



Admissions Policy *(Higher Education)*

For entry 2020-21

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 The College’ is committed to ensuring an Admissions Policy that addresses the needs of potential Higher Education students. The admissions process matches prospective students to the most appropriate course for them. Potential students are judged on their own merits for selection onto a course by the use of open, transparent and consistent entry requirements that relate to the course itself. Whilst making every effort to match students to an appropriate course occasionally there are circumstances where this cannot be achieved, and students are offered guidance and support to identify suitable alternatives. Potential students will receive accurate information about courses; presented in a manner appropriate for them facilitating informed choice.
- 1.2 The term “admissions” refers to the practices and processes developed and delivered by the College that relate to admitting a prospective student up to the point of enrolment on a course through an application and selection process.

- 1.3 The College is committed to providing an Admissions Policy that effectively addresses the needs of potential higher education students. The admissions process matches prospective students to the most appropriate course for them. Potential students are judged on their own merits for selection onto a course by the use of open, transparent and consistent entry requirements that relate to the course itself.
- 1.4 Whilst making every effort to match students to an appropriate course occasionally there are circumstances where this cannot be achieved, and students are offered guidance and support to identify suitable alternatives.
- 1.5 Potential students will receive accurate information about courses; presented in a manner appropriate for them facilitating informed choice.

2. Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to those students on full-time and part-time higher education courses at the College including:
- Foundation Degrees
 - Higher Nationals
 - Honours (Top Up) Degrees
 - Diplomas (Level 4 and above)
 - Higher Apprenticeships

3. Key Aims

- 1.1 In supporting the Policy, the College will:
- Ensure applications are processed efficiently and effectively;
 - Match prospective students to the most appropriate course for them;
 - Identify the learning support needs of the prospective students;
 - Identify any other areas of support a prospective student may have, including those from vulnerable groups;
 - Encourage applications from groups that are, at present, under-represented at the College through a range of approaches including tasters, outreach, student ambassadors, transition programmes and signposting to financial support;
 - Ensure that each applicant is individually assessed, without partiality or bias;
 - Ensure consistency of practice across the College;
 - Provide accurate, impartial and realistic service at pre-entry and exit stages, so that the applicant's career and personal aspirations are kept in clear focus throughout their time at the College.

4. Policy Implementation

- 4.1 The College will process applications efficiently and effectively by ensuring:
- The College's courses are described on the College website, in the relevant prospectuses, through electronic and paper based course guides and specifications and through the UCAS Course Profiles.

- Applicants for full time courses apply for courses via UCAS.
- Applicants apply for part time courses and diplomas by completing a College application form, either in paper form or online.
- Applicants for PGCE and Cert Ed programmes apply by completing a College application form, either in paper form or online.
- Course interview arrangements are centrally administered through the Admissions department.
- Interviews for higher education courses will be offered in line with the College calendar of interview dates.
- Where appropriate students will be given a conditional offer certificate on the evening of the interview. More detailed offer letters are issued within 10 working days of the interview process being completed.
- Marketing, Guidance & Admissions staff are Curriculum Leaders are briefed on the application process annually.

4.2 The College will match prospective students to the most appropriate course for them by ensuring:

- All course information is accurate and clear.
- All course information includes sufficient detail on the course content for the prospective student to have a clear understanding of what the course will cover.
- All course information leaflets contain clear entry requirements.
- All students have the opportunity for an impartial guidance interview.
- All applicants for full-time and substantial part-time courses will have a one to one interview with an admissions tutor (for overseas students please see Section 11)
- All Interviewers (Curriculum Leader or lecturer) use a standardized approach to interviewing, including standardized documentation and completion of interview record summary.
- Students whose choice is unclear either at application or at the interview stage will be contacted and offered further guidance.
- Where a student is refused an offer onto a course they will be given a clear explanation based upon entry requirements and eligibility and will be directed to a guidance interview, where appropriate.
- Refusal onto a course will not be on the grounds of one reference only. Where a reference is not satisfactory but students have demonstrated a commitment to their chosen course through interview and have, or are likely to gain, the appropriate entry qualifications, a second reference and/or other information will be sought.
- Where proof of achieved grades, evidence of prior learning or details of predicted grades are not available at interview this will be recorded as one of the conditions of the offer.
- Any applicant who is refused entry onto a course will have the right to appeal.
- Any applicant who is dissatisfied with the admissions process will have the right to make a complaint.
- Following interview all applicants will be offered a conditional place, an unconditional place or a guidance interview.

