



Higher Education Programmes Admissions Policy

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Purpose

To set out the processes for admission of students to University Studies at West Suffolk College (USWSC) and how we encourage and welcome applicants with different educational and social backgrounds.

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy applies to all applicants to and students at University Studies West Suffolk College unless they are covered by the policy of their awarding institution. This policy is consistent with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education. This policy:

1.2. Aims to:

- Be clear, comprehensive, and well implemented as this is deemed to be fundamental to fair admissions to higher education.
- Be coordinated for the benefit of the applicant experience which intends to influence recruitment, transition, and retention.
- Contextualise prior attainment.
- Minimise barriers for applicants across all protected equality characteristics.
- Ensuring recruitment and admission staff comply with all relevant legislation.
- Planning admissions processes and procedures, with a clear review method.

1.3. Is reviewed regularly considering current and relevant legislation and is intended to inform the actions of staff when carrying out the admissions functions of the College ensuring that fairness and consistency are embedded within the admissions process. It is also intended to inform prospective students, applicants/agents of the details of the admissions process to help them through the process and manage their expectations of the College.

1.4. Details the provisions of the Student Contract (which incorporates the General Terms and Conditions and Tuition Fee Policy) from the point at which the student accepts the terms of their offer from the College.

1.5. USWSC recognises the precepts of the UK Quality Code for HE: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access and the UUK & Guild HE Fair Admissions Code of Practice. The College recognises the following legislation as relevant to the admissions process:

- Equality Act (2010)
- All relevant Data Protection laws
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 15 years (2015)

2. Scope

2.1. This policy describes the process of admission to a University Studies West Suffolk College and the policy applies to all:

- Full Time & Part Time undergraduate (UG) applicants
- Full Time & Part Time HNC/D and HTQ applicants

- All Eastern Education Group staff responsible for considering and admitting an applicant to a USWSC programme.

This policy does not cover degree apprenticeships. Further information on degree apprenticeships can be found on our Apprenticeship webpages.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the 'Principles for fair Admission' are adopted and that these principles are applied consistently. Moreover, to ensure that all prospective students are considered for programmes on a consistent basis and can access information, advice and guidance as appropriate.
- 3.2. The principles state that a fair admission system should:
 - Be consistent in application and operation
 - Be transparent.
 - Enable USWSC to select students who can complete the programme as judged by their achievements and their potential.
 - Seek to minimise barriers for prospective students.
 - Be professional in all aspects of its execution
 - Be compliant with QAA & OFS regulatory requirements.

4. General Principles

University Studies at West Suffolk College:

- 4.1. Welcomes applications from all prospective students. We believe that a diverse community is an essential part of our core values, and that diversity amongst our student body enriches learning and teaching.
- 4.2. Will treat all enquirers and applicants with respect and dignity and seeks to provide an admissions system free from discrimination ensuring equality of opportunity for all individuals seeking a place on a programme.
- 4.3. Offers a range of opportunities for students with varying levels of prior achievement, interests and background, helping them to realise their goals and aspirations.
- 4.4. Operates a transparent admissions policy as detailed in this document. We are committed to providing clear, consistent, easily understandable, and accessible information regarding entry requirements, selection procedures, and conditions of offer and fees which will support students in making an informed decision about their course.
- 4.5. Maintains the right that Safeguarding & Welfare policies may take precedence in admissions decisions.
- 4.6. Maintains the right to offer below the normal grade range in exceptional cases where there is evidence that the applicant's grades may have been affected by individual extenuating circumstances.

5. Provision of Information

- 5.1. The College is committed to providing all stakeholders with all material information required to make an informed decision about their choice of university and course. However, as printed materials may have been published well in advance of any start date, the College reserves the right to make amendments to the published contents, methods of delivery or specific entry requirements of courses if such action is reasonable and considered to be necessary. We endeavour to ensure that all information available on our website is up-to-date and encourage stakeholders to see this as the authoritative

source of course information. Applicants will be reminded to check their course information before accepting an offer at the College. By accepting an offer, students will be deemed to have accepted the offer based on any changes that might have been made.

- 5.2. If it becomes necessary to withdraw a course, or a particular intake of a course, before a student accepts an offer, any such changes will be managed in accordance with the terms of the Student Contract (incorporated within the General Terms & Conditions and Tuition Fee Policy).

