



**Buckinghamshire
College Group**

Admissions Policy and Procedure 2023-25

Responsible Officer: Executive Director Digital Transformation and Planning
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Admissions Policy and Procedure

1. Strategic Overview

Buckinghamshire College Group is committed to providing a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum offer that provides choice and flexibility for students.

To achieve the key strategic aims and values of the College we will ensure that all applicants:

- Are treated fairly in their application via an open and transparent process;
- Have access to information, advice and guidance at all stages throughout the process including clear entry criteria for all courses and routes to work;
- Are provided with information about the likely career or employment outcomes of the course to assist in their choice;
- Are provided with a timely and efficient application process;
- Have the opportunity to disclose any learning difficulty and/or disability and to be referred to the Learning Support Team at the earliest opportunity for any required assessment of support;
- Are offered, where appropriate, a place on a course best suited to their ability and aspirations.

This process supports the College's commitment to equality and diversity. It also underpins the College's duty of care to ensure that all those seeking to study at the College are placed on an appropriate level of course that will allow them to succeed.

2. Scope of Policy

The College provides a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum offer that gives choice and flexibility. This policy applies to applicants for all types of provision and qualifications.

The College adheres to the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education. Where the College's higher education courses are franchised from partner universities/institutions applicants for these courses come under the scope of the admission guidelines of that particular organisation.

3. The Policy

3.1 Provision

All available provision, including Study Programmes, full-time courses, short courses, full cost courses, apprenticeships and business training details are published on the College website.

3.2 Enquiries

The Admissions Team will respond directly to all enquiries regarding the College's available offerings within a target time of 2 working days.

We will offer all applicants access to information, advice and guidance at all stages throughout their application process. This may be with the initial support team, or with course tutors as part of an interview as appropriate.

The College works in partnership with other agencies (e.g. National Careers Service, Local Authorities, schools, other education providers, potential employers) to manage appropriate information sharing and referral processes. All parties ensure that the information and advice

provided to potential students is accurate and in their best interests to support their achievement.

We offer all applicants the opportunity to visit the College (in person or via remote technology) to ensure they make an informed decision when they accept an offer of a place. Applicants can come to our open days or if that is not possible, we can support individual visits.

3.3 Applications

The College welcomes enquiries and applications from all. The Admissions Team will attempt to process all applications within 2 working days. The College will not give priority to/discriminate against applicants based on details provided in their application.

3.4 Learning difficulties and/or disabilities

All applicants who have a disability or a learning difficulty are offered the option to complete a Learning support questionnaire. Once this form is returned to the Learning Support team, the process of establishing support needs and provision can begin.

The College will engage with the Local Authority Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) consultation process as set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (January 2015) and will provide information to the Local Authority as to the College's ability to meet the educational support needs of the young person. A positive confirmation of this will not necessarily mean acceptance to the vocational programme of study applied for, and applicants will still be required to follow the application and interview process set out in this policy. Where admittance of a student with an EHCP will require additional funding from the Local Authority (to ensure all needs can be met), it may be necessary for the College to issue a conditional offer of a place until such time as the Local Authority has confirmed that funding is approved. Where a student applies to the College and receives an offer of a place without disclosing their EHCP or learning needs, it may subsequently be necessary for the College to review any offer in order to ensure its ability to meet the statutory duty as detailed in the SEND Code of Practice.

For more details about the support and contacts available, refer to the Learning Support Policy. The Learning Support Team strives to ensure that the College is able to make adequate adjustment and provision for students with disabilities and additional needs.

3.5 Under 16s

Full time applicants who are under 16 will be contacted by the Admissions Team initially to determine the applicant's individual situation. They will then be referred to the relevant Campus Safeguarding and Prevent Officer, who will provide an initial interview to determine the applicant's suitability for the College and will then support the applicant through the enrolment process.

All applications will be referred to the Pathway to GCSE programme designed especially for year 10 and 11 home-school elective students. To be eligible for enrolment applicants must be registered on their Local Authority Elective Home Education Team register by the spring term of the same academic year. This requirement ensures that participants are actively engaged in home schooling and seeking to enhance their academic prospects through formal education.

3.6 DBS Checks

The College reserves the right to carry out a DBS check on any applicant. The outcome of this process will be taken into consideration when making a decision on admission to College.

The College will carry out DBS checks on those applying to courses where there is contact with children or vulnerable adults. The outcome of this process will be taken into consideration when making a decision about admitting an individual to one of these courses. The applicant will bear the cost of the DBS check. Financial support may be available as set out in the College Support Scheme for Students 2022-23.

3.7 Criminal Convictions

In accordance with the College's Safeguarding requirements, all students/prospective students are asked to disclose any unspent criminal convictions or prosecutions pending; this includes enrolled students who receive a criminal conviction whilst on a programme of study at College. If the programme of study requires an Enhanced DBS, you are required to declare all convictions (including warnings, cautions, reprimands) which are 'spent' and 'unspent'. This is due to certain professions being exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 – students should check requirements for future career plans in this context.

