

## **Admissions Policy and Processes**

### **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

#### **Policy Statement**

In line with our ambition to be one of the best colleges in the country, and with our curriculum policy, Bedford College aims to provide a wide range of learning opportunities at different levels to facilitate access and progression. It is our policy to operate an admissions service which guides students onto appropriate programmes of study, from which they are likely to benefit and which will enable them to maximise their potential. This is achieved through the College values of being student-focused, high performing and demonstrating openness, respect and honesty.

#### **Objectives**

- To provide impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) which helps students to make realistic and informed decisions about their choice of learning opportunity
- To make available comprehensive and accurate information for each programme of study, to include: entry criteria, qualification aims, costs, study requirements, progression routes and assessment methods
- To manage applications and enrolments in a timely and efficient manner, with high levels of customer service
- To ensure that the admissions process does not disadvantage applicants by discriminating on any grounds, including disability, age, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity or sexual orientation
- To make reasonable adjustments to facilitate access to learning programmes for people with disabilities
- To provide information and advice on College facilities and support services
- To undertake best endeavours to maintain a safe College environment for all our students, staff and visitors
- To ensure applicants are notified of the reason, where admission to their chosen course is declined
- To allocate places on a first come, first served basis where a course is oversubscribed and a limit on numbers has been approved, and to provide applicants with information on alternative opportunities including those offered by other providers
- To treat applicants with courtesy and respect at all times
- To provide information, advice and guidance services which continue to meet the standards of the Matrix quality mark.

## **Responsibilities**

The central admissions process is the responsibility of the Director Student Services and is implemented by the Enquiries and Guidance Service under the leadership of the Enquiries and Guidance Manager. Interviews for full-time and substantive/ specified part-time courses are the responsibility of the relevant Course Manager.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

The implementation of the Admissions Policy is monitored via:

- Assessment under the Matrix quality standard
- Customer feedback
- Service standards
- Performance monitoring reports to the College Executive
- Conversion of applications to enrolment
- Monitoring early withdrawals and transfers
- Sampling of guidance interview checklists
- Observation of admissions interviews and related activity
- College self assessment process and the common inspection framework
- Equality impact analysis.

## **Supporting documentation**

The following College documents are relevant to the application of this policy:

- Disclosure of Unspent Convictions by Students
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Single Equality Scheme
- 16-18 Bursary and Adult Support Fund Policies
- Shuttleworth College Accommodation Guide.

## **ADMISSIONS PROCESSES**

### **Principles**

There are 3 processes for admitting prospective students to the College, depending on the course they have chosen. These are:

#### **Information**

This normally applies to part-time and short courses which have no pre-requisites. Applicants are provided with information, either verbally, paper-based or on-line, and may then proceed directly to enrolment.

#### **Advice**

This includes those part-time courses which have pre-requisites in terms of previous qualifications, level and/or experience which need to be checked. This will normally be undertaken by Enquiries and Guidance advisers but may involve a referral to a lecturer.

#### **Guidance**

For all full-time and designated part-time courses prospective students are required to complete an application form prior to a guidance interview with an appropriate member of staff, normally a teacher. The interview is normally held face-to-face (although may be carried out over the telephone if appropriate), and may also include presentations to potential students and/or parents, as well as practical activities.

### **Process for admission to full-time and designated part-time FE courses**

#### **Stage 1 – Preparing to receive applications**

Enquiries & Guidance advisers are linked with specific programme areas so that course managers have a named contact for all admissions matters. Advisers make contact with course managers during November and December each year to ensure they have up-to-date knowledge of all courses we propose to offer in the following academic year. By 15<sup>h</sup> December course managers supply interview dates for the period January – June, together with any additional information about the interview which they require to be communicated to applicants e.g. practical or written assessments to be undertaken, special clothing required. Arrangements for dealing with applications received after the end of the academic year are notified to Enquiries & Guidance by the May study week.

#### **Stage 2 - The application form**

Application forms are available in paper form from Enquiries & Guidance but students may apply online via the College website [www.bedford.ac.uk](http://www.bedford.ac.uk) .

All applications are screened by the appropriate Enquiries & Guidance adviser to ensure they are completed correctly (and are realistic in terms of entry qualifications), following a checklist. Applicants are contacted by telephone if any

information is missing or if there are any other queries.

If an applicant has included a first and second choice, they are initially offered an interview for their first choice, unless they specifically request interviews for both courses. Applicants requesting a careers interview are referred to the College careers team who will arrange an appointment prior to course choice being confirmed.

Applications are entered onto EBS and acknowledged within 5 working days.

Applicants are invited to indicate on the application form if they have a learning difficulty, disability or support need. The Additional Support administrator/adviser pulls off a report on a regular basis, and writes to these applicants to introduce the Additional Support service and explain how to contact it for help and advice.