6. Admissions Process

- 6.1. Full-time undergraduates: Those who are applying for admission to a Full-Time Undergraduate programme will normally do so through the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). Within USWSC the process for admitting students through the UCAS system is centralised to the Admissions team.
- 6.2. Part-Time Undergraduates: To apply to Part-Time Undergraduate programme an applicant does so through the college internal application system. Following this, the application is processed in the same manner as the Full-Time programmes.
- 6.3. International admissions: All International applications will be referred to the internal Admissions team who will confirm eligibility. Currently, the college does not accept any international Students on UG & HNC/D courses.
- 6.4. For internal students of Eastern Education Group and previous students who have left within 3 years of the enrolment year please see the Internal Progression to Higher Education Policy.

7. Selection framework

- 7.1. Professional judgement will be used in assessing the academic potential of individual candidates in a way that is consistent with University Studies at West Suffolk College's Admissions Policy.
- 7.2. Entry requirements will be reviewed annually prior to the onset of the recruitment cycle by the USWSC Leadership Team in conjunction with academic teams.
- 7.3. USWSC accepts a broad range of qualifications and a combination of qualifications for entry onto its programmes, including vocational and Access to Higher Education qualifications, alongside a range of qualifications offered internationally. Qualifications may be subject to a NARIC (National Recognition Information Centre) review, the designated United Kingdom national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.
- 7.4. The Personal Statement and Reference is used as indication of ability, motivation, and potential, alongside information about personal circumstances and contextual social and cultural information, including related work or voluntary experience showing commitment to a chosen career.
- 7.5. All applications received by the relevant UCAS deadline (normally 15 January prior to point of entry) are to be given equal consideration. Such consideration will also be given to applications received after 15 January up to and including 30 June (end of main applications scheme through UCAS).
- 7.6. Applicants are normally expected to achieve, or already have, the published course entry requirements. Exceptionally, applicants who do not meet course entry requirements may

still be considered if the course team judges the application demonstrates additional strengths and alternative evidence. This might, for example, be demonstrated by:

- Related academic or work experience.
- The quality of the personal statement.
- A strong academic or other professional reference.
- Evidence of motivation, potential, knowledge, and ability to study the course of their choice; or
- A combination of these factors.
- Undertaking a task assigned by the course team.

- 7.7. USWSC welcomes applications from students with additional needs and will make every reasonable effort to meet their needs to enable them to study at the College. Applications from students with disabilities and/or additional needs are considered on their academic merits in line with applications from all students. If there is any doubt about a particular applicant's suitability for a programme, admissions staff will refer to the relevant academic team and the Academic Skills Advisor, a decision will then be made in liaison between the three parties.
- 7.8. For select programmes auditions, interviews or portfolios may be required as part of the admissions process. This will be facilitated through the admissions team, who will make the final decision on the application. Please refer to point 7 Interviews.
- 7.9. Applicants to certain vocational or professional courses may be required to pass an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and/or to demonstrate medical fitness to practice prior to being admitted. This is to comply with the requirements of relevant professional bodies. Applicants will be advised if these or any other conditions apply when they are made an offer of a place.

8. Recognition of Prior Learning / Entry to Level 5 or 6

- 8.1. Consideration for admission based on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will be given in accordance with the RPL Policy. We recognise that experience counts and offer the RPL and Recognition of Certificated Prior Learning (RPCL) as a process that allows applicants to gain recognition for skills or qualifications gained at work or elsewhere. RPEL and RPCL can help the applicant gain credit towards a wide range of qualifications and may reduce the period of study time necessary to obtain their chosen award.
- 8.2. For applicants whose first language is not English, each programme will publish a minimum score for the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and this forms part of the selection criteria.
- 8.3. A Grade C/4 GCSE or an equivalent qualification is normally required.
- 8.4. Unless your results are transmitted to USWSC via UCAS or confirmed by your school/college when you apply, you will be required to produce satisfactory evidence of your qualifications. You must provide us with an original transcript or certificate; or by agreement with the Admissions Office a clear and legible copy that has been authenticated by the issuing organisation or other authorised person.
- 8.5. The College will only offer a place where there is evidence that an applicant can complete their chosen course with a good final classification, and as such, the College reserves the right to exercise academic judgement and discretion when assessing any prior attainment.

9. Interviews

- 9.1. Some courses require an interview as part of the entry requirement as stated on the website and this will be conducted by at least two panelists to ensure the applicant meets the needs of the course.
- 9.2. The applicant will be invited to an interview date within two weeks of their application if application is received before the end of June.
- 9.3. The interview decision will be given within two weeks of the date of interview.

