



# **Admissions Policy & Applicant Complaints Procedure**

**Effective September 2022 to Present**

Student Regulations and Policies

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# UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL LANCASHIRE

## ADMISSIONS POLICY AND APPLICANT COMPLAINTS

### PROCEDURE

#### 1. Principles

The University believes that education is a basic right and that individuals should be encouraged to participate in the education process throughout life to the highest level of their ability to benefit. This is central to the University's mission to encourage and enable individuals to develop their full potential. Therefore, the University is committed to enhancing access to its courses through the continued development of local provision, flexibility in course design and delivery, recognition of work based and prior learning and collaboration with external partners in the development and delivery of courses. The University believes that intakes to courses should reflect all groups in society able and eligible to participate, and recognises the importance of the recruitment and selection process in achieving this. The University is resolute in the view that the potential to study successfully draws from a range of academic and other attainments, motivation and commitment and that course based selection and admissions criteria should reflect this.

#### 2. Background

This policy takes into account the sector guidelines within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education; the principles from the Schwartz review of higher education admissions (2004) and the work of Supporting Professionalism in Admissions. It is also underpinned by relevant legislation.

#### 3. Admissions Policy Statement

The Admissions Policy is derived from the Mission Statement and associated aims:

- The University operates a policy of responsible recruitment and undertakes to ensure that promotional material accurately reflects the University's courses and facilities.
- The procedures for the admission of students are non-discriminatory and espouse the University's commitment to equal opportunities.
- The University will not admit applicants unless there is a reasonable expectation that the applicant can fulfil the learning outcomes of the course and reach the required standard for the award.
- Responsibility for the selection of students lies with Admissions Tutors, nominated by Heads of School, operating within the general entry requirements for the award specified by the University and any specific course based requirements.

- The selection of students is based on ability to benefit as demonstrated through prior educational achievement, motivation and commitment.
- The admission of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties is based on the academic judgement that the student can, with reasonable adjustments by the University, be reasonably expected to fulfil the learning outcomes of the course to achieve the award

#### **4. Implementation**

- 4.1 Implementation of the Admissions Policy is represented through a Code of Practice which forms a series of guidelines for staff engaged in admissions and recruitment work. These guidelines enshrine the basic philosophy of the University as expressed in the Mission Statement with respect to Admissions.
- 4.2 Recruitment and marketing activities are the responsibility of the External Relations Service.
- 4.3 Responsibility for implementation, monitoring and review of the Admissions Policy lies with the Head of Admissions.
- 4.4 The University operates one central admissions function at its Preston Campus, which is responsible for application processing and formal liaison with national clearing houses such as UCAS, and a separate Admissions Office in its Cyprus Campus. The Shanghai and Delhi offices also have offer making authority and an admissions function.

#### **5. Code of Practice**

##### **5.1 General Admissions Practice**

- 5.1.1 The University's code of practice applies to all of its courses, wherever they are delivered.
- 5.1.2 The admissions process will pay due regard to the University's responsibilities to minimise fraud, to protect the health and safety of its staff and students and to meet its legal obligations in relation to human rights, freedom of information, data protection and discrimination of any kind. To this end, the University will operate procedures that are fair to all applicants regardless of age, background, disability, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or gender reassignment.
- 5.1.3 The University encourages applications from anyone who sees the ethos of this University or partner college as particularly relevant to their individual needs, and in addition recognises a special responsibility towards:
- Those who for domestic, cultural, physical or other reasons need to come to this University or partner college;
  - Those who are seeking to re-enter the education system after a period away from study;

- Those with accreditable alternative experience in lieu of standard entry requirements;
  - Those applicants from under-represented groups in Higher and Further Education
- 5.1.4 The Head of Admissions in collaboration with Heads of School and Heads of Partner Colleges are responsible for ensuring that admissions policies and procedures are effectively implemented.
- 5.1.6 Applications to courses offered in Partner Colleges and overseas campuses which are validated by the University are processed by staff operating within the University's Admissions Policy. The Head of Admissions retains responsibility for the oversight of such delegated arrangements.
- 5.1.7 The University's central Admissions Office may act as an agent for partner colleges in processing UCAS applications where there are no facilities for this in the college or otherwise by agreement.
- 5.1.8 It is the responsibility of each School and Partner College to ensure that there are academic teams/tutors for their courses. Appropriate advice, assistance and training/briefing will be provided by the University's Admissions Office to support admissions teams/tutors.
- 5.1.9 Staff in the University's Admissions Office are responsible for creating and updating the applicant record on the University's student record system.
- 5.1.10 Offers to students applying through UCAS are transmitted by UCAS on receipt of appropriate information from the University's Admissions Office. All other offers will be made through the Head of Admissions or Partner College or campus as appropriate. This authority may be delegated to Heads of School in relation to part-time and certain specialist courses following consultation with the Head of Admissions.
- 5.1.11 Formal correspondence with applicants will be sent through the University's Admissions Office, campus or Partner College as appropriate.
- 5.1.12 Successful applicants will be informed of the offer conditions including details of the University Regulations and Information and Conditions of Offer.
- 5.1.13 Requests for transfers between courses will be accommodated wherever possible, giving due regard to Home Office requirements for international applicants. Admissions tutors are responsible for identifying common transfer routes into the second or third years of other courses and for planning their intake accordingly.
- 5.1.14 Offers should normally only be made for courses which have been approved through the University's Course Approval process. If in exceptional circumstances an offer is made for a course which is at pre-approval stage, the offer must state that it is subject to the course being approved and make clear when such approval is expected and what the consequences will be if approval is not granted.

