

# HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS PROCEDURE



# Higher Education Admissions Procedure

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Employees		
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## Any Associated Documentation, for Reference:

**FE Admissions Policy, Adult Admissions Procedure, Apprenticeship Admissions Procedures, Safeguarding Policy, Fitness to Study Procedure, Fitness to Practise Procedure, 16-18 Admissions Procedure, Access and Participation Statement, HE Course Fees and Charges, Student Protection Plan**

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## Scope and purpose of the procedure

1. This procedure applies to all applications made by prospective learners to any of Preston College full or part time higher education courses regardless of background or characteristic.
2. This procedure takes into account guiding principles of effective admissions practice (QAA, 2018), statutory and legislative requirements. There may be occasions where this procedure will be superseded by the relevant policies and procedures relating to these responsibilities. The procedure sets out Preston College's approach to deliver a fair, accessible and transparent admissions service to all applicants who have the potential to succeed in higher education.
3. Applicants applying for a Higher Education programme awarded by the University of Lancashire are also covered by the University's Admissions Policy and Applicant Complaints Procedures. Details of University's policy can be found at: [www.lancashire.ac.uk](http://www.lancashire.ac.uk)
4. Higher apprenticeships are considered firstly by the applicant's employer in consultation with the College. Therefore, certain activities will deviate from the standard admissions procedure and are covered in the complementary Higher Apprenticeships Admissions Statement.

## Changes to published information

5. Where a programme does not run or where there are significant changes to a programme between the offer being made and the student commencing the programme, applicants will be advised of this and the options available to them.
6. In the event of an offer being made for a course still in the pre-validation stage any advertising materials and any offers must make this clear.
7. In the event of an offer being made subject to learner numbers on programme any advertising materials and any offers must make this clear. The College will attempt to offer alternative suitable provision, if available, where course numbers cannot be met.
8. In these instances, the College's Student Protection Plan should be followed: [Policies & Procedures - Preston College](#)

## Guiding Principles

9. Preston College's HE Admissions Procedure is informed by six guiding principles of effective practice:
  - Policies and procedures for applications, selection and admission to higher education programmes are transparent and accessible.
  - As a higher education provider Preston College uses fair, reliable and appropriate assessment methods that enables us to select learners with the potential to complete their programme successfully.
  - Preston College reduces or removes unnecessary barriers for prospective learners.

- Information provided to prospective learners for recruitment and widening access purposes supports learners in making informed decisions.
- All colleagues and partners engaged in the delivery of admissions, recruitment and widening access are appropriately trained and resourced.
- Preston College continually enhances widening access strategies and policies in line with local and national guidance.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

10. The HE Manager ensures that the College has appropriate admission procedures in place; in line with sector conventions, statutory and legal requirements and that these are effectively implemented and monitored. They are also responsible for ensuring this procedure is accessible to colleagues, applicants and learners and that appropriate training is in place for colleagues involved in making admissions decisions.
11. All colleagues involved in any aspect of the admissions process are responsible for following this procedure.

## **Learning and Curriculum Administrators (HE)**

12. Learning and Curriculum Administrators with responsibility for HE provision receive and process applications for all full-time and part-time HE programmes. It is their responsibility to enter accurate data onto the College's system and pass applications to the relevant Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisors and academic staff at both the College (and where appropriate the partner University for decisions).

## **Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisors (HE)**

13. Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisors with responsibility for HE provision, assess all applications against published entry criteria as part of the decision-making process and liaise with designated HE academic colleagues if a decision cannot be made on the basis of formal qualifications. They will, when requested, arrange interviews or auditions for students in consultation with academic staff.

## **Work Placement Coordinator**

14. Ensure timely submission and monitoring of DBS applications. Maintain a tracking log to identify outstanding checks and escalate to the Safeguarding Lead where delays pose a risk to programme commencement

## **Human Resources**

15. Undertake DBS risk assessments where disclosures arise, ensuring decisions are evidence-based, consistent, and recorded in line with College policy.

## **Curriculum Leaders**

16. The Curriculum Leaders with responsibility for HE provision apply their academic and professional judgement throughout the HE admissions process and are responsible for

adhering to this procedure. Where a decision cannot be made on the basis of meeting the standard entry criteria; curriculum leaders are responsible for referring applications through contextual admission practice or [special cases](#). They will when required, provide assessment materials to support the decision-making process.

