



Policy Title	Higher Education Admissions Policy
Reference Number	HE 03
Version Number	Version 2
Revision Date	March 23rd 2018
Department	Student Services
Approved by	HE Strategy Group and Executive Team
Originator	Maureen Charlton – Director of Student Services
Date Approved	March 29 th 2018
Date of next review	March 2021(or before if regulations change)

1. Introduction

This policy provides a structure and guide to the approach and arrangements for the admission of prospective Higher Education students to Northumberland College. This policy applies to all Northumberland College staff involved in the recruitment and admission of students onto higher education awards with Northumberland College and is subsidiary to Northumberland College general Admissions Policy.

2. Principles of Fair Admission

The policy and procedure for admissions has been developed to adhere to the principles of fair admission as defined by QAA Quality Code expectations¹ and aims to ensure admissions processes are transparent, professional and inclusive to minimise barriers for prospective students whilst also using reliable and valid assessment methods to guide appropriate selection activities in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy and commitment;

“To create a supportive climate of fairness and respect where no learner is left behind so that the College is considered by its local community to be exceptionally inclusive.”

3. Admissions Statement

Northumberland College aims to recruit students who have the potential to meet the demands of and benefit from their programme. The admission of students must reflect our commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that all prospective students regardless of background, are provided with equal opportunity to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. This is consistent with our commitment to widening participation in Higher Education whilst maintaining, monitoring and enhancing academic quality through fair, equal and transparent processes for all applicants. This is consistent with the Northumberland College mission;

“To become an outstanding college delivering for the communities it serves with an entrepreneurial and innovative ethos.

We are committed to a first-class experience for our students via an employer led curriculum which offers both a pathway to work – developing all of the skills and attributes required to succeed in the workplace

We seek to be at the heart of the economic and social well-being of our county”

4. HE Admissions Roles & Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for Higher Education Admissions and Recruitment processes lies with Director of Student Services. Central administration of HE admissions is standardised through the Student Services Division.

¹ QAA (2013) UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education
Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

4.1 Setting and monitoring of admission criteria and target numbers

Each individual programme specification defines the entry requirements for each specific course, as validated and approved by our partner institutions. Entry requirements are reviewed annually by the Academy Head and Director of HE to ensure a fair admissions system which admits students who are able to succeed. This review will take into account the progression and success of existing students.

This process is conducted as part of the HE Strategy group and fed forward into the annual Business Planning process. Target numbers are negotiated by the Academy Head and Director of HE and approved by the College Executive Team during the Annual Planning Process. Recruitment against target is monitored centrally by the Director of HE/ and Academy Head in liaison with the Head of Student Recruitment for each individual course. This is referred to the HE Strategy group for review during Term 3 and any necessary review of the HE Offer or limits on offers made against planned place will be set by the HE Strategy group as this becomes necessary. If a decision is taken not to run a programme then we adhere to the procedures outlined in the Student Protection Policy and this includes informing students of this in writing and offering support to help them identify alternative provision.

4.2 Promotion of HE and Public Information

Clear, accessible and current information and guidance about programmes and their admissions requirements and procedures is provided for applicants via Northumberland College Higher Education prospectus, Northumberland College website, our partner institutions and the UCAS website. To ensure that all prospective students can make an informed decision it is the joint responsibility of each Academy Head, the Director of Higher Education and the Director of Marketing to ensure that all public information is consistent and in line with the approved programme specifications. This will include ensuring that a standard tariff point score is set for entry onto all undergraduate courses in accordance with the Awarding Body/Organisation Programme Specification. All marketing materials including digital must be up-to-date, approved and consistent at the time of publication.

4.3 Recruitment and Selection Procedures

4.3.1. Application

All applications are received through the Student Services Division within the Helphub team who have a nominated UCAS correspondent for the College.

