

## Policy Coversheet

<b>Name of Policy</b>	Staffordshire University Admissions Policy
<b>Purpose of Policy:</b>	Policy for the Admission of Students to the University
<b>Intended Audience:</b>	Potential Applicants and Applicants
<b>Approval for this policy given by:</b>	
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<b>Individual Responsible for Review:</b>	Clare Beckett, Director, Student Recruitment & Admissions
<b>Authorising Department:</b>	

# Staffordshire University Admissions Policy

## Contents

Section 1.0	General Principles	Page 2
Section 2.0	Guidance, Procedure and Policies	Page 3
Section 3.0	Information and Guidance	Page 3
Section 4.0	Recruitment and Selection Procedures	Page 4
Section 5.0	Monitoring and Review	Page 7
Section 6.0	Staff Development	Page 8
Section 7.0	Complaints	Page 8

## **Staffordshire University Admissions Policy**

### **1. General Principles**

1.1 The University aims to provide education and training for all applicants who demonstrate the potential to benefit from its provision, in line with the specific entry requirements established for each course.

1.2 It seeks to offer progression from school and further education to higher education, both undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research degrees, welcoming applicants from a range of diverse backgrounds.

1.3 The admissions process is designed to ensure that applicants possess the ability and aptitude to complete their studies successfully.

1.4 All admission procedures and criteria by which applicants are selected will be fair, lawful, clear, explicit, open and consistently applied. They will reflect the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and widening participation mission reflecting a diverse population of applicants. All procedures will conform to the requirements of current legislation and the relevant commitments at Staffordshire University.

1.5 The Strategic Recruitment and Admissions Group made up of representatives from each School will have responsibility for setting admissions criteria on an annual basis.

1.6 All University staff and applicants have access to, and are required to comply with, the University's policies and procedures. Staff involved in the admission of students, including those of partner institutions, who give guidance to applicants and/or undertake admissions and enrolment duties, will be knowledgeable and competent in their roles. They will operate to clear guidance and be supported by appropriate staff development. They will have an understanding of the educational and cultural differences of a diverse population of applies and knowledge of different routes into education and employment.

1.7 The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the University is in receipt of all information required to allow the institution to make a decision on their application and that all information is accurate. Omission of relevant information, or the supply of inaccurate information, may invalidate the application or the offer of a place.

1.8 Applicants will be selected on the basis of their application, including evidence of qualifications and experience and, where appropriate, through the use of interviewing, auditions, portfolio evidence or other such mechanisms. Consideration will be given to the nature and the purpose of an interview, or any other selection method, the criteria to be used for selection and whether applicants are to be interviewed individually or in groups.

1.9 Where appropriate, full time undergraduate admissions will be processed through UCAS.

1.10 Information will be collected and used only in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.

1.11 All recruitment, admissions, enrolment and induction procedures will be regularly monitored for their effectiveness for all categories of applicants.

## **2. Guidance, Procedures and Policies**

2.1 To implement its principles, the University will regularly review, update and publish annual guidance, procedures and matrixes including:

- Entry and admission criteria matrix; Clearing requirements; Enrolment criteria;
- The Staffordshire University annual fee schedule
- Admission procedures for international students
- Admission procedures for applicants who declare a criminal conviction
- Admission procedures for applicants who disclose a disability

2.2 The University's Admissions Policy should be read in conjunction with other University publications listed below.

- Fitness to Practice Procedure including Disclosure Screening for Applicants
- Staffordshire University Complaints Procedure
- Placement and Practice Policy
- Student Charter
- Credit Control Policy
- Staffordshire University Safeguarding Policy
- Staffordshire University OFFA Agreement
- Equality and Diversity policy
- Data protection policy
- Applicants with criminal convictions policy

2.3 The Admissions Policy and its associated guidance are mapped against the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*, published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (September 2006), and UCAS procedures.

2.4 All University policies, procedures and guidance are published on the University's website and are available on request in hard copy form.

## **3. Information and guidance**

3.1 The University will provide applicants with accurate, clear, relevant and accessible information and clear guidance to enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options prior to and during their course of study. This will be achieved by:

3.1.1 Holding advertised Open Days/Evenings, Test-Drive Taster Sessions and Offer Holder Days

3.1.2 Visiting Schools and holding visits by schools and colleges on site and providing talks at schools and colleges about entering higher education and studying at Staffordshire University

3.1.3 Providing free information and advice from suitably qualified members of staff to applicants

3.1.4 Providing access to information in suitable alternative formats for applicants with particular

disabilities or with specific needs as appropriate.

3.1.5 Providing specific course information for every course advertised in the prospectus via the University website or in other durable formats as laid out in HEFCE's Guide to providing Information for Prospective Undergraduate Students (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lt/provinfo/>). This information gives details of course content, entry requirements, fees, any other costs associated with the course, attendance, duration of study, location, and progression opportunities. Information provided will meet CMA and QAA requirements and will include, in addition to the above, information on modes of study, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, learning outcomes, the extent of flexibility and choice, financial support available and will also provide information on which courses are accredited or approved by professional and statutory bodies. Information provided will also include the range of learner support, academic or pastoral, available for students, including study skills support, information technology and learning resources/library services, personal tutorial support, student welfare, counselling and health services, employment and careers services and personal development planning available.