### **Step 3 – The guidance interview**

The designated Enquiries & Guidance adviser allocates the applicant a date and time to attend their guidance interview, according to the schedule supplied, and this is notified in writing to the applicant, including any additional information they might need about the interview format.

Applicants are interviewed within 4 weeks of their application being acknowledged, or within 4 weeks of the start of the spring term for those applying before January.

Interview details are entered onto EBS.

Applicants are contacted by text on the evening prior to their appointment to remind them to attend.

The format of the guidance interview varies according to the course applied for and can include, for example, auditions, written assessments, practical skills tests or presentations. All applicants have a 1:1 meeting with the relevant course manager or tutor (or, at The Bedford Sixth Form, the admissions co-ordinator), to give them the opportunity to ask questions and obtain detailed information about the course and College, and to help staff assess the suitability of the applicant for their chosen programme.

If the applicant is known to have a learning difficulty, disability or support need, a member of the Additional Support team may be invited to attend the interview.

During the interview a guidance checklist is completed to ensure all the relevant information is covered, including entry requirements, assessments, progression routes, associated costs, additional learning needs and financial support. The applicant is given a copy of the checklist which, where appropriate, also states the conditions attached to any offer made.

The only permitted outcomes of the interview are conditional offer, unconditional offer or no offer.

If an applicant does not attend their guidance interview they are sent a letter asking them to contact us if they wish to re-book. If contact is made the appointment is re-booked, otherwise their EBS status remains Did Not Attend. Applicants will normally be offered two opportunities to attend, unless they notify us of exceptional circumstances.

#### **Step 4 – The offer**

If we can offer a place, a letter is sent confirming the offer made at interview and specified in the guidance interview checklist. The offer will either be **unconditional**, which means that a place at College has been offered with no conditions attached, or **conditional**, which means that a place has been offered provided that the applicant can meet certain conditions. Conditions will normally relate to qualifications which the applicant is required to pass (including specific grades required) prior to taking up their place. The offer letter refers applicants to the conditions stated in the guidance checklist.

Arrangements for applicants to notify examination results to the course manager are made by the programme areas.

In some areas an unconditional offer is made to a programme rather than to a specific course. Applicants are then allocated to the appropriate level of course once any conditions have been met and/or examination results are known.

If it is not possible to offer a place on the chosen course (or on an alternative course discussed at interview), the applicant is notified in writing. The letter may suggest alternative options, and will include a referral to the College Careers Service.

All offers/no offers are entered onto EBS.

Information on offers made to applicants aged 16 – 19 is sent to the local authority as part of the September guarantee requirement.

#### **Step 5 – Accepting the offer**

Applicants are requested to notify the College whether they wish to accept or reject the offer made. They do this by returning the acceptance card enclosed with the offer letter within 2 weeks of the offer being made. If the card is not returned within 2 weeks a reminder letter is sent with a further 2 week deadline. If there is still no response, the applicant is telephoned.

All decisions are entered onto EBS.

#### **Step 6 – Welcome Day**

All new full-time students (excluding Access) are invited to attend a 1 day Welcome Day course in June/July, designed to introduce them to the College, the course and their fellow students, keep them on track and ease the transition to post-16 learning. Skills assessments are undertaken in order to ensure that support needs are identified early and support put in place.

## **Step 7 – Starting College**

4 weeks before the course starts (or after GCSE results for conditional offers), applicants are written to confirming induction arrangements and enrolment times, including any other information they might need such as fees payable, in order to make their transition to College as smooth as possible.

### **Process for progressing students**

Progression should be discussed with students in tutorials during and towards the end of their course, in line with the tutorial policy and progression guarantee.

There is a short, fast-track application form which should be used for students wishing to progress to the next level within their subject. The form is a combination of an application form and the guidance interview checklist used when interviewing new students. It should be used to:

- confirm that the student wishes to progress to the next level
- briefly record the discussion and the information given
- confirm any conditions attached to the offer, including qualifications/grades still to be achieved
- confirm that the student has received the appropriate guidance.

Programme areas should agree how they wish the form to be completed. This may include:

- in a meeting between the student and course manager/teacher **or**
- in a meeting between the student, the course manager/teacher and personal tutor **or**
- by the personal tutor in an individual tutorial (following discussion and approval within the course team that the student is able to progress)

Progression offers **must** be signed off by the course manager. Normally this would be the course manager of the 'receiving' course, or as otherwise agreed within the programme area.

The form is a 3 part-document; the white copy is given to the student, the yellow copy retained by the tutor and the pink copy passed to Admissions by 29 May. They will write to the student to confirm the offer and progress the application in the normal way.

