entitlement of all potential students to impartial information, advice and guidance and to support individuals in identifying the course/programme of study which most meets their skills and aspirations in a relevant and confidential environment.

2. SCOPE

2.1 The policy underpins the College's Strategic Objectives Pillars.

2.2 The policy relates to all applicants who:

- a) Are school leavers aged 16 or over on the 31st August of the academic year,
- b) Are seeking to re-enter the education system after a period away from study,
- c) Are applying to the College following study or training at other institutions or place of employment.

The College will apply the principles inherent in this policy statement to all applicants, including full and part time FE, HE, those on Apprenticeship programmes or other work-based learning schemes, e-learners, distance learners and those on partnership/franchise schemes.

Employers who use College services for the training of employees on/off College premises will also be covered by this policy.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 Blackburn College will ensure all potential students receive:

- Full and detailed information about their study programme and any additional support including personal and financial,
- Appropriate guidance, where necessary or requested,
- Access to transparent entry criteria.

3.2 All decisions relating to admissions will be based on:

- Transparency,
- Equality of opportunity,
- Respect for the rights of the individual,
- Consistency of practice and procedures,
- Confidentiality and disclosure protocols.

3.3 Blackburn College will:

- Recruit students with the appropriate levels of entry qualifications and/or prior experience enabling them to succeed,
- Ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants whatever their background,
- Consider all applications fairly, consistently and independently,
- Ensure the application process is effective, supportive and timely.

3.4 All applicants will be asked to declare if they have a disability or have received learning support previously. All such disclosures will be treated as confidential with relevant information passed on to the Additional Learning Support Team in order for support requirements to be discussed. Disclosure of disability is not taken in to consideration when making offers for a course.

The College will make every effort to provide reasonable adjustments to both services and curriculum delivery in order to meet the needs of disabled applicants (adjustments cannot be made to the core competencies of the programme). Our ability to make reasonable adjustments may be limited if permission is not granted to disclose details of the additional need.

3.5 In order to ensure compliance with the objectives stated above, the following specific processes will be in place:

4. PRE – ENTRY INFORMATION

Blackburn College will ensure all potential students, and where appropriate their employers, receive full and detailed information about programme provision. Such information will be given impartially and without prejudice.

Course information will include details about:

- Entry requirements
- Course/Programme contents and structure
- Teaching and learning strategies employed on the course and assessment procedures
- The qualifications or accreditation to be gained
- Work placement opportunities
- Exemptions or credits which can be claimed against previous experience
- Progression opportunities
- Course fee, where appropriate
- Financial support available
- Support for transport costs
- Other grants, benefits or allowances to which students may be entitled
- Additional Learning Support which may be available to students
- Other forms of additional support available, including college wide services such as counselling and advice about the impact of learning on the individual benefits received.
- Other requirements e.g. residential
- HE Student Agreement
- Tuition Fee Policy
- Academic Regulations
- Complaints and Compliments Procedure

Information to local school leavers will be made available through a series of schools' partnership activities.

Information to others who are interested in learning will be made available to employers and to the community through; The Hub, College publications, the College website and outreach activities.

Blackburn College will aim to ensure all of its information is easily accessible, by providing it in different formats on request.

The potential student will be fully informed of the costs, both implicit and explicit of the course they wish to undertake and methods of payment.

5. FURTHER EDUCATION

a) Applicant Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that they complete an application form as accurately as possible. The application will form the basis of the decision to invite to interview.

b) Admission and Interview

All potential students for Further Education and for Apprenticeships will be interviewed.

Guidelines and training on the interview procedures are provided for nominated staff in order to meet standards and ensure consistency.

Admissions tutors are expected to be aware of any disability issue or gender and/or cultural differences which may affect the interview should it have been declared in the application.

Any applicant with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who regards themselves as having a physical disability will be further encouraged to disclose this at interview so that appropriate adjustments or arrangements can be discussed and arranged wherever possible.

Where necessary, and by arrangement, the College will provide a communicator or other forms of support which may be required.

The interviewer will recognise and take into consideration any prior achievement or accreditation.

Applicants are entitled to a place on a course/programme of study at the College so long as:

- The College offers the applicant's choice of course/programme,
- The applicant meets the entry requirements,
- There is a place available on the course,
- There are no outstanding debt or disciplinary issues¹.

Applicants who require further advice or guidance following the interview or who are unlikely to meet the set entry criteria, will be offered a referral to other services either internally or externally.

c) Deferrals

All applications for Further Education courses from applicants who wish to defer the start of their programme until the following academic year will be considered on a case by case basis.

d) Rejections

Full refusal will be based on the College's inability to provide an appropriate learning programme, satisfactory support, or where a person's record shows a persistent refusal to adhere to appropriate regulations and policies. However, alternative provision may be recommended.

¹ The Principal and Chief Executive can exercise their discretion to allow an applicant a place should a compelling case be presented.

The College accepts that it is not possible to legislate for every circumstance which might arise in the admission process, but strives to ensure that it provides a fair and equitable service to all applicants.