- Each student will have the opportunity to discuss whether they are on the right course with their Academic tutor and offered further guidance if appropriate.

The College will identify support needs of prospective students by ensuring:

- Students' support needs are identified as soon as possible in the applications process. This can include support for a learning difficulty, disability or medical need. In addition, support needs may arise due to issues of a welfare or Safeguarding nature, including those students in identified vulnerable groups such as Young Care Leavers.
- All students have the opportunity to discuss how their support needs might be met with a designated member of staff such as the HE Quality and Support Officer, Learning Support Manager, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator and/or Safeguarding Officer.
- All students' support needs are clearly documented.
- Applicants are told whether or not their support needs can be met and provided with clear explanations.
- Where students disclose other needs that may affect their application they will be contacted by a relevant member of staff.
- Under exceptional circumstances a telephone interview can be arranged. This must be with the agreement of the Head of Central Services.
- All applicants are asked to declare if they have a Relevant Criminal Conviction (RCC). If they do make a declaration they will meet with a Safeguarding Officer and follow guidance as set down in the Criminal Convictions Policy.
- For some students a Risk Assessment may be necessary, where appropriate the College may then use the 'Fitness to Study and Practice Policy'.
- For some students who are moving between departments/subject areas a reference from a course tutor may be required alongside attendance and academic records and any other relevant information that will assist the process.
- Access to initial and ongoing Information, Advice and Guidance [IAG] is provided for all applicants in person, by telephone, in writing and through the College Information Centre and the College website.

The College will maintain consistency of practice by ensuring:

- The Admissions process and supporting documentation are reviewed annually
- Awareness raising sessions are delivered to Curriculum Leaders, Subject Area Managers, Guidance, Marketing and Admissions staff.
- Data on applications is reported monthly (January to August) to the Admissions Group and relevant Heads of Departments.
- Annual reports are presented to Governors.
- Entry criteria are fair, consistent and well communicated.
- All information collected relating to IAG is confidential and securely stored.

5. Entry Criteria

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 This section lists the core entry criteria. Individual course leaflets and College prospectuses identify any subject-specific entry requirements according to qualification. These subject-specific requirements can include, for example:
- Presentation of a portfolio
 - Experience in the Performing Arts
 - Previous qualifications in a relevant subject area.
- 5.1.2 The College welcomes applicants with non-traditional qualifications. Each applicant will be interviewed and Curriculum Leaders/Subject Area Managers or Tutors must gain permission from their Head of Department or Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality prior to accepting such applicants on to a course without the requisite entry criteria.
- 5.1.3 Some courses will require a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) check. Certain convictions will prevent potential students gaining the appropriate work experience and therefore they will not be able to complete essential parts of their course. Where students have concerns about their criminal record they should declare them at the application stage in order that appropriate guidance can be given.
- 5.1.4 As part of the College's commitment to Safeguarding, all potential students will be asked if they have any relevant criminal convictions, including sexual or violent crimes. Risk will be assessed on an individual basis. For more information please see the Criminal Convictions Policy.
- 5.1.5 If an applicant wishes to gain entry to a course using qualifications obtained overseas then the College may need to apply for a Statement of Comparability on those qualifications before the applicant can be offered a place. If a Statement of Comparability is required the applicant will need to provide documentation including their original qualification certificate and transcript as well as an official translation of the documentation if the original is not written in English. Applicants who require a statement of comparability will be advised of this upon receipt of their application.

5.2 Foundation Degree and Higher National Certificate/Diploma

- Applicants must have successfully gained a minimum of 48 UCAS points. Other qualifications or relevant life/work experience may also be considered.
- A minimum of 2 A Levels
or BTEC National Diploma/Extended Diploma
or Access to Higher Education Diploma
or relevant Level 3 NVQ
or International Baccalaureate
- Successful interview, supported by personal statement.
- All applicants will additionally require GCSE English at Grade C/4 or equivalent. For some programmes mathematics at C/grade 4 will also be required and applicants are advised to check course leaflets or the prospectus or to contact

Student Guidance for more information.

- Applicants with English as a second language or those who have not studied the final two years of school in English must be able to demonstrate a capability in English at a standard commensurate with IELTS 6.0, with a minimum of 5.5 being awarded on individual sections.