- i. Prospective students who are applying for full time programmes are expected to apply through UCAS. To support our commitment to inclusivity and fairness, any prospective students who inadvertently apply via Northumberland College application form or website will be advised to progress an application via UCAS.
- ii. Prospective students who are applying for Foundation Degrees, Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas which are designated as part time will typically apply via Northumberland College application form or website and will be

required to complete a personal statement prior to or during the interview process to support fair and transparent assessment processes.

- iii. Prospective students applying for end-on courses (e.g. Honours Degree top-up) are expected to use the college internal application form available on request from the Helpub or on the website
- iv. Applicants who are applying for PGCE or Certificate in Education courses validated by University of Huddersfield are also required to apply through the University website and will be fully advised in writing about this expectation and procedures to follow during the admissions process.

Applications will be progressed by the Helpub team to agreed selection procedures as detailed in 4.3.2 and following completion of these procedures, application and selection process evidence will be formally reviewed by the Programme Leader and Director of HE based on the assessment criteria at 4.3.3. An offer decision, including any required conditions, will then be issued to the prospective student.

4.3.1.1 Application Considerations

Plagiarism & Fraudulent Applications

If Northumberland College detects or is made aware of plagiarism in any element of a prospective student's application or selection activities, Northumberland College reserves the right to decline the application or withdraw any offers made. It is the applicants' responsibility to ensure that all information/ evidence provided in support of their application is accurate and true.

Criminal convictions

For some programmes, disclosure is required by law (spent and unspent), particularly for courses in health and related areas, social care, teaching or working with children. For courses subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, satisfactory evidence of DBS clearance will be an essential condition of acceptance to the programme. The College will seek further clarification from any applicant who has declared they have an unspent criminal conviction. In such cases the applicant may be subject to a risk assessment supported by the student services team.

Declared Learning Needs

Northumberland College is committed to supporting all learners regardless of any specific support needs. It is advisable that applicants make the College aware on their application of any declared learning needs in order that support arrangements can be put into place when attending any of our campus sites. For prospective students with a declared learning need, a representative from Northumberland College ALS team will conduct offer support to ensure that the College can make required, reasonable adjustments to support learning and signpost individuals to other appropriate sources of support as needed (for example, if relevant, Disabled Students Allowance).

4.3.2 Selection & Interviews

Helpub staff will ensure that all applicants will be given an opportunity to attend an interview and/or provided with information on open events as appropriate. Applicants will be advised in writing of any pre-interview processes and requirements necessary along with appropriate materials/ instructions.

Key responsibility for assessing applicants lies with the HE Programme Leaders, who will make informed decisions as to the suitability and capability of an applicant to succeed on their chosen programme of study. It is a requirement that all applicants attend an interview and each programme has bespoke practical or written assessment requirements to support applicants to demonstrate their skills and abilities as detailed in the individual programme specifications. It will be the responsibility of the HE Programme leaders to assess this and recommend offer decisions to the Director of HE.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide accurate data at the time of application and to disclose anything which may influence an admission decision. Failure to disclose information which would have been influential in the decision making process may lead to an offer being retracted.

4.3.3 Assessment of Applications

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Academic achievement or predicted achievement – do they meet the entry requirements
- Personal statements – to understand skills, motivation and interest in subject
- References
- Interview/ audition and selection activities – held by programme leaders such as level of self-awareness for counselling or riding skills for equine
- Portfolios to be assessed by tutors (where relevant e.g. Art programmes)

In order to support our commitment to inclusivity, fairness and widening participation, non-traditional applicants who do not meet standard tariff points scores or agreed qualificatory entrance requirements will also be considered based on interview and appropriate work experience. Such consideration will be on an individual basis subject to demonstrating the capacity to studying at level 4 through the above non-qualificatory assessment criteria and via written recommendation/ justification submitted by the Programme Leader to the Director of HE.

In order to ensure that all applications are managed fairly, consistently and transparently offers will only be made once an applicant has completed an interview, provided the necessary information, fulfilled the required assessment tasks and any specific or bespoke requirements identified for their particular chosen programme of study.

