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DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Nottingham College Higher Education Admissions Policy

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide prospective students, college staff and partner organisations with a guide to the admission of higher education students to Nottingham College. It aims to provide an efficient, fair and transparent Higher Education (HE) admissions process in line with Equality and Diversity policies. The College operates within the boundaries of current legislation, including United Kingdom (UK) Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations. It also accords with newer guidance by the regulator for HE in England, the Office for Students (OfS).

2 Scope

This policy covers all admissions to HE courses at Nottingham College, validated by other higher education institutions including Nottingham Trent University and Pearson Edexcel.

3 Principles of a fair admissions process

The College seeks to ensure a fair HE admissions process which provides equal opportunity for all individuals regardless of background, to gain admission to a course which is suited to their abilities and aspirations.

The College is firmly committed to equal consideration of all applications received by the usual UCAS deadline of 15 January in each admissions cycle. The College observes all rules and procedures laid down by UCAS when processing applications.

Each application is considered on an individual basis against the entry criteria for each course, set by academic staff in our Faculties in consultation with the College's University Centre. These criteria are set at the beginning of each admissions cycle. Assessment will be based on the information provided by the applicant on the UCAS application form. Some courses may require an interview, audition, or submission of a portfolio to support the application process.

Access Agreements

Nottingham College has a current Access and Participation Plan with the Office for Students (OfS) which is published on our website at: www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/study/university-centre/welcome-to-the-university-centre-at-nottingham-college/key-information-and-supporting-documents. This Plan, and previous Office for Fair Access Agreements (OFFAs), detail the practical measures taken to achieve the principles of this Admissions Policy, in particular the development of Widening Participation in Higher Education.

4 HE Admissions functions and responsibilities

The Admissions team works closely with the University Centre, taking advice from other parts of the College as and when required (e.g. the International Office concerning applicants from outside the European Union/European Economic Area).

4.1 Publishing information

All course entry requirements, course content, duration and fees will be made public in line with information in the programme specification. Primary sites of publication are the College's website, UCAS and Discover Uni (formerly Unistats).

4.2 Assessing, making offers and communicating with applicants

All applications are received through the Admissions Team and is responsible for handling all admissions-related enquiries, providing initial point of contact for all information relating to the admissions process. The team ensures that invitations to interview/audition, requests for portfolios, offers and decisions are communicated to applicants quickly and efficiently within UCAS guidelines.

4.3 Vacancy management

The Admissions team is responsible for managing and advertising the number of course entries and vacancies in co-operation with the College's Faculties. Course vacancies are advertised on the UCAS website and in specially-targeted media campaigns at various points during the application cycle.

4.4 Discontinued (or changed) courses

In accordance with UCAS procedures: if the College is required to discontinue (or significantly change) a course, applicants already holding an offer will be notified as soon as is practicable and the University Centre will offer advice on possible alternative choices. Where this is not feasible, the University Centre will assist those applicants to find suitable vacancies at other HE providers, particularly in accordance with the College's non-continuation policy (Student Protection Plan) should this circumstance arise.

5 Application

Applications for all full-time Higher Education courses should be completed online through the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) at www.ucas.com.

Applications for part-time higher education courses should be made using the part-time Higher Education application form available on the following link:

www.nottinghamcollege.ac.uk/university-level/how-to-apply

Prospective students with difficulty accessing these online materials are asked to contact the University Centre for advice. Applications can be accepted in alternative media where necessary.

6 Assessing applications

The following will be considered when assessing an individuals' application:

- Qualifications and grades already achieved
- Predicted results on pending qualifications
- UCAS personal statement
- Relevant work experience
- Academic reference(s)
- Assessment results from interview/audition/portfolio selection
- Exceptional circumstances (such as illness or personal difficulties).

Further information such as a CV or extra references, more details on qualifications (such as transcripts), an extended personal statement, examples of written work, or an audition/interview may be requested. By doing this, when taking a decision to make an offer or reject an application, a review of all the information that has been made available is fully considered.

For courses that do not require interviews, the decision to make an offer is usually taken by the Admissions team based on the assessment criteria outlined. In unclear cases the application will be referred to a member of staff in the Faculty (normally the Course Leader) for further advice and/or a decision.