## **HE Admissions Group**

17. Contextual admissions applications that are considered by representatives of the HE Admissions Group. All applications require approval from two members of the HE Admissions Group before an offer is made. The HE Admissions Group is made up of Vice Principal Quality, Teaching, Learning & Learner Support, Director of Quality, HE Manager, Director of School, and Curriculum Leader of the course. Meetings are held virtually, as required to ensure that all applications can be considered within 10 working days to align with the time frame for non-standard applications as described in [Stage 1 of the HE Admissions Process](#).

## **Admissions Process**

### **Applications**

18. Potential applicants may contact the College and obtain information on courses via the College website, telephone or in person at reception. In addition, the College holds a number of open days where applicants may meet the staff who teach on the programme they are considering. The College produces a prospectus that contains programmes the College will offer together with information on welfare, guidance and support available. The website also contains detailed course leaflets which gives prospective students detailed information about the courses. All applications are to come via Preston College website (including level 3 progressing learners and higher apprenticeship candidates).
19. Applicants are responsible for providing the College with accurate information on which it will make admissions decisions. Any student found to have provided false information or to have plagiarised their assessments are at risk of having an offer withdrawn.

### **Entry requirements**

20. Criteria for admission are approved as part of the College's (or awarding body's) course approval process. Entry requirements for each programme are set out in course leaflets and on the College website. Standard entry requirements normally indicate the expected grades and/or UCAS points a student should hold. Entry requirements may be changed for individual students who can demonstrate alternative qualifications or experience that leads tutors to believe that they will be successful on the programme.

### **Contextual admissions practice**

21. Contextual admissions may help the college to identify and encourage students from underrepresented groups, allowing them to take account of the circumstances to assess their attainment and potential which may lead to the college adjusting their standard offer. This practice of uses additional information (such as an additional assessment or non-academic information), which allows the college to identify applicants with the

greatest potential to succeed in higher education, rather than relying on exam results alone.

## **Assessing applications**

22. Admission to a programme is based on the academic and professional judgement of colleagues involved in the admissions process. The following standard criteria is typically used to assess an application:

- Academic qualifications (including prior and predicated grades)
- Relevant work/life experience and/or knowledge (where appropriate)
- Contextual admissions practice
- Programme specific criteria (e.g. personal statement, audition, interview, satisfactory DBS)\*

## **Additional assessments to support contextualised admissions**

23. Assessments to support contextualised admissions are designed to be fair and inclusive, they are used to enable applicants to demonstrate their potential to succeed in HE. They typically focus on the skills that applicants will need to do well at HE level, such as critical thinking, problem solving and how to apply subject knowledge. The assessments are developed and internally verified by the relevant subject tutors and are designed to assess the applicant's ability to draw on their existing subject knowledge and skills.

## **Special Considerations**

### **Transfer to Preston College for part of an undergraduate programme**

24. The College will consider application from students wishing to transfer to Preston College for part of an undergraduate programme. In this instance the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedure should be followed. [Policies & Procedures - Preston College](#). Applicants should contact the Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor (HE) who will, along with academic colleagues, work to support any applicant wishing to make an RPL application. Students who may be eligible to claim accreditation for prior certified learning (APL) towards a University of Lancashire awarded programme will be supported to prepare the necessary paperwork for consideration and approval by University of Lancashire. Details of University of Lancashire's policy can be found at: [Recognition of Prior Learning](#)

### **Applications to Preston College top-up degrees (awarded by UCLan)**

25. Preston College will consider applications to top-up degrees awarded by University of Lancashire on a case-by-case basis. For example; where an applicant has completed a foundation degree elsewhere or where a foundation degree graduate has not immediately progressed on to a top-up degree.

## **Applicants requiring additional support**

26. The College adopts an inclusive approach to learning, offering high quality teaching which is tailored to individual requirements and aims to promote independence and the achievement of positive outcomes. Where an applicant has declared a disability or need for additional support, the Advisor will liaise with relevant colleagues to provide information to applicants and support at events held throughout the admission process such as open events, interviews and auditions.

