

Higher Education Admissions Policy

Date reviewed: September 2016
Date for next Review: September 2018
Policy Owner: Director of Higher Education

Background and Context

This policy, together with the admissions processes, have been devised and are conducted in accordance with Chapter B2 of the QAA UK Quality Code 'Recruitment, selection and admissions to higher education'. Due regard has also been given to guidance from Supporting Professionalism in Admissions programme (SPA), Admissions Guidance from UCAS and appropriate equality legislation.

Purpose & Scope

The University Centre Farnborough (UCF) is committed to recruiting students from broad and diverse communities, who have the potential to succeed and benefit from higher education. This policy applies to all areas of the UCF's higher education provision.

Principles

The UCF is committed to ensuring that all applicants are treated fairly and that decisions about recruitment, selection, admission and progression to its courses are based on objective academic and non-academic criteria that have been made available to applicants prior to application.

The UCF aims to ensure that information provided to applicants on courses, facilities, entry requirements and procedures are accurate in order to enable applicants to make informed decisions. This information will be made easily accessible for applicants. The information is also available through the website and on the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website.

The prospectus and web site specifies the typical standard entry requirements for each course. Due to deadlines for printed matter, online information is expected to be the most current.

The UCF's aim is to select those students most likely to benefit and succeed. The entry criteria and selection methods chosen for each course are designed to ensure that students who are offered places are likely to succeed academically and gain intellectually from the provision available. This is subject to the availability of places and, therefore, it may not always be possible to make offers to all the good candidates who may apply.

Where interviews or auditions are necessary to make decisions about the suitability of a candidate for a course, this is made clear to applicants. Applicants

will be given detailed information regarding what to expect, along with advice regarding anything they need to bring or prepare in advance.

The purpose of an interview is to ensure that candidates have enthusiasm, motivation and ability to succeed on the course. Where applicable, the practical skills necessary to meet the criteria for the course will also be taken into account.

Suitable applicants for courses that do not require an audition or interview will be made an offer, provided they meet, or are predicted to meet, the standard entry requirement. The decision whether or not an applicant is eligible for an offer will be based on an applicant meeting entry criteria for that subject, which is usually, but is not limited to, relevant academic achievement and an established interest in the subject determined through a personal statement.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Where an applicant does not possess the relevant entry requirements but would like to be considered based on previous experience, it will be necessary for staff to request supplementary material to support the application. This could include a portfolio of evidence, successful completion of a written project at an appropriate academic level, or other appropriate documentation. Candidates would be considered under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures for the appropriate awarding body. Information can be obtained by contacting the Admissions Officer.

Applicants who possess appropriate RPL may claim appropriate exemption from part of the course.

Training

The UCF is committed to the continuing professional development of all staff and to delivering an on-going programme of appropriate training events. In order to ensure that admissions processes are conducted in a professional manner by authorised and competent representatives, the UCF offers relevant staff development sessions. All staff involved in the recruitment, selection, interview and admission of students are required to engage with this training. This may include admissions procedures, sharing best practice, decision making, equality and diversity matters and updating regarding other related issues such as new qualifications and disability issues.

The Admissions Officer and the Director of HE oversee the admissions cycle to ensure that decisions are made consistently and in accordance with published information.

The UCF will ensure accuracy and completeness of published information about learning opportunities and assure it is available in a variety of formats, including online and hard copy. The collaborative partnership with the university will also be made explicit.

The UCF will ensure that information regarding qualifications, course content, entry requirements and selection is available on the UCF and UCAS websites.

HE Admissions Procedures

All full time applications are initially received either directly or through UCAS and processed in a timely fashion. Applicants applying for courses that do not require an interview will be made an offer providing they meet the entry requirements and subject to places being available. In normal circumstances the UCF will aim to make decisions within ten working days. These decisions will be processed through UCAS or, if received directly, by email.

Applicants requiring an interview will normally be invited to attend an interview within ten working days of receipt of their application. Applicants would normally be given a minimum of two weeks notice of an interview. If students are unable to attend on the date given they can contact the admissions team for an alternative date. Following interviews, decisions will be processed through UCAS or directly by email and usually within one week of an interview.

All applicants will be provided with information regarding course fees, including additional costs such as residential visits or studio fees, and sources of additional support in their offer. Students will be informed on several occasions if additional information is required prior to being accepted onto the course, such as a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check or evidence of appropriate work placement. This information will be available on the UCF website, explained at interview, and during any orientation days, and sent to applicants in advance of the commencement of the course.

International Students

International students should submit a UCAS application and will then be contacted to provide copies of all appropriate documentation along with proof of identity. The UCF requires notarised copies of all certificates / documentation including any completed qualifications. Following a successful interview we would issue an appropriate certificate to enable students to obtain the appropriate visas.

We are required to return attendance reports to UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) in order to ensure the UCF meets all statutory requirements of UKVI. The UCF, in line with validating body requirements, sets minimum requirements for the standard of English expected of applicants for whom English is not the first language. Full details are available within the prospectus.