For courses that require further assessment such as an interview, audition or portfolio, the decision to offer an interview or audition is usually made based on the assessment criteria. In unclear cases an application will be referred to a member of staff in the Faculty (normally the Course Leader) for a decision.

6.1 Conditional offers

If there are requirements that you need to achieve before you can enrol on the course, (e.g. an English language qualification, or minimum grade in your current studies), a conditional offer can be made. You are guaranteed a place once you have successfully met all of the conditions for entry. These might include:

- completion of examination(s) at a specified grade
- attaining a minimum number of UCAS tariff points
- passing an English language qualification with a specified grade/score or
- any other condition that we consider appropriate for a particular course.

The College will clearly explain the conditions which need to be met in the offer communication. Admissions will be responsible for confirming conditional offers as soon as results have been released via UCAS. In some cases it will be the responsibility of the applicant to provide evidence of qualifications to enable a confirmation decision to be made. Applicants who are required to provide evidence of qualifications will receive a deadline for providing this evidence.

If you have not met the conditions by a given date (or before the start of the course), we reserve the right to withdraw the offer. By accepting the offer, you agree to be bound by its terms.

6.2 Minimum English language requirements

Applicants would usually be expected to demonstrate English language skills at level 2 or above; this is would typically be:

- GCSE English Language at grade 4/C (or equivalent)
- IELTS (International English Language Testing System) of 5.5 overall (with no individual component less than 5.0) for a Foundation degree or HNC/D or 6 overall (with no individual component less than 5.5) for Bachelors degree

- An equivalent qualification recognised by *UK Visas and Immigration* on their list of secure English language test (SELT) providers – see the list of approved tests at www.gov.uk (search for ‘Tier 4’).

6.3 Unconditional offers

These can be made to applicants who already meet the entry requirements for a particular course. Unconditional offers may also be made to students who can demonstrate their ability to undertake the study programme. This may be through other things such as life experience, work experience, or the undertaking of other qualifications not necessarily described in the entry criteria, or a combination of qualifications and experience.

Admission to a course is subject to you meeting the terms of the contract. You are required to provide satisfactory evidence of your qualifications beforehand or at enrolment. Failure to provide such evidence to our satisfaction may result in termination of your offer, cancellation of your student registration and termination of the contract.

6.4 Declined applications

The most common reason(s) to decline an application is that the applicant:

- does not meet a specific entry requirement
- does not have (or is unlikely to achieve) the required grades for admission as advertised
- submits work/demonstrates skills which are considered to be less than the required standard or;
- is unsuccessful at interview/audition (only where appropriate to the course).

Unsuccessful applicants are strongly encouraged to check the College's HE Prospectus and UCAS entry profile for details of specific course entry requirements *before* asking for feedback.

All decisions (including those to turn down an applicant) are checked by staff in the Admissions team to ensure consistency in applying the appropriate entry criteria and adherence to this HE Admissions Policy. In all cases, decisions are taken by at least two members of staff.

6.5 Requests for feedback

In all cases, requests should come directly from the applicant. The College will not respond to requests from those advising applicants (whether parents, guardians, teachers or careers advisers) *unless* that person has been expressly appointed (in writing) to act on behalf of the applicant. A copy of the written authority to act for the applicant would need to be provided along with the request for feedback. In the vast majority of cases, however, the College would expect to receive the request for feedback direct from the applicant.

7 Potential issues when considering applications

7.1 Plagiarism

If UCAS notifies the College of the detection of plagiarism in a personal statement, the College reserves the right to decline the application or withdraw any offer already made.

7.2 Fraudulent/incorrect/missing information

If we find that your application contains incorrect or fraudulent information (or is missing significant information), the College may decline, withdraw or amend the offer, or cancel your student registration.

7.3 Disclosure of criminal convictions and related information

Nottingham College does not wish to deter applicants with a previous criminal record from taking advantage of the potential opportunities provided by Higher Education. In general, a criminal record should not be regarded as an obstacle to further study or employment. However, the College has a legal duty to reduce the risk of harm or injury and to ensure the safety and security of its students and staff.

As a condition of taking your place you are required to disclose any relevant, unspent criminal convictions *for some courses* (e.g. law, accountancy, early years and teaching) and you are required to disclose all convictions (whether spent or unspent) and/or cautions when deemed necessary to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) application as part of some courses, as well as any other necessary checks both before and after enrolling. The College will inform you if and when such checks apply.