- 5.1.15 The University will do all that it reasonably can to deliver programmes in accordance with the terms of the offers made to applicants. In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to discontinue a programme or to make significant changes to a programme between the time an offer is made and enrolment, in which case a member of academic staff from the relevant School or Partner College will contact the applicant and advise them of the options available. Particular attention will be paid to the applicant's needs in such circumstances, as it is not always possible for them to secure an alternative offer.
- 5.1.16 Senior Admissions Officers will monitor successful and unsuccessful applications to ensure equality and consistency and will liaise with admissions tutors to clarify atypical decisions. Similar monitoring will be carried out by the Partner Colleges.
- 5.1.17 Enquirers are encouraged to visit and the University operates a number of Open Days throughout the year. An invitation to attend a course-based Offer holder day will be offered to all UK applicants to whom offers are made.
- 5.1.18 A Contact Schedule is reviewed each application cycle to provide timely information to applicants for them to make a considered decision on whether to accept an offer of a place on a course at the University.
- 5.1.19 The University will send details of enrolment and induction programmes to new students studying at Preston, Burnley or Westlakes campuses prior to the commencement of the session. New students studying outside these campuses will have details sent from their point of study.

## **5.2 Entry Requirements**

- 5.2.1 The University considers a range and combination of qualifications, experiential and certificated professional learning for entry. Academic entry criteria are set by Schools and Partner Colleges, taking into account relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body criteria and are reviewed on an annual basis.
- 5.2.2 Information on content of courses, entry requirements and processes such as interview, audition or portfolio, requirements for criminal record checks (DBS) and Fitness to Practice are listed on the University's website and the UCAS website.
- 5.2.3 Undergraduate applicants must have 5 GCSE passes at 4 (Grade C) or above including Maths and English, or equivalent i.e. Key Skills Level 3 or Functional Skills Level 2.. However, if the subject is relevant to our degree programme and requires a higher GCSE grade (e.g. GCSE B grade), and/or includes a Professional body that governs the entry requirements, Grade 5 or above may be required.

For mature applicants, decision making on levels of literacy and numeracy can be based on the whole profile/contextual data on their application. General minimum entry requirements are detailed in the Academic Regulations.

- 5.2.4 All applicants must have sufficient competency in the English language to study successfully for the proposed award. Minimum English language requirements are detailed in the Academic Regulations.
- 5.2.5 There are recognised progression routes for advanced entry from qualifications such as Foundation degrees.
- 5.2.6 The Head of Admissions will keep abreast of changes in the 16-19 examination systems, review and advise minimum entry qualifications accordingly for UK applicants, the Director of International Recruitment will review and advise on international and English language entry qualifications.
- 5.2.7 The key determining factors in distinguishing 'ability to benefit' through the selection process for any group of applicants are motivation, commitment and academic aptitude. It is the responsibility of course teams to identify appropriate methods to judge these factors to ensure that they are given proper prominence in the selection process.
- 5.2.8 It will be made clear in promotional material that all relevant aspects of an applicant's experience have value and will be taken into account in the admissions decision.
- 5.2.9 Courses leading to professional recognition or awards offered by external awarding authorities may place additional entry requirements on applicants. These will be detailed on the University's website and in course literature.
- 5.2.10 The University operates a contextualised admission policy. We identify applicants using a range of background factors which we believe should be considered when making an offer for a place at the University. Applicants will be eligible for a contextualised offer if their home postcode falls into quintile 1 or 2 of POLAR4, IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation), EST (Education Skills Training deprivation) and IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index). Applicants who are care-experienced will also be eligible for a contextualised offer. Contextualised offers will be made one grade (8 tariff points) lower than the advertised entry tariff for a range of our courses.