Indirect Provision

Interviews will be arranged where necessary in accordance with institutional agreements and as agreed at the admissions meetings. If candidates are subject to an interview, the UCF will ensure that decisions are returned to the university in a timely fashion, enabling all deadlines to be met. Normally decisions would be communicated with admissions staff at the partner university and processed by them as soon as possible. The UCF and the partner university will agree target numbers and offer levels at the beginning of the recruitment cycle.

Applicant Responsibility

Many applicants will be subject to UCAS rules regarding replying to and accepting offers which are widely publicised. These dates are determined by UCAS and it is essential that applicants comply with the deadlines given. Those who do not respond in a timely manner may be rejected by default (RBD) and it may not be possible to reinstate original offers. The UCF will inform any applicants they are aware of who are approaching a RBD date, if they have not already responded.

Disabled applicants are encouraged to disclose their disability on their application form in order that reasonable adjustments can be made during the selection process and in order to ensure appropriate support is in place, during an interview / audition if appropriate, and prior to the commencement of study. Specialist staff will support applicants who are seeking a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and a range of specialist support services are available to students with physical disabilities, mental health conditions or learning difficulties / disabilities.

Details of Policy & Procedures

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)

The UCF provides a range of opportunities for applicants to visit the UCF both prior to and after making an application. These events will enable applicants to receive further details regarding the courses, facilities, student experience and support available in order that applicants can make informed decisions. Trained IAG staff are available at these events to talk individually with students and answer any queries.

Orientation Day

Where applicants are not required to attend an audition or interview they will be invited to attend an orientation day following the receipt of an offer of place. With late applications, however, this may not always be possible.

These events will enable applicants to receive further details regarding the courses, assessment, facilities, support services and overall student experience. In addition students will be able to meet the course team and current students as well as being taken on a tour.

Applicants who cannot attend may request additional literature or to visit on an alternative date by contacting the UCF.

Changes to Courses

It may sometimes be necessary to change the specification or discontinue a course. Where this occurs, as much notice as possible is provided. Sometimes the timetable may change. Any such significant changes to courses will be communicated to applicants as soon as possible.

Where a course fails to recruit viable numbers the UCF will work with the

applicants affected to make alternative offers at the UCF, or will provide advice in seeking admission to another university or college. In addition we will discuss other options elsewhere and release applicants into UCAS clearing should they so decide.

Courses that are still subject to validation are clearly promoted using established conventions so applicants are aware.

Deferred entry

The year of entry is not taken into account in the decision making process. Applicants who apply for a deferred place on their UCAS application will be processed along with all other applicants and must fulfil the conditions of any offer made within that admissions cycle. If they do not do so, a further application will be required in the following admissions cycle.

Applicants who wish to defer following an offer of a place being made are encouraged to put the request in writing. It would not normally be possible to allow an applicant to defer for more than one year.

Induction & Enrolment

Applicants will be sent information from the UCF, and partner university if appropriate, regarding joining arrangements.

Students will be taken through a full Induction programme which will cover a range of important information about the UCF and its support services. During this period students will be able to enrol with the UCF (and their partner university where required) as well as completing other activities such as an assessment of learning and study needs, along with any health and safety requirements.

Applicants with criminal convictions

Applicants to courses that involve contact with children or vulnerable adults will be required to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) application. A number of courses require this as a compulsory element and therefore return of the DBS form may be a requirement for an offer to be made. The UCF will seek further information from any applicant who has declared a criminal conviction, to satisfy itself that an offer can be made to that individual. Applicants are required to declare this information on the appropriate application form.

The UCF reserves the right to assess all such applications to ensure that admitting the applicant would not preclude them from a career in the relevant sector, or place staff, students or visitors to the UCF, or within work placements, at risk.

Decisions on the admission of applicants with criminal convictions will normally be made by the UCF according to our Safeguarding policy.

Feedback

In the event of an applicant being unsuccessful in gaining a place, they may contact the Admissions Officer informally for feedback.

Complaints and appeals

If the applicant is still unclear why a place has not been offered, based on all of the information, the applicant should contact UCF within two weeks of receiving the decision. The Complaints Policy will apply when dealing with such issues and can be obtained from the web site.

Parents, guardians, advisors, schools and colleges are asked to note that feedback will usually only be offered directly to the candidate, unless the UCF or the partner university has received a clear written statement indicating that the applicant is willing for matters to be discussed with another individual or party.

In some cases it may be necessary to forward a complaint to the appropriate university, if they have made the final decision. The complaint would then be processed under their appropriate policy.

Review

The UCF seeks feedback from students, through forums and other means, regarding their experiences from application through selection, admissions and induction. We take their feedback seriously and implement changes regarding how we can improve and enhance the experience as appropriate.

The review of this statement will take place every two years. The next date it is due for review is September 2018. The processes and detail of this policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain appropriate and fit for purpose. In addition entry requirements are reviewed on an annual basis and revised as appropriate.