What is a relevant criminal conviction?

Relevant criminal offences include convictions, cautions, admonitions, reprimands, final warnings, binding over orders (or similar) involving any of the following:

- any kind of violence including (but not limited to) threatening behaviour, offences concerning an intention to harm or offences which resulted in actual bodily harm.
- offences listed in the *Sex Offences Act 2003*.
- the unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction involves commercial drug dealing or trafficking.
- offences involving theft, firearms, arson or those listed in the *Terrorism Act 2006*.

There are a number of offences which will normally be ignored as individual blemishes on an otherwise clear record - such as motoring offences, soft drug possession (not dealing), graffiti and minor 'teenage' skirmishes.

'Spent' convictions (as defined by the *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*) are not considered to be relevant and need not be disclosed.

What does 'spent' mean?

If a person does not re-offend during their rehabilitation period, their conviction becomes 'spent' (as defined by the *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*). Convictions that are spent are not considered to be relevant and you should not reveal them. Please note that certain offences are never spent.

Convictions outside the United Kingdom

If you have been convicted of a similar offence by a court outside the United Kingdom, and that conviction would not be considered as spent under the *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974*, you should also inform us if requested.

If you are convicted of a relevant criminal offence after you have applied, you must tell us (and any other university or college that you have applied to). Do not send details of the offence; simply tell us that you now have a relevant criminal conviction. We may then ask for further details.

We are obliged to consider whether any spent or unspent criminal convictions or related information are compatible with you taking up your place or continuing on your course for specific courses.

The College may be under a duty to disclose information about you to professional, regulatory or statutory bodies.

7.4 Declared learning needs

The College aims to support all students with their support needs. Admission to a particular course is based on the academic judgement that the student should be able to fulfil the learning outcomes, with support, if appropriate.

Students with disabilities or learning difficulties are required to declare these during the application process so that suitable support arrangements can be made before the student starts the course. The College may require further information to determine the level of support needs. Where necessary, reasonable adjustments will be made to assessment methods used in the selection process to ensure the provision of equal opportunities for applicants with disabilities or learning difficulties is met.

For applicants with a declared learning need, the College will, in certain instances, conduct an assessment to ensure that the reasonable adjustments required to support the applicant can be made.

Applicants will be provided with information about how to apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) which they will need to apply for directly to facilitate the provision of certain types of support.

7.5 Care leavers

Nottingham College recognises the unique challenges faced by care leavers when preparing to enter higher education.

The College welcomes applications from individuals who identify themselves as currently, or having previously been looked after. Applicants will be subject to the standard selection procedures and will be considered on an individual basis. The offer of a place may be based on any special circumstances outlined in the application.

Care leaver applicants will be offered confidential support from the College's named contact - Helen Lucas, HE Student Finance and Welfare Officer to support their transition into Higher Education. Contact details are: helen.lucas@nottinghamcollege.ac.uk 0115 838 0612.

7.6 Exceptional circumstances

The College considers extenuating, mitigating and medical circumstances that are declared during the application process up until enrolment. A supporting statement from the academic referee and direct communication from a senior official from an educational institution, or person of standing in the local community in support of an applicant's circumstances is welcomed.

8 International Students

International students are defined as being from countries outside the European Union/European Economic Area. The Admissions team assess applications along with the College's International Office to confirm:

- correct assessment of fees (determining whether applicant has Home or International status)
- verification of qualifications
- UK visa requirements

8.1 Minimum English language requirements

Applicants must have attained (or be expected to achieve) a minimum level of academic English, either IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or an equivalent qualification recognised by UK Visas and Immigration on their list of approved secure English language tests (SELT) and providers.

For the latest list of approved qualifications please refer to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>



- for HNCs, HNDs and Foundation degrees:

Applicants must have attained (or be expected to achieve) an IELTS academic test score of 5.5 or above, with no individual component less than 5.0, or an equivalent approved qualification.

- for BA (Hons) Top-up degrees:

Applicants must have attained (or be expected to achieve) an IELTS academic test score of 6.0 or above, with no individual component less than 5.5, or an equivalent approved qualification.

9 Communicating with applicants

Decisions reached following assessment will be communicated to the applicant via UCAS (for full-time courses) and directly (for part-time courses). In the regular admission cycle and where interviews are not required, the applicant will usually receive an offer or decision within 3 weeks of the application being received. For international applicants and at later stages of the admission cycle, communication may also be made via email to ensure timeliness.