### **5.3 Proof of Qualifications**

- 5.3.1 All applicants will be asked to provide evidence of the academic qualifications as listed on their application form if this has not been provided by the Awarding Body Linkage via UCAS. Applicants will be given a deadline date to send in their evidence.
- 5.3.2 All qualifications will be checked against the application form by the Admissions Office, School or Partner College, wherever the application has been processed, as soon as the evidence is provided.
- 5.3.3 If no evidence is provided by the deadline given, a Hold will be put on the applicant electronic record so they cannot enrol as a student. The Hold will only be taken off the record when the evidence has been provided and matched to the application form.

**5.3.4** If it is found that an applicant has wilfully or negligently misrepresented their qualifications or other information in their application form, the offer may be withdrawn and the applicant's contract with, and membership of, the University may be terminated. In the case of UCAS applicants, the Head of Admissions will inform UCAS of the findings.

#### **5.4 Selection Procedures**

5.4.1 Requests for advisory interviews at the enquiry stage will be met wherever possible. Where appropriate, staff in the University's Admissions Office will assist admissions tutors in fulfilling this requirement.

5.4.2 Senior administrative staff in the University Admissions Office or Partner College Admissions Offices will initiate offers to specified groups of applicants, in accordance with course entry criteria determined by Schools or Partner College admissions teams. Such criteria will be reviewed annually. All other decisions will be made by admissions tutors.

5.4.3 Individual interviews may be required of applicants in the following categories, unless an offer can be made on the basis of the application alone:

- Those with alternative qualifications
- Applicants with experiential learning
- Special or unusual factors disclosed in application
- Where an interview or audition is part of the usual selection process

5.4.4 Normally two staff should be involved in any one interview or audition.

5.4.5 The University will not admit applicants unless there is a reasonable expectation that the applicant can fulfil the learning outcomes of the course and reach the required standard for the award.

5.4.6 Applicants who are unsuccessful in their first choice course will be contacted and, wherever possible, an appropriate alternative course will be offered. Where an alternative course cannot be offered, the applicant will be given further advice and guidance.

5.4.7 There is no right of appeal against a decision not to admit an applicant onto a particular course. However, applicants are entitled to know the reason(s) for their non-selection and to discuss these with the Admissions Tutor or relevant Admissions Office for the course.

#### **5.5 Admission of Students with Criminal Convictions**

5.5.1 The University actively promotes equality of opportunity for all and welcomes applications from a wide range of people. Having a criminal conviction will not necessarily prevent someone from studying at the University; this will depend on the nature of the course and the circumstances and background of the offences.

5.5.2 The University complies fully with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants fairly. Any information

about an applicant's criminal convictions will be disclosed only to those people who need to see it as part of the admissions process.

- 5.5.3 A declaration of all criminal convictions is a requirement for courses where the final award also confers a licence to practice in a profession where certain types of crime, or any criminal record, could prevent a licence being granted, or where a DBS check is required because the course involves close working with either children or vulnerable adults. In such cases, the criteria for consideration of this aspect of an applicant's background, in relation to his/her admission to a course, is explained in course literature. Applicants for these courses would require a DBS check. The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that procedures are in place for the consideration of convictions in line with professional body requirements and for notifying applicants of the outcome.
- 5.5.4 It is important to note that should your Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check prove to be unsatisfactory for the purpose of the course you have applied to, your offer of a place for that course may be withdrawn. If you have already enrolled on a course and your DBS check subsequently discloses a criminal conviction, you may be required to withdraw from the course even if you have already started. If you are aware that your DBS check will disclose a previous conviction, please contact (the course leader) for advice as not all convictions may preclude you from continuing with the course
- 5.5.5 In relation to applications for other courses, applicants only need to declare specific offences once an offer has been accepted by the applicant. Convictions that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) are not considered to be relevant and applicants should not reveal them.
- 5.5.6 Applicants who declare a criminal conviction will not be automatically excluded from the enrolment process. However, the Head of Admissions may ask for more information before making a decision. The details will be submitted for assessment by an authorised Panel of the University or Partner College in relation to the University's duty of care to the wider University community. Where the Panel judges the risk to the University or Partner College community is significant, enrolment may be refused, restricted or withdrawn. In such cases, applicants will be given the reasons for refusal or restriction and to discuss these with the Chair of the Panel.

## **5.6 Admissions of Students with a Disability and/or Learning Difficulty**

- 5.6.5 Admission to a course is based on the academic judgement that the student can, with reasonable adjustments by the University, be reasonably expected to fulfil the learning outcomes of the course to achieve the award.
- 5.6.6 In line with the University Disability Policy, applicants are strongly encouraged to disclose disability related information within the application process. Failure to do so may mean the University or Partner College cannot put appropriate support arrangements into place for the start of the course.
- 5.6.7 Operating under advice from the University Disability Decision Panel, the University or Partner College may require further information from the applicant regarding anticipated support needs in order that a considered judgement can be made.