4.3.3.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL/ APEL/ APCL)

Northumberland College encourages learners to apply for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APEL or APCL) as part of our widening participation policy, including entry from non-traditional routes. This may include previous academic study or relevant work experience however it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the relevant evidence to demonstrate this. Applicants wishing to enter stage 2 of a Foundation Degree / HND / programme will be assessed on their level 4 performance and suitability for the new programme. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide the evidence and map it to the assessment criteria.

Accreditation of Prior Experience or Learning (APEL) arrangements are governed by Awarding Body Assessment Regulations and Awarding Organisation Assessment

regulations therefore any prospective student requesting APEL arrangements should be referred to the Programme Leader for specific advice and consideration and any APEL offer decisions will be approved by the Awarding Organisation/Body as appropriate. (Further details can be found in individual programme specifications).

4.3.4 Communication with applicants

Interview arrangements will be appropriately communicated to the applicant via UCAS and also directly from the Helphub. The arrangement of interviews/ auditions is communicated to the applicant directly from the Helphub and/ or via UCAS as appropriate. 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. For applicants who are unable to travel to interview, it may be possible to conduct an interview over Skype or upload portfolios of evidence/ auditions for assessment. Requests for this will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

4.3.4 Appeals, mitigations and complaints

4.3.4.1 Appeals

Consistent generic feedback will be provided to applicants who are not offered a place. More specific individualised feedback may be available on request. Unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal in writing. The College will accept an appeal against an admissions decision if the applicant can demonstrate and provide evidence that prejudice or bias has influenced an outcome or where evidence can be provided that procedural irregularities have occurred. Appeals will not be accepted against an academic judgement.

Requests for appeals must be made in writing to the Director of HE within five working days of being refused admission to the College, explaining the reasons why the College should reconsider its decision. Appeals will be considered by a Panel chaired by the Vice Principal, whose decision is final.

Northumberland College reserves the right to uphold an original admission decision and reserves the right to exclude a candidate who is considered on justifiable grounds to be unsuitable for a place on a particular programme according to individual circumstances.

4.3.4.2 Complaints

All applications are dealt with in a fair and transparent way. Should a situation arise whereby an applicant feels they have not been treated consistently, fairly or appropriately in any way, they wish to progress a complaint. Northumberland College complaints procedures are available from the Helphub or on the College website. In the first instance the applicant should detail the reasons for their complaint in writing and submit this to the Quality department. This will be acknowledged and investigated in line with our procedure and the applicant notified of the outcome. (For further details see College Complaints Procedure).

4.3.5 Deferred applications

The Programme Leader will initially contact the applicant at the beginning of the year and request confirmation of attendance in the following academic cycle. Whilst the College

accepts deferred entry applications it cannot guarantee that a course will definitely be available through the annual business planning process in the requested year of entry. Programme Leaders should refer to and follow the Student Protection Policy in such circumstances.

4.3.6 Discontinued/Suspended Courses

If the College has cause to discontinue/suspend a course, applicants will be notified as soon as it is practicable and if possible will offer an appropriate alternative. For further details see the Student Protection Policy.

4.3.7 Late Applications, Clearing & Mitigations

4.3.7.1 Late Applications

Northumberland College will consider all late applications made after 30th June in any one academic year subject to the suitability of the applicant and availability of places. Applicants will remain subject to the assessment criteria stipulated in 4.3.3.

4.3.7.2 Clearing

Overall responsibility for decisions during clearing rests with the Director of higher Education but these decisions will be advised by the programme leaders. During Clearing, Northumberland College will stipulate a minimum level of acceptance that all staff should adhere to in preparation for and during clearing. The College criteria for selection may be adjusted to suit the College and departmental requirements. Applications processed via the clearing period will seek to match applicants to their chosen course to suit their qualifications/ experience. Such advice will be provided by experienced staff with full knowledge of available programmes and the requisite entrance expectations.