The decision to interview/audition is communicated to the applicant via UCAS or directly from the University Centre. In the regular admission cycle, applicants will usually receive an invitation to interview email within 3 weeks of the application being received if required. Any course-specific additional information required for interview will also be sent with the invitation.

There will be a minimum of 1- 2 weeks' notice given prior to interview dates. If a decision not to offer an interview is made, notification will be sent to the applicant within UCAS advisory deadlines.

For applicants who are unable to travel to interview, (such as international applicants), it may be possible to conduct an interview via *Skype* or upload portfolios of evidence/auditions for assessment. Requests of this nature will be handled on a case-by- case basis.

9.1 Assessment at interviews/auditions and portfolios

A member of staff from the Faculty (normally the Course Leader) will conduct the assessment round by means of interview/audition or by viewing a portfolio submission. Following assessment, the offer decision, type of offer and any conditions of the offer will be communicated by the University Centre to the applicant via UCAS within 2 weeks.

9.2 Feedback

Consistent generic feedback will be provided to applicants who are not invited for assessment or are subsequently not offered a place. More specific individualised feedback may be available upon request.

10 Appeals and complaints

Appeals

An appeal is defined as being a request to review an admissions decision and/or the outcome of an application. The outcome of a successful appeal would be to reconsider the application with a view to either changing or upholding the original decision.



There is no right of appeal against an *academic judgment* of the College. However, if following receipt of feedback an applicant feels that an error has occurred, they do have the right to request a formal review of the original decision on any of the following grounds:

- that relevant information was missing from the original application
- information or data contained within the original application was misinterpreted or
- an administrative irregularity occurred whilst handling the application.

Unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal in writing to:

Damian Fidler
Head of Higher Education, Access and International
Nottingham College
The Adams Building
Nottingham
NG1 1NG

This should be completed within 10 working days of being refused admission to the College, explaining in detail the reasons why the original decision should be reconsidered.

Appeals will be considered by a panel chaired by a senior manager who will examine all of the information presented to support the application. This may involve contact as appropriate with the relevant Faculty. The outcomes will be communicated promptly to the applicant. Appeals will be acknowledged within 15 working days of receipt and normally responded to within a further 10 working days. The College aims to thoroughly and fairly investigate all appeals and resolve such matters during this initial investigation and as such, the panel's decision must be considered as being final and binding in all cases.

Complaints

Following appeal, if you are still unhappy with an admission decision you have recourse to the College's HE complaints procedure. Copies of the summary guide: *Getting It Right for Higher Education Students* are available upon request from the University Centre. Please contact heteam@nottinghamcollege.ac.uk or call **0115 838 0541**.

The *Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education* (OIA) is unable to consider any which relate to admissions. This expressly falls outside the OIAs remit. For further information, go to www.oiahe.org.uk

11 Confirmation and Clearing

11.1 Confirming offers

The University Centre will be responsible for confirming conditional offers as soon as results have been confirmed via UCAS. In some cases, it will be the responsibility of the applicant to provide evidence of qualifications to enable confirmation decision to be made. Applicants who are required to provide evidence of qualifications will receive a request from the University Centre with a deadline for providing this evidence.

11.2 Clearing

The College will publish details of available places and revised entry requirements (if appropriate) when the clearing period opens.

12 Deferred entries

Applicants holding an Unconditional place who wish to defer entry until the following academic year should contact the University Centre for advice.

13 Enrolment

A comprehensive Welcome Pack and details of enrolment arrangements will be sent out to all confirmed applicants over the summer. The enrolment details will include clear guidance on the required next steps, what documents to bring and a list of college contacts.

14 Audit

A record of all decisions relating to applications will be kept by the Admissions. Information on decisions made, based on offers/entry requirements will be recorded and made available to applicants upon request. This will include details of interview approval process and subsequent communication(s) to student. Where an applicant has been unsuccessful the reason(s) for rejection will be clearly recorded.

15 Customer feedback and policy review

Nottingham College takes its obligations very seriously and is keen to know if any aspect of implementing the admissions policy falls below the high standard expected; we welcome customer feedback and suggestions for possible improvements. This policy is normally reviewed on an annual basis.