The College works in partnership with external agencies such as Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the National Careers Service in order to ensure the quality and integrity of its Admissions procedures.

e) Course Closures

In the event of a Further Education course (to which an applicant has already applied) not running we aim to:

- Signpost to suitable alternative courses at Blackburn College
- Signpost to suitable alternative courses at other institutions

6. HIGHER EDUCATION

a) Applicant Responsibilities

Whilst the Admissions team and appropriate academic staff are responsible for the admission of Higher Education applicants, there are certain responsibilities on applicants throughout the admissions cycle.

All applicants will be bound by the terms and conditions confirmed when submitting an application.

All applicants will be responsible for responding to offers made within the timescales set by UCAS and the College including disclosure of information that may affect the outcome of the application.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that any disability or medical condition is disclosed in order to enable the College to make any reasonable adjustments. The Higher Education Disability Advice Service will support an applicant who has disclosed a disability or medical condition to identify the reasonable adjustments the College could make to support you. Responsibility for applying to Student Finance England for the Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) lies with the applicant.

Applicants are required to complete an application for a Higher Education course honestly and with integrity. As such, applicants may be rejected in the case of qualifications/grades already received that vary from those specified on a certificate/transcript; plagiarism of a personal statement or falsification of a reference amongst other criteria.

Applicants will not apply / be allowed a place for a Higher Education course where there are existing debt or disciplinary issues².

b) Selection Criteria

Initial Selection Criteria

When considering an applicant's suitability for a potential Higher Education course, a range of initial criteria and documentation may be used to assess the application. These include:

- Records of academic achievements and qualifications - including both qualifications already attained and qualifications the applicant is predicted to achieve,

² The Principal and Chief Executive can exercise their discretion to allow an applicant a place should a compelling case be presented.

- A personal statement,
- An academic reference,
- A personal reference in the case of mature applicants,
- An appropriate assessment task,
- An interview (including face to face, phone or electronic media) in the case of mature applicants without meeting the appropriate entry criteria,
- An English language proficiency test.

On production of evidence, reasonable adjustments can be made during the initial selection process where the adjustment does not impact upon the ability to demonstrate a core competence.

Programme Specific Criteria

In addition to the selection criteria above, Higher Education programmes may have specific entry requirements. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Specific qualifications or subject combinations required for entry to certain academic disciplines,
- The submission of a portfolio or work examples,
- Records of relevant work experience,
- Reasonable non-academic expectations.

Programme specific entry criteria are determined by the awarding body, usually at the time of programme validation, and are detailed in the relevant Programme Specification. These criteria may not be varied, nor may additional academic or non-academic criteria be imposed other than by:

- A requirement of an external awarding body;

and/or

- A minuted decision of the Academic Board, or other body acting under authority delegated by the Academic Board.

Course specific entry criteria will be published in the prospectus and on the College's website. Programmes with approved non-academic entry criteria, such as for example a requirement for a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service check, must clearly state this in the published entry requirements.

Meeting the general selection criteria or programme specific criteria does not effectively guarantee a place on a course. Places on courses continue to be subject to demand and course numbers.

Whilst reasonable adjustments can be made for disabled applicants all applicants irrespective of disability must be able to demonstrate the core competencies of the course.

c) Special Cases

Inevitably special cases may exist. These include, but are not limited to:

- Transfers into a programme mid-year where an applicant has already started a University course elsewhere;
- Transfers into courses at the end of a year where an applicant has already started a University course elsewhere;
- Applications to Top Up Degree programmes where an applicant has not previously studied an appropriate Foundation Degree or Higher National Diploma at Blackburn College;

- Transfers between courses where an applicant has started a different Higher Education course at Blackburn College.

In these examples the appropriate University partners' academic guidelines will be considered and decisions made on an individual basis using these guidelines.

d) Deferrals

All applications for Higher Education courses from applicants who wish to defer the start of their degree programme until the following academic year will be considered equally.

e) Rejections

In the case of an applicant being rejected from a Higher Education course at Blackburn College we aim to:

- Ensure alternative or more appropriate courses are offered as an alternative,
- Signpost the applicant to relevant impartial Careers Advice service within Blackburn College,
- Assist the applicant in locating alternative provision,
- Personally write to all direct applicants to inform them of the rejection and offer feedback, if requested and in the UCAS cases communicate the decision through the appropriate mechanism (eg. UCAS Portal),
- Where a disabled applicant is unable to meet the core competencies or the College is unable to make the necessary reasonable adjustments the above conditions will apply.

f) Course Closures

In the event of a Higher Education course (to which an applicant has already applied) not running we aim to:

- Ensure alternative, appropriate courses are offered as an alternative;
- Signpost the applicant to relevant impartial Careers Advice services within Blackburn College;
- Signpost to alternative courses at other institutions in the case of firm applications where no suitable alternative at Blackburn College exists. Where a suitable alternative does exist, no alternative Higher Education course elsewhere may be offered;
- Ensure 'Firm' applicants are contacted in a personal, appropriate and timely manner seeking to minimise any distress course closures can cause.

8. GENERAL INFORMATION

Information, Advice and Guidance

The Hub Student Services offers a drop-in enquiry point for potential and existing students which is open at published times throughout the year.