5.3 Honours Degree (Level 6 1 year 'top up' programme)

- Foundation Degree in a related subject
- Subject related HNDs or Level 5 professional qualifications in a related subject may also be accepted
- Non-native English speakers or those who have not studied the final two years of school in English must be able to demonstrate a capability in English at a standard commensurate with IELTS 6.0, with a minimum of 5.5 being awarded on individual sections.

5.4 PGCE* / Certificate in Education and Training:

- A minimum of a Level 3 qualification in the applicant's own subject specialism
- An appropriate level of education (5 GCSEs minimum at C/grade 4 and above or equivalent - to include English)
- Confirmation of 75 hours of teaching each academic year (which may be voluntary) over the course of the programme
- Successful interview and presentation with course tutor
- The ability to communicate fluently, accurately and effectively in professional spoken English (IELTS 7.5 or equivalent)
- **Applicants wishing to progress to PGCE will need an honours degree or equivalent*

5.5 Level 4 Diplomas

5.5.1 The College offers Level 4 Diplomas in Art and Design Foundation Studies, Accounting and Counselling. Course leaflets set out individual entry requirements, including English and maths, for each course.

5.5.2 Entry requirements for all Level 4 Diplomas include:

- Satisfactory interview
- Satisfactory reference/s

5.5.3 Course level requirements include:

- Accounting: Level 3 Diploma in Accounting or other suitable Accredited Prior Learning in an accounts based discipline, together with a successful interview.
- Art and Design: two A Levels including one in a related subject or Merit grade Extended Diploma in a related subject, and a portfolio that demonstrates a good standard of work and an interest in Art and Design.
- Counselling: Level 3 Certificate in Counselling Skills or evidence of having met the equivalent standards, including assessment, elsewhere. A reference confirming successful completion of the course will be required. A commitment to a training programme of 450 hours spread over two years.

5.6 Progression Criteria (Year 1 to Year 2 of a course)

- For a student to progress and enrol onto the 2nd year of a course they must have successfully completed all required 1st year components of their course to the agreed standard as set out by the relevant awarding body.
- If a student is not to progress to the next level, the Curriculum Leader must clearly state the reason why they feel the student will not be able to achieve and must be able to provide documented evidence to this effect.
- Student handbooks must clearly state details of progression including the importance of attendance, meeting deadlines and completion of work.
- If a student is unable to progress on to the next level of their course they will be offered a guidance interview to assist them in identifying their other options.

5.7 Progression Criteria (Next level of course)

- For a student to progress to the next level of a course, e.g. from a Foundation Degree to a BA (Hons) top up, they must show that they have successfully passed the relevant components of their course at the appropriate level, in line with awarding body requirements. Students must have the correct entry criteria, complete an application and follow the progression application process.
- Student handbooks must clearly state details of progression including pass levels, the importance of attendance, meeting deadlines and completion of work.
- If a student is unable to progress on to the next level of their course they will be offered a guidance interview to assist them in identifying their other options.

6. Apprenticeships

6.1 Students applying for Apprenticeships must complete a satisfactory initial assessment for their programme and must have a successful interview with the curriculum team. Students must also be employed in a suitable job role. Apprenticeship employers may have additional requirements for the post, details of which will be provided on each Apprenticeship job description.

7. Overseas Students

7.1 All non-British students are required to show their passports at the point of application. This is to ensure students have the relevant visas and are charged the correct fees.

7.2 The College is not registered as a sponsor, therefore it is unable to take applications from non-EU overseas students who do not have residency and have not already gained the appropriate visa.

7.3 All overseas students who will be charged full fees will need to send a cheque for 25% of the course fee at the point of application. This fee is refundable if a student is not offered a place on the course, minus a £50 administration charge. This applies to full and part time courses. The remaining fees for full and part time students are payable on enrolment.