Please note that declaring a criminal conviction does not automatically preclude access to becoming, or continuing as, a student of Buckinghamshire College group and we offer support when necessary.

For prospective students, it is important that you disclose your criminal conviction at your first point of contact with the College. For existing students, you must declare immediately upon receiving your criminal conviction.

Where the applicant has stated they hold a criminal conviction, the Admissions Team Leader will confidentially request further details. The application will then be referred to the Campus Safeguarding and Prevent Officer who will follow a risk assessment process. This is designed to protect students and staff at the College whilst leaving scope for those with criminal convictions to seek admission to a college course. The College reserves the right to refuse admission to applicants who may present a risk, or for whom there will not be adequate support to succeed.

3.8 Admission of students previously excluded from Buckinghamshire College Group

Students who have been previously excluded from Buckinghamshire College Group must have evidence that they have addressed the issues leading to their exclusion and may be admitted on a Conditional Entry. Please refer to the College's disciplinary procedure. The College will attempt to offer an appropriate alternative course where possible.

3.9 References

All applicants are asked to provide a referee. By nominating a referee, the applicant is providing the College permission to contact and request information from the referee regarding the applicant on a professional basis.

The Admissions Team will send a reference request form to the nominated referee's e-mail address. If under 18, the College will contact the applicant's school for a reference.

4. Entry Requirements

4.1 Entry Criteria

We set our entry criteria at a level that ensures that applicants are placed on a course that matches their academic ability and therefore gives them the best chance to succeed. It supports progression through levels of learning for those applicants who are academically able to advance.

Government legislation now states that all 16-18 students must continue to study English and Maths as part of their studies until they achieve a minimum grade 4 (grade C). For this

reason, all courses now have a minimum English and Maths entry criteria. Students who do not achieve grade 4/C are expected to participate in English and Maths lessons as part of their Study Programme.

We will clearly publish the entry criteria for courses both in our printed materials and online. The criteria reflect the minimum entry criteria that applicants must meet.

For some courses, as well as meeting the minimum entry criteria for that level of study, we may ask applicants to meet additional entry criteria relevant to that particular subject area. This may be specific subject-related testing or activities (e.g. DBS check for childcare, production of an art portfolio for art and design courses).

4.2 Adults

Adults returning to education are welcome to apply to most College courses. The College may consider previous experience and training as an alternative to formal qualifications.

5. Admissions Procedures

5.1 Applicant Journey

The College has the following Admissions procedures for all courses to ensure that applicants are matched to the most appropriate courses. The aim is to process all applications swiftly and minimize the time from initial enquiry to offer.

The Admissions Team will manage all communication between the College and the applicant throughout the admissions and enrolment process until the applicant is an enrolled student*.

Any applicants that the Admissions Team identify as Children Looked After, Leaving Care or a Young Carer will be referred to the Campus Safeguarding and Prevent Officer who will ensure that support and IAG is provided prior to and after enrolment.

*Applications for apprenticeships, Teacher Training and Counselling are initially processed by the Admissions Team, before being referred over to the relevant department. The relevant curriculum team member will then contact the applicant directly.

5.2 Offers

The offer will be based on an outcome given by a member of curriculum staff after some or all of the following activities and information have been provided, as appropriate:

- Completion of online Application Form (paper application forms and MS Word forms are available on request)
- Interview
- Previous qualifications/experience
- References
- Portfolio
- Initial assessment indicating levels of literacy and numeracy
- Trade or skills assessment (for Hair, Beauty and Construction type courses only)

The majority of applicants will be interviewed. Activities and information required will be communicated to applicants.

Applicants will be informed of their offer status by the interviewer at the end of the interview. They will then receive an offer confirmation from the Admissions Team via E-mail.

All applicants to the College will be treated fairly and have access to College courses. If we believe the course an applicant has applied to is not suitable for them, we will advise them from the following options:

- If the subject area is an appropriate choice, but the course level is not, then we will offer the applicant a place on a lower or higher level course within that same subject area
- We may refer them to their second choice or a suggested alternative
- We may refer them to the College's Admissions Team or our internal careers adviser

If we cannot make an offer of a place to an applicant, we will explain the reasons clearly at interview. Examples of reasons we **may** not offer a place or where we **may** withdraw an offer of a place include:

- The applicant does not meet the minimum entry requirement based on actual or predicted grades
- The applicant does not complete their application form with accurate and truthful information
- We receive a poor reference from a current or previous school, college or training provider that gives negative feedback on attendance, attitude to learning, and suitability for course
- The applicant does not successfully complete any additional subject-related testing or subject-related activities to the required standard for the level of course
- Where the applicant is not going to be able to complete the specific work or industry placements required for a course due to the outcome of a DBS check or Safeguarding Risk Assessment
- The College is unable to provide the support required to ensure the applicant is successful

In the event of not making an offer to a student, we will conduct an internal review via the Fair Access Panel to assess the student's case. We will make best endeavours to make an offer to the student that will best meet their needs, whilst maintaining the safety and stability of our students and staff.