Appointments for individual and detailed information, advice and guidance are available. Such interviews will adhere to the standards set out under the Matrix accreditation.

School Partnership guidance and advice activities take place throughout the year at a range of venues.

Students are entitled to pre-entry and exit guidance in order to ensure that personal choices match career aspirations.

All information collated during the Admissions procedures is regarded as confidential and will not be disclosed to other parties without the prior agreement of the applicant. Records will be stored securely.

Criminal Convictions

To help the College preserve a safe and secure campus, applicants for Blackburn College courses are required to provide information relating to any previous criminal conviction(s).

The College will consider all applications. Declaration of a criminal conviction does not mean an applicant will not be offered a place on the course.

Applicants declaring criminal convictions will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Team who will assess (amongst other factors):

- The appropriateness of the choice of course considering the conviction,
- Factors that may limit an applicant's ability to fulfil a certain requirement of the course (e.g. a work-placement),
- An applicant's job/career aspirations where a criminal conviction could limit a candidate's chances of gaining this employment despite appropriate qualifications.

All declarations of criminal convictions will be considered independently and professionally.

Disclosure Barring Service

Certain courses will require an applicant to undergo a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check, formerly Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. An applicant will be liable for the fee associated with this check. Should a DBS check reveal convictions, the applicant will then be referred to a panel who will assess the factors detailed above. Disclosures of criminal convictions will not necessarily mean an applicant is not offered a place on the course. However, where criminal convictions are revealed that have not already been declared in the application it may cast doubt over the validity of the application as a whole and lead to an applicant being rejected.

Document Verification and Fraud

The College reserves the right to:

- Request additional information to verify an application;
- Put the application process on hold whilst investigating the alleged fraudulent application and/or plagiarism;
- Withdraw the application/registration/place if it is proven, or if the College has reasonable belief, that the information provided is false, or if the applicant/student refuses to provide the requested information;
- Terminate a student's registration if she/he is found at a later stage to have submitted a fraudulent application.

Complaints

Blackburn College is committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all applicants. In the event of a complaint, complainants are advised to follow the Complaints Procedure located here: <https://www.blackburn.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/publication-scheme/our-policies-procedures/complaints-and-compliments-procedure/>.

9. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

FE – The views of students and staff including Assistant Principals, Heads of School (HOS), Admissions Team have been taken in to account in developing, administering and monitoring this process.

HE – The views of students and staff including the Assistant Principal of Higher Education, Heads of School, Additional Learning Support Manager, Head of the Quality of Education and the Admissions Team have been taken in to account in developing, administering and monitoring this process.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEWING

The policy will be monitored through the Admissions Group. More specific quality control of the central process rests with the Vice Principal (Finance and Corporate Services) and quality control of the Curriculum Centre process rests with Assistant Principals.

The effectiveness of the admissions processes will be reviewed through:

- Regular analysis of applications by school and subject area,
- Annual analysis of conversion rates from application to enrolment,
- Monitoring of adherence to performance indicators set by the College Leadership Team (CLT),
- Feedback from employers who use College Services to train employees,
- This analysis will form part of the annual Self-Assessment Report.

11. RELATED POLICIES/ PROCEDURES

- The Careers Education and Guidance Policy,
- The Financial Assistance for Further Education Students Policy,
- Complaints procedure,
- Course programme specifications,
- General entry criteria,
- Course specific entry criteria,
- Academic Regulations Section 6,
- Disclosure of Disability Policy,
- Student Protection Plan
- Appropriateness to Study Policy,
- Data Protection Policy.

12. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

This policy forms part of the suite of student support policies overseen by the Vice Principal (Finance and Corporate Services) whom is responsible for ensuring the admissions policies and procedures are effectively implemented and monitored.

The Vice Principal (Finance and Corporate Services) will establish an admissions team who will effectively manage and deliver the admissions process.

Key account holders are allocated to manage the work with employers and the central employer hotline. The Business Development Team manage the transfer of responsibilities for initial enquiries from employers.

Contact with people who disclose a disability will be made by the FE Additional Learning Support Team and HE Disability Advice Service Team to ensure support needs are discussed during the admissions process.

The policy will be reviewed every three years. The review process will be led by the Vice Principal (Finance and Corporate Services) who will consult with relevant curriculum staff and support staff.

13. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Blackburn College is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and to providing a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment means that this policy has been reviewed to ensure that it does not discriminate (either intentionally or unintentionally) against any of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender (including gender identity), race, religion or sexual orientation and meets our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, this policy has no adverse impact on any of the above protected groups.

Author:	Michael Rigby
Owner:	Jennifer Eastham – Vice Principal (Finance and Corporate Services)
Date last approved:	October 2018
Date of review:	November 2022
Consulted with:	The policy has been created following regular feedback with Assistant Principals, Head of the Quality of Education, the Assistant Principal of Higher Education and Director of Business Development and External Engagement
Consultation date/s	November 2022
Date of approval:	10 November 2022
Approved by:	Policies and Procedures Committee
Next Review date:	November 2025