3.1.6 Responding to applicants' requests for advice made by telephone, email on social media or in person

3.1.7 Providing information on the facilities available on each campus for students with disabilities

3.1.8 Providing advice and guidance on opportunities for credit transfer and accreditation of prior learning

3.1.9 Ensuring that any alterations to courses from earlier published information are communicated to applicants holding an offer. This may include closure of a course, significant changes to cost, location, content and the status of a course, including withdrawal or granting of validation by a professional or statutory body, or the failure of an advertised course to gain approval or accreditation.

#### **4. Recruitment and selection procedures**

4.1 The University is committed to ensuring that selection policies and processes are transparent and are followed fairly, courteously, consistently and promptly; that information concerning applicants remains confidential in line with the University's Data Protection Policy and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules

4.2 The University will ensure all admissions decisions are made by those equipped to make the required judgements.

#### **4.3 Selection principles**

4.3.1 Entry requirements will be transparent and consistently used for all applicants when considering ability, aptitude, skills, qualifications and prior learning or experience (acquired in the workplace or elsewhere) that indicates their potential to succeed on the course and will be published in prospectuses, leaflets or through the University website.

4.3.2 Selection criteria for courses leading to the University's own awards will be determined on an annual basis and published in course specifications on the University website. The University reserves the right to review and alter criteria where appropriate and in line with the University's policies and procedures.

4.3.3 Selection criteria for other courses will be set with regard to guidance and policies issued by the University or by professional/regulatory bodies and will be published in prospectuses, leaflets or through the University website.

#### **4.4 Admissions processes**

4.4.1 Opportunity will be given on application forms, at any interviews or other selection activities, for applicants to draw attention to relevant qualifications, experience and other information that might support their application.

4.4.2 Where courses are full and/or waiting lists are held, or when courses have to be closed for any reason, applicants will be informed immediately with the offer of alternative courses wherever possible.

4.4.3 Every reasonable adjustment will be made to support applicants who have disclosed a physical or sensory disability or specific learning need. On the application form, at any interview or during other selection activity, applicants will be encouraged to disclose any disabilities or specific learning needs, in order for us to discuss their needs and put adjustments in place prior to arrival.

4.4.4 Applicants with a criminal conviction will receive clear information on the procedure which will be followed, in accordance with the Staffordshire University Applicants with Criminal Convictions Policy.

4.4.5 For certain courses, particularly in teaching, health, social work and other courses involving work with children, applicants must declare relevant criminal conviction(s), *including* spent sentences and cautions (see Staffordshire University Applicants with Criminal Convictions policy). Such applicants may be required to undergo a criminal records bureau (DBS) check, the outcome of which will inform the final admissions decision.

4.4.6 For applicants to a course where a reference is required and there has been a significant break since schooling, a personal reference from a professional or employer (not friend or family) may be requested rather than a school reference.

4.4.7 Applicants under 16 years old are admitted only after consultation with parents or guardians and with school or local education authority representatives as appropriate.

4.4.8 The University will carry out checks on documents supplied by applicants to establish authenticity in order to guard against fraudulent applications. Where an application is processed through UCAS, if the UCAS Similarity Detection Service highlights a "non-original" personal statement, the applicant may be rejected, however the University will, in these circumstances, provide the applicant with an opportunity to explain the similarity and provide a 'new' personal statement. This will allow the University to continue to consider applications where there may be a valid explanation. Any applicant subsequently accepted as a student should be aware that this record will remain on the student file and could be taken into account, if found guilty of any subsequent academic offence.

#### **4.5 Interviewing and assessment**

4.5.1 Applicants will receive clear information on requirements for interviews, auditions, portfolios or any form of assessment applied during the application process. Interviews, auditions and assessments will be conducted and evaluated in a standardised manner for the course.

4.5.2 Decisions and the reasons for the decisions, are recorded in writing to facilitate feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

4.5.3 For certain courses, initial assessment for Basic Skills attainment (numeracy, literacy, ESOL) may be carried out as part of the admissions process. The offer of a place on the course may then be informed by the outcome of those assessments.

4.5.4 Where diagnostic assessment on needs in literacy and numeracy takes place, which is carried out during the induction process, this is not part of the admissions process and will not compromise an applicant's enrolment on a course. The purpose of these tests is to ensure that appropriate support is provided after an applicant has been admitted.

4.5.5 There will be a clear structure for each interview, or other selection method, and these will be conducted against pre-determined criteria.

4.5.6 Where an applicant is perceived as unsuitable for a particular course then, wherever possible, s/he will be referred to other appropriate courses.

#### 4.6 **AP(E)L and Advanced Standing**

4.6.1 AP(E)L. Applicants can use the process of the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning to access Higher Education courses leading to the University's own awards. The process is based on a portfolio of evidence to show the equivalence of the normal entrance requirement of a specific course.