- 7.4 Students who are not resident in the UK are given an opportunity for a telephone interview.
- 7.5 As a result of any such interview students are offered either an unconditional place, a conditional place, or are sent a letter to explain that they have been unsuccessful. Unsuccessful applicants are refused entry onto the course based on entry requirements.
- 7.6 Conditional offers may be made to include a range of requirements including,
- Assessment of English Skills
 - Satisfactory references
 - Gaining or proof of relevant qualifications
 - Skills assessment or similar (if stated as part of the entry requirements for a course)
- 7.7 All courses are delivered and assessed in English. English language requirements are set out on individual course leaflets. Where a student's first language is not English an offer may be made subject to assessment of their English skills, both written and spoken. The interviewing tutor will complete a referral form, which will be forwarded to the ESOL Curriculum Leader, who will then arrange for an assessment. Students must attend College in order for the assessment to be completed. The application process cannot be completed until the student has been assessed. If a student's level of English is not seen to be appropriate for their course the offer of a place can be withdrawn. Where appropriate students may be offered a place on a course on the condition of attendance at an ESOL class.
- 7.8 Where students have been assessed and need Learning Support Assistant e.g. support worker in class, this will be charged at the same rate of recovery as an ESFA student.
- 7.9 All full fee paying students on a full time course, whose first language is not English, will be eligible for a place on an ESOL course (subject to availability).
- 7.10 Overseas students who hold a visa have their visa expiry date monitored. It is the student's responsibility to ensure the visa will cover the length of their course. If a student's visa is found to be invalid or has expired and they do not produce a new visa they will be removed from the course and their details passed to the Home Office. Any fees already paid will not be refunded.
- 7.11 Where an applicant wishes to gain entry to a course using qualifications obtained overseas then the College may need to apply for a Statement of Comparability on those qualifications before the applicant can be offered a place.

8. Appeals and Complaints

- 8.1 Where a student is refused entry onto a course or progression onto the next year of their programme of study they are given a clear explanation based upon the entry progression criteria and, where appropriate, a guidance interview will be arranged to discuss alternative options.

8.2 Should a student wish to appeal against this decision or complain about an aspect of the admissions process this should be put in writing to the Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality within 10 working days of receipt of the decision. Any student is entitled to appeal a decision of refusal of entry or progression.

- A complaint is a concern related to an administrative error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions process and will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Complaints Procedure.
- An appeal is a request for a formal review of an admissions decision or condition of offer and will be presented to an Admissions Appeal Panel for their deliberation.

8.3 The Assistant Principal will record and acknowledge receipt of the complaint or appeal within 5 working days. A College appeal panel will review the appeal within 10 working days of receipt. The appeal panel will consist of Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality, Curriculum Leader for the course concerned and the relevant Head of Department. Staff substitutions must be at the same level or higher as those stated. The student/applicant is not required to attend the appeal review.

8.4 During the appeal the following information will be reviewed:

- Appeals letter
- Interview Record
- References or tutor report
- Application form
- Any other relevant documentation*

8.5 In the case that the appeal relates to a student who has been refused progression onto the next level or next year of a course due to attendance, inability to meet deadlines etc. evidence will be presented relating to the decision of unsuitability to progress, for example, MSR information, Case Conference notes, attendance data, and outstanding work. The outcome of the appeal is final.

8.6 Once the appeal is complete the following actions are taken:

- The student is advised of the outcome by letter within 7 working days of receipt of their appeal (although some variation may be necessary over the summer period)
- In the case of an unsuccessful appeal the student will be offered a guidance interview and any other support mechanisms available including referral to Career Connect, National Careers Services or other suitable external agencies

8.7 In exceptional circumstances a student may be refused entry onto a course for alternative reasons, for example as a result of a risk assessment. Where this is the case this must be with the advanced agreement of the Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality. The appeals procedure will be applied as above but with substitutions to staff and/or paper work as appropriate. In some circumstances Vice Principal Services, Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality, Student Engagement Officers or Head of

Central Services may instigate the Fitness to Study Policy. If a student is excluded under this policy, the appeals policy for Exceptional Review will be followed.

8.8 Appeals will not be considered:

- about matters of academic judgement regarding an applicant's ability to study a programme
- about an applicant's failure to satisfy non-academic requirements specified by external agencies for a particular programme (e.g. criminal records checks)

9. Monitoring and Review, Policy into Practice

9.1 The Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality will review this Policy annually, and governors will be asked to review and approve the policy on an annual basis. Monthly admissions reports will be reported to the Admissions Group.

10. Data and Confidentiality

10.1 All personal and sensitive information will be managed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality.

11. Relevant Documents

11.1 The following documents and procedures are available from Student Guidance or via the Intranet and Southport College Website. For clarification on any of the above points please contact the Marketing Manager, Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality or the Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality.

- Maintaining Student Responsibility – Academic Procedures
- Maintaining Student Responsibility – Conduct Procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Work Experience Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Criminal Convictions Policy
- Fitness to Study and Practice Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Admissions Policy

11.1 In addition all College students are subject to all College policies and procedures which may be used in conjunction with or in addition to the Admissions Policy where appropriate. These include the Fitness to Study and Practise Policy and the Criminal Convictions Policy.