- 9.4. If the applicant is not suitable where possible, an alternative course will be offered for consideration by the candidate.
- 9.5. The process within the interview will be to ensure a judgement of the applicant meets the course requirements.
- 9.6. Requests for feedback should be made in writing by the applicant where the applicant has gone through the interview process. Requests should be sent to the University Studies Admissions team dealing with the interview in the first instance. The College endeavours to respond to all requests for feedback within 20 working days. As our courses receive a high number of applications, however, please note that the College cannot provide feedback to everyone who is unsuccessful. If an application is unsuccessful, applicants can apply to us again in the future.
- 9.7. The College will not discuss the outcome of individual applications with anyone other than the applicant.

10. Criminal Convictions

- 9.1 USWSC aims to provide a supportive, positive, and safe environment for learning and teaching. For this reason, all applicants will be required to declare any relevant criminal convictions. The relevance of criminal convictions depends upon the nature of the course. It is important to note that having a criminal conviction does not necessarily prevent an applicant from being accepted on a course. This will depend on the nature of the programme of study, the outcome of any Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, and the circumstances and background of the offences.
- 9.2 All courses that bring students into contact with children or vulnerable adults require applicants to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. More information may therefore be required about any criminal convictions.
- 9.3 Please refer to the Criminal Convictions policy for more information about process & procedure.

11. Offers

Offers may be Unconditional or Conditional. An Unconditional offer means the applicant has met the academic entry requirements and the selection criteria for the course. A Conditional offer means that some criteria has still to be met, for example results of qualifications currently being studied for.

All offers will provide details of the College's enrolment terms and conditions which can be found on the USWSC website. The College is committed to ensuring that offers will be in a clear, easy to understand form and will be consistent with the published entry requirements.

- 11.1. If the admissions team who are considering the application deem the application to be more appropriate to an alternative course of study an alternative course offer may be made. This happens when an applicant has been unsuccessful for their chosen course and an alternative course is a strong match to an applicant's skills and interests. Applicants do not have to be considered for an alternative course and can opt out from this process at any point during the admissions cycle.
- 11.2. Making an offer for study, which is subsequently accepted, is the creation of a contract between USWSC and the applicant. The Student Contract will only come into force when the applicant has accepted the College's offer, following the instructions set out in the offer
- 11.3. USWSC reserves the right to amend or withdraw an offer of a place based upon (but not limited to) the following.
 - a) If the student is subsequently found to have made false statements or provided

inaccurate information or omitted significant information, including criminal convictions, during the application process.

- b) Based on information provided to the College after an offer has been made (i.e. via a reference or DBS certificate).

- 11.4. USWSC may report any application it suspects to be fraudulent to the UCAS Verification Unit.
- 11.5. USWSC may convene an Admissions panel to consider the suitability of any applicant to join the course at any stage of the admissions process. In this case, the applicant will be invited to submit a statement for consideration.
- 11.6. The College reserves the right to refuse admission to applicants who have not met academic or non-academic entry requirements; where there is evidence that they are unable to meet the academic, professional, or vocational requirements of the course or where the course applied for has reached full capacity, following consideration of all applications received by the relevant "equal consideration" deadline.
- 11.7. If you accept our offer of a place, you have the right to cancel your contract. You must notify us of your decision in writing (email or letter). It is your responsibility to take account of UCAS application and acceptance deadlines, together with UCAS terms and conditions for students taking up places of study.

12. Disabled Applicants & Additional Support Needs

The College is committed to inclusion and equality. Our main aim is to remove disabling barriers that students face and support students to work as independently as possible. We adjust and provide support, so that students with learning difficulties and or disabilities can succeed on their courses. All staff involved in the admissions process have a responsibility to help to ensure that applicants feel comfortable about disclosing their disability-access needs at any stage in the admissions process.

- 12.1. USWSC is committed to providing on-going support and accessible services for students, and to supporting all students to complete their courses as independently as possible.
- 12.2. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss with the College any additional support requirements, especially where support may be required during the application and induction process. Applicants are encouraged to discuss these needs with the College as early as possible to ensure that consideration can be given to any arrangements that may need to be put in place.
- 12.3. The College is committed to providing on-site and individual tours on request for students with reduced mobility and/or visual impairment. The College will work with applicants and their support networks to support equal access to recruitment and induction events. In rare instances, it may be necessary to advise a student to defer entry whilst adjustments are put in place e.g., changes to the fabric of a building. The admitting course should always consult the Inclusive Learning Service on these cases.

Applications from students disclosing a disability or long-term health condition are judged based on the standard entry criteria for the applicant's chosen course and decisions are made purely on these criteria.

The reasons for inquiring about disability access needs are to ensure:

- Arrangements are in place that the applicant might require for an online or in-person interview.
- The applicant can access further specialist advice and information, if necessary, from HE Student Support Team.