Where students on the first year of a level 3 programme are subject to conditions for progressing onto the second year, this should be managed within the department and will not be processed by the Admissions team.

The programme area is responsible for checking that any conditions attached to the offer have been met before re-enrolling the student (as they would with new applicants).

Students wishing to progress onto a course in a different subject or programme area should be referred to Enquiries and Guidance to collect a standard application form or apply online. Their application is processed as in steps 2 – 7 of the admissions procedure above.

## **Processes for admission to other provision**

### **Foundation Education courses**

Applications for Foundation Education programmes are entered onto EBS and then forwarded to the relevant course manager who deals with all subsequent stages.

### **Higher Education courses**

Application to full-time HE courses is via the UCAS system.

Application to part-time HE courses is direct to the College on a College application form and follows the processes outlined above for designated part-time courses.

Admissions processes relating to higher education, including handling enquiries, UCAS and Student Loans Company procedures, are managed centrally in Enquiries and Guidance by the Higher Education Admissions Administrator.

### **Employer-responsive programmes**

Admissions to training requested by employers are handled via the Business Development team. Where a course requires an application to be submitted, this then follows the normal procedures outlined above.

### **Apprenticeship programmes**

Applications are completed online via the College website or the National Apprenticeship Service website, and are managed by the Business Development team.

### **Admission of international students**

This is subject to UKBA Tier 4 visa regulations. There is a discreet application form for international students. Applications must be accompanied by a non-refundable administration fee of £195 and a personal statement. Where possible, Enquiries and Guidance advisers assess the equivalence of overseas qualifications using the NARIC database. Applications are forwarded to the relevant course manager together with the personal statement and any accompanying qualification information. Decisions are then notified to Enquiries and Guidance who inform the applicant of the outcome.

The procedure for the admission of international students is publicised via the College website <http://www.bedford.ac.uk/international-students/how-to-apply>.

### **Admission of students under age 16**

Admission of any applicant under the age of 16 will be considered by the Senior Manager 14-16. Admission of such learners will usually be in conjunction with a project or school link agreement, or because there are special circumstances which mean that their educational needs cannot be met in school.



## **Admission to Shuttleworth College Halls of Residence**

Admission for residential students to the halls of residence at Shuttleworth College is by application and interview with the Student Development Manager at the Shuttleworth campus. Students and their parents are also required to attend an information meeting prior to the start of their first term in halls. Where demand for places exceeds supply, applications will be prioritised according to the distance from the student's home to the College.

## **APPLICANTS DISCLOSING A CRIMINAL CONVICTION**

We have a duty of care under our safeguarding procedures and Prevent strategy to make every effort to ensure that students who might pose a risk to other College users are not admitted onto our courses, and have procedures in place to do this. The procedures were developed in consultation with Nacro.

Applicants are asked at application stage to declare any unspent criminal convictions. They are also assured that this declaration will not necessarily be a bar to them joining the College. Convictions which would give rise to particular concern are those for offences against a person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, convictions involving unlawful supplying or possession of controlled drugs or substances, and theft. Convictions that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and reformed under the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012)) do not need to be disclosed. However, applicants for courses involving working with children or vulnerable adults are required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

## **RIGHT TO REFUSE ADMISSION TO THE COLLEGE**

Under certain circumstances the College may reserve the right to refuse an application or enrolment. Applications from prospective learners who fall into this category will be given full consideration before any such refusal.

The College reserves the right to refuse admission to any applicant who:

- has disclosed a criminal conviction which is either not spent or can never become spent and which the College believes represents an unacceptable risk to students and/or staff
- has previously been excluded from this or another education institution. Before any such decision is made, reasonable effort will be made to obtain references from previous education institution/s. Where provided, references will support any decision to offer a place
- has previously attended this or another education establishment and not completed courses, including all external assessments, without good reason
- has previously been subject to the College's disciplinary procedure and has not followed the recommendations following the outcome of any such disciplinary
- has been notified by the police as presenting an unacceptable risk
- has outstanding debts with the College
- provides false or misleading information on an application or enrolment form.

The above list is indicative, and is neither exhaustive nor exclusive. The College reserves the right to make the final decision on whether or not to accept an application or enrolment to College. Any such decision will be made by an Executive Director.

In the event the College offers a place and subsequently discovers that the candidate has committed an action that would constitute gross misconduct under the College's Disciplinary Procedure, the College reserves the right to withdraw the offer, whether or not the course or programme has commenced.

Should an applicant dispute a decision not to admit them to the College, they may appeal to the Director of Quality, Standards and Performance. However, the original decision will only be reconsidered if it did not follow the College admissions policy, or other relevant policy or procedure, and/or the applicant provides evidence that was not revealed earlier in the admissions process.

Lesley Ferguson  
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