### **Applicants with a Disability**

27. Preston College welcomes applications from disabled students and from those with specific learning differences; their applications will be considered on the same academic grounds as those of other students. The College will contact applicants who indicate a disability on their application and subsequently accept an offer. The College will invite such applicants to discuss their support needs with a member of the Student Support and Wellbeing team so that any necessary support can be arranged. Further information may be found at: [Student Services - Preston College](#)

### **Applicants who have been in Local Authority Care (Looked After Children/In Care)**

28. The College welcomes applications from students who have had experience of being in local authority care. Applicants who indicate they have been in care on their application will be contacted by the Learner Support Team to discuss any support or needs they may have. Further information may be found at: [Student Services - Preston College](#)

### **Reasonable adjustments**

29. Where required, 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. Where entrance to a programme is dependent upon demonstrating a competency standard then the standard must be:
- Appropriate and necessary
  - Applied equally to disabled and non-disabled applicants

### **Safeguarding, DBS Disclosures and Criminal Convictions**

30. Preston College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all members of the College community to share this commitment. We have a duty of care to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students, staff, and placement providers.

### **Declaration of Criminal Convictions**

31. At the point of application, individuals must disclose any criminal convictions (spent or unspent, depending on programme requirements) or ongoing investigations to enable the College to undertake a risk assessment as part of the admissions process.
32. Applicants for programmes leading to professional registration (e.g. Counselling, Health & Social Care, Education, Early Years Education) must disclose all convictions, cautions or reprimands in line with PSRB requirements.

33. For all other HE programmes, applicants must disclose relevant unspent convictions as defined under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions Order).

### **Risk Assessment Process**

34. Risk assessments may be initiated following applicant disclosures or where a DBS check reveals relevant convictions or investigations. Cases will be referred to Human Resources, who will undertake a formal risk assessment in consultation with the Safeguarding Lead and relevant Director of School. The purpose of the risk assessment is not to prevent admission automatically, but to consider all factors carefully and fairly. Each case will be reviewed on its own merits, and admission will only be declined where it is considered necessary to protect the safety and wellbeing of students, staff, or those the College serves.
35. The assessment will consider:
- Nature and seriousness of the offence(s)
  - Time elapsed since the offence(s)
  - Any evidence of rehabilitation or patterns of offending
  - Relevance to the programme of study and/or placement activity
  - Requirements of PSRBs where applicable
36. Outcomes of the risk assessment may include:
- Admission confirmed with no restrictions
  - Admission confirmed subject to specific risk management measures
  - Admission withdrawn/refused where the conviction presents an unmanaged risk or prevents progression to a professional licence.

### **DBS Requirements**

37. Students applying to programmes in Counselling, Health & Social Care, Education, and Early Years Education will be required to apply for Enhanced Disclosure through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).
38. The College will support the administration of this process. Should the DBS outcome be unsatisfactory, the College reserves the right to withdraw an offer or remove a student from their programme of study.
39. Students cannot commence placement activities or modules requiring clearance until DBS confirmation is received. Where a DBS outcome reveals relevant information, a risk assessment will be undertaken as outlined above.

### **Escalation and Referral**

40. Where disclosures raise concerns about a student's capacity to engage safely in study, applicants may be referred into the Fitness to Study Procedure.
41. Where disclosures raise concerns about suitability for professional practice, applicants will be referred into the Fitness to Practise Procedure.

## Failure to Disclose

42. If an applicant fails to disclose a relevant conviction or ongoing investigation and this later becomes known during their period of study, the College reserves the right to remove the student from their programme.

## Appeals

43. Applicants may appeal decisions under the College's Admissions Appeals Procedure, normally on the grounds of procedural irregularity or the emergence of new and relevant information not previously available.

## Confidentiality

44. All information regarding disclosures will be treated in strict confidence, shared only with those involved in the risk assessment and stored securely in line with GDPR requirements.

## Decisions

45. The following decisions may be made:

**Standard offers:** Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisors will assess applications to higher education against published entry criteria. Where an applicant meets the criteria, an offer will be made pending final confirmation of examination results, additional and non-academic requirements.

**Non-Standard offers:** Where an applicant does not meet published entry requirements or where relevant work/life experience needs to be assessed, advisors will liaise with the appropriate curriculum leader with a decision being made in 10 working days (where the applicant has provided all information required to make a decision).

**Contextual offers:** An offer made on the basis of contextual data or participation in an outreach event. This might include:

- an offer based on advertised grades
- an offer at a grade or more lower than advertised
- an unconditional offer (see below)
- an offer linked to a bridging assessment

46. If an offer can be made it will be one of the following:

- Conditional** – where an applicant has been initially assessed as suitable for the programme but still needs to meet the requirements, for example, not yet achieving a specified result with their current qualification.
- Unconditional** – where an applicant has met all entry criteria and unconditional offer may be made. Preston College does not issue unconditional offers to applicants who have not yet met their entry requirements.