4.6.2 Advanced Standing is when the applicant enters a Staffordshire University validated course later than the stage, level or year than the normal entry point for the course. Applicants can enter a course with a previous qualification or other certified learning, where this learning is mapped to the Staffordshire University course and it has been established that the learning outcomes, content, currency, academic credit and level of award are appropriate and relevant. Advanced Standing can be awarded for a full level or part level and this denotes the point of entry to the course.

#### 4.7 **Making offers**

4.7.1 Offers will be made as promptly as possible. Clear information will be provided to the successful applicant on:

- any conditions attached to the offer
- what the applicant has to do next and by when
- when further information e.g. regarding joining instructions, will be provided.
- any arrangements for enrolment, registration and induction
- any orientation or induction for international students before the start of the course

4.7.2 Where a request for deferral of entry to the following year has been made, the University's 'Procedure for deferral of a place offered' will be implemented.

4.7.3 Clear information should be given to applicants who do not meet the required entry criteria specified in the offer regarding their options and what action to take.

4.7.4 Prompt and clear feedback is given to applicants who have not been offered a place, when requested, and advice about alternatives and future options will be given, as appropriate.

4.7.5 Where offers have been made on the basis of fraudulent information, the University reserves the right to withdraw the offer or withdraw the student if enrolled.

#### **4.8 English Language Requirements**

4.8.1 As all teaching, learning and assessment at the University is through the medium of English, all applicants will be required to demonstrate that they meet the required level of English language competency for their desired course of study.

4.8.2 Applicants whose first language is not English will be required to have a recognised English language qualification, such as IELTS (International English Testing System), or equivalent at the appropriate level for the course of study for which they wish to be considered. The equivalent qualifications are outlined on the University website.

4.8.3 Each course will state an overall IELTS score (or equivalent) together with any individual element requirements, as and where appropriate.

4.8.4 Where an applicant's English language competency is below that necessary for their intended course of study, they will be required to successfully undertake a pre-sessional English language course prior to being enrolled on their course.

#### **4.9 Visa requirements including UKVI Tier 4**

4.9.1 Applicants who are not UK, EU or EEA citizens wishing to gain admission to the University must meet and possess the appropriate leave to remain in the UK and satisfy immigration requirements in force at the time of entry onto the course. The University will not normally accept students whose decision by the Home Office is pending.

4.9.2 Students seeking sponsorship through UK Visas and Immigration Tier 4 sponsorship will be required to meet the requirements as set out by the Home Office in addition to University requirements.

4.9.3 Students who are not UK or EU nationals and who are not sponsored under Tier 4 will be required to demonstrate that they have appropriate leave to remain in the UK.

### **5. Monitoring and review**

5.1 The University will monitor and regularly review its policies and procedures to ensure that they continue to support the University's mission and strategic objectives, that they remain current and valid in the light of changing circumstances and that they meet all external requirements, including adherence to equality legislation.

5.2 To monitor its Admissions Policy, the University will:

5.2.1 Provide opportunities for students to inform the University as to their experience of the application process through a survey. This will be carried out in partnership with the Students' Union, through a range of mechanisms, including the student representatives' structure, student representatives' forums, through student surveys and other evaluation mechanisms, as appropriate

5.2.2 Monitor any complaints received

5.2.3 Consider the effect of the Admissions Policy, and in particular the operation of course entry

criteria, when annually reviewing against the relevant benchmarks, (learner success rates and progression, retention, withdrawal and non-completion data) as appropriate.

5.2.4 Review data regarding applications, offers made, the take-up of offers and successful completion where relevant, in order to inform future recruitment and curriculum development

5.2.5 Review its policies in relation to changing patterns in the applicant market, changes in the nature of the main qualifications offered by applicants and the demand for modes of study

5.2.6 Monitor admission procedures across schools and subjects, where relevant

5.2.7 Monitor the application of admission policies and procedures to courses provided by collaborative arrangements with partner institutions

5.2.8 Monitor success rates of students with advanced standing and accreditation of prior learning or experience

5.2.9 Review recruitment materials and any pre-entry information and activities

## **6 Staff Development**

6.1 The University is committed to ensuring that all those involved in recruitment and admissions are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities

6.2 Staff development and training sessions are held for staff involved in admissions in order to update knowledge and expertise in the light of changing circumstances.

6.3 Staff participate in national agendas through membership of various professional bodies, through workshops and conferences and are committed to sharing good practice locally and with collaborative partners.

## **7. Complaints about the admissions process**

7.1 All staff contributing to the admissions process must be familiar with the University's complaints procedure relating to the admissions process.

7.2 An applicant cannot complain or appeal where this is a disagreement with the judgement of an admissions decision, in assessing the merits of application, or in reaching a decision on entry, which has been reached in accordance with the published criteria and processes contained in this policy.

7.3 Where an applicant has reason to believe that his/her application has not been handled fairly, objectively or in accordance with the procedures described above, he/she should write to the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions setting out his/her reasons. The Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions will then review the handling of the application in the light of the student's written statement and report, in writing, to the Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience within seven working days. The Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience may confirm or rescind an earlier decision in the light of this report and will send a written reply to the student within ten working days of receiving the request for the review of the application. Such decision shall be final.

7.4 The applicant may consult a representative of the Students' Union for guidance on this procedure.