- 12.4. Students who do not require additional support during the application process but believe they may require additional learning support, mental health support, or reasonable adjustments during their studies are also strongly encouraged to discuss their anticipated needs with the College on application. This is to ensure consistent, well-planned support can be delivered throughout every student's studies.

13. Course Changes or Suspension

- 13.1. USWSC reserves the right to make course changes, including changes to course content, structure, teaching and assessment or suspend a course, at any time between your acceptance to 28 days prior to the date when your course starts, for one or more of the following reasons:
- To comply with external, professional, accrediting, or other regulatory body requirements.
 - To improve course quality.
 - To ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the intended learning outcomes and/or standards set by relevant professional bodies.
 - To implement external examiner and academic adviser feedback.
 - To implement student feedback, for the benefit of students.
- 13.2. The College will notify you of any such changes as soon as reasonably practicable. If, because of a change made under this clause, you wish to withdraw your acceptance or terminate your enrolment. You must notify the College in writing or through UCAS, within 14 days of receiving written notification of the change. If you would like to be considered for another course, the College will use its reasonable endeavours to provide a suitable alternative course within the institution (for which tuition fees may be payable) or suggest a suitable alternative course with an alternative provider. Alternatively, the College will provide you with a full refund of any deposit or tuition fee paid.
- 13.3. On withdrawal or suspension of a course applicants affected will be contacted as early as possible and will be given the right to withdraw their acceptance of the offer. Applicants are given a date by which to respond. If no response is received the application will be withdrawn from the College.
- 13.4. If a course is discontinued after an applicant has accepted their offer the terms of the General Terms and Conditions will apply.

14. Deferred Entry

- 14.1. Applicants who would like to defer entry for a year should indicate this in their application. It is also recommended that they outline briefly in their personal statement their reason for choosing deferred entry. Applicants will usually be considered on the same basis as applicants for the current year of entry and receive correspondence from UCAS and USWSC during the application timetable for that year.
- 14.2. The College allows applicants to request to defer once an application is made if an applicant's circumstances change which means they cannot commence their studies in the forthcoming academic year.
- 14.3. Applicants who wish to defer their place to begin their studies in the following year may first need to meet the conditions of their study offer before making a deferral request. Applicants must submit their deferral request by emailing the University Studies Admissions Team.
- 14.4. We recommend making a deferral request as soon as the decision has been made to defer. Deferral requests are granted on a first-come, first-served basis. We will continue to accept deferral requests until all deferral places are filled.
- 14.5. Applicants may only defer once. If an applicant deferred their place on their course in one year and did not take up their place in the following year, they will need to reapply if they wish to join the course later. Any deferrals after the student has accepted their offer will be managed in accordance with the General Terms and Conditions.

15. Applicants from staff or their near relatives/Conflict of Interest

All members of staff have a responsibility to declare any conflict of interest and disclose to the Exams Team that are related to a prospective student. The College will not unreasonably deny access to the College to any applicant based on their relationship with a member of staff or their own position as a member of staff.

16. Complaints

- 16.1 A complaint is normally a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or administrative error in the application process. Complaints can cover a wide range of issues including the way in which an application has been handled, the outcome of the selection or fees classification, or the way in which an applicant has been interviewed. A complaint needs to be dealt with flexibly, quickly and as close as possible to the point in time at which it arises.
- 16.2 Concerns that the University Studies at West Suffolk College's admissions principles and procedures have been incorrectly implemented may be raised through the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure for Pearson courses and Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Appeals & complaints policy for UEA courses.
- 16.3 Applicants are encouraged to view the General Terms & Conditions & Tuition Fee Policy, which sets out the requirements of students of the Student Contract.
- 16.4 Challenges against academic judgement will not be considered. Academic judgment is defined as a judgement about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice.
- 16.5 A challenge will only be considered if:
- There has been an irregularity in the conduct of the application process which was material enough to affect the outcome of the application; or
 - If an applicant believes there was an irregularity in the processing of the Fee Assessment form which may have affected the outcome of the fee status.

17. Student Transfer

- 17.1 Transferring is the process whereby a current student at USWSC or at another institution, moves from one degree programme to another. This includes students transferring to USWSC from another institution and transferring between USWSC programmes. Please refer to the Student Transfer Policy for more details.

18. General Terms and Conditions

- 18.1 It is important that applicants and their advisers are aware of the College's enrolment terms and conditions that will be legally binding on an applicant once the applicant accepts an offer of a place at the College. These can be found on the College website. The enrolment terms and conditions are incorporated into the General Terms and Conditions which will apply to all matters after the student has accepted an offer from the College.