47. All applicants receiving an offer will receive a letter outlining in details the conditions of the offer. This will include the details of any specific criteria that needs to be fulfilled before an applicant can enrol onto their programme. It will include a link to Preston College's Terms and Conditions, Appeals Procedure, Complaints Procedure and Student Protection Plan.

## Rejections

48. Reject: A **standard rejection** decision may be made, but is not limited to the following reasons:
- Failure to complete the application form correctly
  - Knowingly providing false or fraudulent information at any point of the application process
  - Failure to attend an audition, workshop or interview or provide a portfolio (digital or physical)
  - Failure to fulfil academic or non- academic entry requirements, for example not having the required qualifications, not providing a satisfactory DBS or medical clearance before starting the programme or not providing evidence of securing relevant employment or placement.
  - Failure to provide evidence of qualifications they have achieved in a reasonable timeframe as requested by Preston College
49. All **non-standard rejections** are reviewed by the HE Quality Manager in liaison with the Director of School. All applicants who receive a reject decision will be provided with feedback as to why their application was unsuccessful.
50. The Learning and Curriculum Administration Team will keep a copy of all rejections, together with the reasons for rejection. This will enable the College to give an unsuccessful candidate any explanation of how the decision was reached.

## Feedback on applications

51. Feedback will normally include generic information to help applicants understand the means by which applicants are selected for the course to which they have applied, but a certain amount of specific information on an individual's application may be available on request.
52. Feedback will not be provided to any third party including, but not limited to, a parent, agent or other supporter.

## Applicants wishing to reapply

53. Applicants who are unsuccessful or who do not take up their place with Preston College are welcome to reapply. Previous admissions decisions will not be taken into account, however, there will be circumstances where the College's Fitness to Study or Fitness to Practice procedure will take precedence.

## Appeals and Complaints

54. An admission appeal is defined as a challenge to an admissions decision. This may be a decision to reject an application or the conditions of an offer. An admissions appeal is not:
- General feedback
  - An expression of dissatisfaction with a service you have received from the College
55. Applicants wishing to appeal an admissions decision should follow the College admissions appeal procedure: [Policies & Procedures - Preston College](#)
56. An applicant who is not satisfied with the way in which the College has dealt with their application may complain using the College's complaints scheme available on the College website.

### **Access and Participation**

57. Widening Access and Participation is a fundamental element of the College strategy and we are passionate about ensuring that students from under-represented groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds have fair access to higher education. Our [Access and Participation Statement](#) outlines how Preston College will facilitate access to HE for key student groups.
58. Whilst applicants can disclose information at any point in the admissions process we encourage them to provide this information at the point of application to ensure that we can contact them to discuss what adjustments can be made, what support they will require once they arrive and information about support such as additional funding that might be available to them.

### **Reporting**

59. In implementing this procedure, the College will ensure that any personal data relating to the application of this policy will be obtained, processed and destroyed in line with the principles outlined in the General Data Protection Regulations and supplementary enacting Data Protection Legislation. The College is committed to being transparent about how it collects and processes the personal data of its learners, employees, visitors and other stakeholders to meet its data protection obligations. The College will ensure all processing is lawful, fair and transparent and individuals are informed of the legal basis for processing their data. Further information relating to the College's compliance of the General Data Protection Regulations can be found in the College's Data Protection Policy.

## **Appendix 1 - HE Admissions Process**

### **Stage 1**

All applications are to come via Preston College website and will receive an immediate email response to confirm receipt of the application.

Applicants can then expect a follow-up communication from a Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor within 5 working days of their application being received. This communication will provide information regarding the programme and evidence required to meet published entry criteria (including where appropriate evidence of relevant work/life experience and/or knowledge).

The Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor will conduct checks to verify qualifications submitted as evidence through the [Learning Records Service](#).

Following an initial assessment of their evidence, applicants will be contacted by the Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor within 5 working days (for standard applications) or 10 working days (for non-standard applications) of their application being received. This communication will include information regarding further evidence required to meet entry criteria and interview arrangements.

Current Preston College students who have applied to progress to study a higher education programme will have their results checked by an Advisor in liaison with the Achievements team.

### **Stage 2**

Interviews will be arranged by the Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor (HE). Applicants can expect to receive an invite to interview via letter, email or text that will detail the time and date of the arranged interview.