5.3 Unconditional Entry

Applicants who meet all entry requirements and have completed a successful interview can be given an unconditional offer. These applicants will be provided with details of enrolment arrangements.

5.4 Conditional Entry

Applicants who do not currently meet all entry requirements and/or do not fully satisfy the interviewer can be given a conditional offer, allowing them entry provided they meet the given conditions.

Applicants who have a history of disrupted education, exclusion or behavioural problems may be offered a place subject to conditions. These conditions will be made explicit to the applicant. A decision to admit any applicant under these circumstances will be at the discretion of the Fair Access Panel.

When an applicant has been given a conditional offer, dependant on achieving a specific level of qualification, and then fails to meet that level, the application will be considered on an individual basis, and further advice and guidance will be given.

If the College is unable to offer a place on the applicant's chosen course, the College will try to make an offer on a similar course at an appropriate level that matches the applicant's experience, qualifications, abilities, interests and career plans.

6. Recruitment

6.1 Information, Advice and Guidance

If applicants are unsure about progression routes or have welfare or financial issues, they can discuss individual guidance with trained staff in Admissions or Student Services.

6.2 Interview Process

Before the interview, the Admissions Team provides impartial information on all courses. The Advisor will explain the options available to match the applicant's interests, including apprenticeships where appropriate, and inform prospective students of the progression opportunities from their chosen programme of study.

The interview is an opportunity for applicants to discuss their options further and learn more details about their chosen course before making a decision.

7. Enrolment

7.1 Full Time Enrolment

Enrolment may take place online or in person (specific course arrangements may apply). If enrolment takes place online students may be required to review and sign their enrolment documents prior to an ID card being issued.

It is mandatory that students under the age of 18 provide contact details for their parent/carer.

All students on full time courses have an induction period of up to six weeks, after which a review is undertaken to affirm correct course and level.

7.2 Part Time Enrolment

Part time students may enrol in person or online, depending on the specific course. Details of enrolment arrangements will be outlined as part of the application process. Those who enrol online will receive two learning agreements by post, one of which must be returned to the College. ID cards will then be issued on the day/evening that the course starts or alternatively a collection time can be agreed with the Admissions Teams.

7.3 Late Enrolment

Late enrolment (i.e. following the start of the course) may be possible at the discretion of the Faculty Director.

7.4 Cancellation of Courses

Where insufficient student numbers have applied for a course it may be necessary for the College to close, cancel or change courses. The College will inform applicants at the earliest opportunity as soon as they are aware that a course is closed, cancelled or changed. Such situations will be dealt with personally by the relevant Faculty Director and the Admissions Team Leader. Any such changes will be approved by the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality.

In the case of cancellation any fees paid by students or employers will be refunded, and where possible alternative courses will be offered. All cancellations will be confirmed, ideally prior to commencement of the course, and at the latest within 1 week of the course commencement, with alternative provision guidance.

8. Data Protection

All students' personal data is held securely. Information can only be shared with the applicant's consent. For further guidance see Data Protection Policy and Procedure and the Student Information Privacy Notice published on our website.

9. Complaints

In the event of an applicant wishing to make a complaint or raise a concern about the application process they should do so via admissions@buckscollegigroup.ac.uk The target time to resolve a complaint is 2 working days. The Complaints Policy is available at <https://www.buckscollegigroup.ac.uk/contact/complaints>

10. Appeals

Appeals may only be made by applicants if it is believed that the application process, including entry criteria, has been unfairly or inaccurately applied.

Any appeals against the application process must be supported by evidence that demonstrates how the entry criteria are met, or provides mitigating circumstances such as long term illness affecting examination results. In such circumstances proof of predicted grades will be required. Final decision on appeals sits with the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality.

Equality Impact Statement

We have a duty to consider the impact of changes on groups with Protected Characteristics (race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership)

What are the overall aims of the policy? Why are you proposing changes?	The Policy aims to treat all applicants fairly, identifying when applicants may require additional support to access learning and student experience at the College, and ensuring that support from the earliest opportunity.
Given the aims of your proposal, what issues does your data/information highlight?	It remains a high priority that Curriculum, Admissions and Learning Support staff work in partnership to ensure supportive and proactive communication to support applicants in achieving student success and a positive student experience.
How could the Policy affect positively/negatively on groups with protected characteristics?	This Policy promotes fairness for all applicants and promotes support to ensure equal access.
What actions will you take to mitigate any negative impact?	Commit to providing training to staff as required to promote consistency and good internal and external communications.
Is there any potential negative impact justified in light of wider benefits of the proposal?	The Policy reinforces the College's right to exclude applicants on the grounds that they pose a risk to others in the learning and wider College environment and/or that the College, despite best endeavours, is unable to provide sufficient support

	to facilitate a positive learning and student experience.
Recording final decision	This policy requires the approval of the College Executive and Corporation.
Has the policy taken into consideration the requirements of GDPR regulations? Are there any actions that need addressing, e.g.; data sharing agreement; has data consent been considered; data retention timescales?	Student information that is collated for the purposes of informing the work of the policy is collated with their consent and held in line with the principles of the College's Data Protection Policy.