4.3.7.3 Mitigating Circumstances

The College recognises that some applicants may have faced individual circumstances which have affected their capability to meet the entry requirements as stated in their offer. These circumstances may include illness, serious personal/family issues, relevant teaching issues i.e. where a teacher may have been absent for a significant amount of time. The applicant will be assessed on an individual basis and also be expected to provide written evidence to the Director of HE to support their plea, submission of which does not guarantee admission.

5 Confirmation and Acceptance

Higher Education enrolment processes are centrally administrated and standardised through the Student Services Division in the Helphub alongside the central college enrolment process with responsibility for programme level enrolment devolved into each academy. It is the responsibility all enrolment staff to ensure that no HE applicant is enrolled prior to receiving a confirmed course offer.

5.1 Confirmation of offers

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide evidence to meet conditions of their offer to enable confirmation decision to be made. Applicants who are required to provide evidence of qualifications, DBS or other certifications will receive a request from the Helphub with a deadline for providing this evidence. They will then be sent an offer confirmation letter which

confirms detailed course information for their chosen programme including Student Terms & Conditions.

5.2. Acceptance of offers

All learners intending to progress to enrolment must respond to confirm their acceptance of this offer including confirmation of the Student Terms and Conditions. Once accepted, applicants will be invited to attend our enrolment events with details of the times and dates applicable. The enrolment letter will include clear guidance on the next steps, what to bring to enrolment and a contact for any queries. Applicants should not be progressed through enrolment without having a confirmed offer and signed acceptance of the Student Terms & Conditions.

6. Fee Assessments

Tuition fees are made publicly available via our advertising materials, at enrolment and upon request. Fees are set by individual institutions and approved by OfS (Office for Students). Fee caps can then be submitted to the Student Loan Company in order that student finance applications can be assessed appropriately. Student Finance England regulations determine between 'continuing' and 'new' students which assists the College in charging the correct fee to the student.

Fee amendments will be considered if an applicant can demonstrate through APL procedure (see 4.3.3.1) that they have already met the learning outcomes of a particular module/s.

7. Data Protection

Applications will not be discussed with third parties unless permission has been granted by the applicant. Northumberland College complies with the General Data Protection Regulations to ensure that personal data is managed appropriately. For further information please see the Data Protection Policy.

8. Monitoring, Audit and Review

8.1 Monitoring

This policy is the responsibility of the Director of Student Services. It is reviewed annually to ensure that currency, sufficiency and alignment to Northumberland College mission and strategic objectives. Further reviews will be commissioned in year if needed to comply with changes in practice and policy within the sector.

8.2 Internal Audit Trail

A record of all decisions relating to applications will be kept centrally within the Helphub. Clear and consistent decisions, based on offers/entry requirements will be recorded and available to applicants on request. This will include;

- Application assessment criteria
- Evidence of interview outcomes
- Interview outcome approval process and subsequent communication to student
- Where applicant is not successful the reasons for rejection will be recorded

8.3 Support & Training

Regular training on Admissions processes will be conducted by the Director of HE Director

of Student Services and appropriate members of the College Leadership Team. All updates to admissions procedures and processes will be communicated to all staff and HE staff will undergo specific specialised briefings and/or CPD with the Director of HE, Quality, MIS and Student Services teams as appropriate in line with policy and procedural developments. No member of staff can take part in admissions unless fully trained

Related Documents

Northumberland College Strategic Plan
Northumberland College Student Protection Policy
Northumberland College Equality Policy
Northumberland College Admission Policy
Northumberland College Complaint Procedure
Northumberland College Fees Policy
Northumberland College Student Terms and Conditions
Northumberland College APL Assessment Procedures
Northumberland College Data Protection Policy
UCAS Admissions & Decision Processing Guide

Date for Review: August 2018

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