Where applicable, applicants will be notified to bring original copies of prerequisite qualifications to be checked during the interview process.

Applicants who do not attend their interview appointment will be contacted by the Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor (HE) who will attempt to make contact with them and offer an alternative appointment, time and date.

Should the Advisor be unable to make contact with the applicants their application will be automatically withdrawn after a period of 6 weeks.

If an applicant attends an interview/audition they will then receive either an Offer letter or a Rejection letter as [detailed below](#).

If an applicant is successful at interview then the Recruitment, Admissions and Careers Advisor will seek approval from Curriculum Leader for their application.

### **Stage 3**

Applicants who successfully gain a Conditional Offer will receive an offer letter within 10 working days of their interview, detailing any conditions they are required to meet or offering a place on their programme without conditions.

Applicants on meeting the conditions of an offer will receive a confirmatory letter.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive a letter within 10 working days of their interview.

For applicants who have disclosed additional support needs during the interview process, and have received an offer, they will be contacted by phone normally within 2 working days to discuss further support.

Once an applicant confirms acceptance of a place they will receive pre-programme academic support materials and further information about their course.

Prior to our main enrolment season, any applicant who has received an offer, has met all conditions and accepted, will be enrolled or sent a letter to be invited to enrol.

## **Appendix 2 - Higher Apprenticeships Admissions Statement**

### **Applications**

Applicants are considered by Employers first and in consultation with the College. All eligible applicants are identified through employer selection processes. Applicants who are successful in the Employers' selection processes should apply through the College website and a member of the learning and curriculum administration team will verify the application.

### **Entry requirements**

Absolute minimum entry requirements are developed by Skills England published at the [Apprenticeship search / Skills England](#) as *Occupational Standards*.

The College and the Employers it delivers Apprenticeships with may also set additional entry requirement thresholds. These criteria must be approved through the College/Awarding Partner course approval processes and will be published on the College website.

For higher apprenticeships, there is no mandatory requirement for Level 2 English and Maths where applicants are aged 19+. However, individual employers and/or the College's Director of Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement may require evidence of English and Maths qualifications as a condition of entry.

Applicants who do not hold Level 2 English and Maths may be required to undertake functional skills qualifications during their apprenticeship, where this is a requirement of the employer or programme funding rules.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

Full eligibility requirements are published in the Department for Education (DfE) Funding Rules which are updated every year. [Apprenticeship funding rules - GOV.UK](#)

### **Employer-related requirements**

Individual employers may have specific requirements which may be different or additional to those published in the apprenticeship standards or the entry requirements set by the College. For example, an employer may require an apprentice to have worked for the company for a minimum amount of time. Requirements such as this will be communicated to applicants through the employers' materials advertising apprenticeship opportunities.

### **Academic requirements**

Entry requirements for each programme are set out in course leaflets and on the College website. Applicants who don't meet this criterion may need to undertake further assessment; such applicants will be admitted only if the assessment demonstrates that they have sufficient skills necessary to successfully engage with and complete the course and therefore, the apprenticeship.

### **Applicants requiring additional support**

Applicants should also discuss reasonable adjustments with their employers. Apprentices are not eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance; where financial support may be required they should discuss possible eligibility for additional funding with the College.

## **Offers**

The College will determine whether any exemptions must be applied and will notify the applicant of its formal decision. This formal decision will be communicated to the applicant by the employer and the Business Development Lead.

Applicants who do not meet the conditions of their offer before the course (including employment, academic, contractual documentation completion and relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies' requirements) commences shall be considered, in the first instance, by the curriculum leader who may decide to either accept the applicant onto the course or escalate the decision. In the case of escalation, final decisions will be made by the following joint consideration by the Director of School and the Director of Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement

Applicants who are not eligible for the Higher Apprenticeship may be able to apply for the for the academic qualification.

The College reserves the right to withdraw any offer made on the basis of an application containing fraudulent, incomplete or misleading information.

## **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

In line with Education and Skills Funding Agency eligibility and funding criteria, where it is identified that a successful applicant already has prior learning which maps to the teaching and learning outcomes of the apprenticeship, this will be noted and where necessary the content and cost of the course offered may be reduced to reflect this.

## **Feedback and applications and decisions**

Feedback for apprenticeship candidates and employer sponsored learners will be provided on request to potential employers. The College will not provide feedback to applicants who are unsuccessful in the Employer Selection process.