5.6.8 Admission or enrolment may be refused or deferred if, following an assessment of need, provision of the adjustments required by the applicant cannot reasonably be provided at that time.

## **5.7 International Student Admissions**

5.7.5 All international admissions functions must comply with the latest requirements of the Home Office for Tier 4 students. These requirements relate to a number of key admissions areas:

5.7.5.1 minimum levels of English language ability

5.7.5.2 rulings around academic progression and transfers between programmes

and could result in a different option for an international applicant when compared with a UK/EU/Island applicant.

5.7.6 All Home Office compliance matters are the responsibility of the Compliance Team based within Academic Registry who work closely with the Admissions team.

5.7.7 The University is guided by the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre in terms of the equivalence accorded to international qualifications. The University's Admissions Office is responsible for the maintenance of reference material in relation to international and European qualifications.

5.7.8 Acceptable minimum qualifications in English language are agreed and reviewed by the Admissions Office in line with Home Office requirements and are set out in the Academic Regulations.

## **5.8 Admission of Students under the age of 18 years' old**

5.8.5 The University considers all applications to study on the basis of the applicant's individual merits, which occasionally leads to students who are under the age of 18 being admitted to study on our courses. The University will treat all students in the same way and therefore all students, regardless of their age, will be expected to have the necessary skills to study and live independently, and assume an adult level of responsibility.

However, the University acknowledges that anyone living in England who is under the age of 18 is legally defined as a child, and this document highlights the special arrangements that are in place as a result.

5.8.6 Parental Responsibility -The University shall not act in "*loco parentis*". This means that the University will not act in a parental capacity towards students who are under the age of 18.

Where the parents or guardians of an international student remain abroad, the University requires that the student provide details of a guardian based in the UK. Preferably this should be someone who is in or near to the University and who can act in *loco parentis*. The guardian must be a British national or holder of a UK Biometric Residence Permit. Students under the age of 18 will not be allowed to register on their course until this information has been provided.

5.8.7 Health - Students who have not attained the age of 18 can have their refusal to receive medical treatment overridden by parents or guardians. However, please note that a child from the age of 16 is entitled to consent to medical treatment, and that such consent cannot be overruled by parents or guardians.

Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that the University has been informed of any special needs or requirements relating to the applicant's health and wellbeing.

5.8.8 Student accommodation - Parents or guardians should recognise that residential accommodation offered by the University is generally intended for the use of adults and that, save in exceptional circumstances, special arrangements cannot be made for students who are under the age of 18 years.

5.8.9 Field trips and work placements - Different programmes of study may involve compulsory or optional field trips, excursions or other periods of study away from the University. Subject to the University's duties under health and safety law, the University is not able to take any additional responsibility for a student who is under the age of 18 years in relation to such activities.

When undertaking work placements, the University is obliged to inform any employer that the student is under 18 and ensure that the employer has appropriate insurance and health and safety procedures in place, and that they are aware of the additional responsibilities of employing young people, including any DBS requirements. The University cannot guarantee work placements for those students under the age of 18.

5.8.10 Alcohol and tobacco - It is illegal for alcohol or tobacco to be sold to or bought by students who are under the age of 18 years. The University will take reasonable steps to seek to ensure that the law is not broken in relation to licensed premises under the University's control but cannot undertake to supervise any individual student.

The Students' Union is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for its own licensed premises.

5.8.11 Holding office - Students who are under 18 years are not allowed to hold office, for example, they may not be secretary or treasurer to a sports club or other students' association.

5.8.12 Relationships with staff - Under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust (which may include members of University staff) to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18 years.

5.8.13 Child protection - As a matter of law in England, a person under the age of 18 is a child. The University will report any suspicions or allegations of abuse of children to the appropriate Social Services officer. Any such suspicions or allegations will be reported to the principle safeguarding leads who will contact the appropriate authorities.

5.8.14 Notification - The relevant Head of School and Hall Manager will be notified of any student within their School or Hall who will be under the age of 18 years on entry to the University. The personal and residential tutors (if any) will also be notified, however teaching and other staff will not routinely be made aware of a student's age.

5.8.10.1 Parental / Guardian involvement - It is the University's usual policy that it deals with students (with whom it has a contractual relationship) and not with parents or guardians. This approach will also apply to students who are under the age of 18 years. The University will therefore correspond with students, not their parents or guardians.

5.8.11 Internet - Parents or guardians of students under 18 should note that internet access is unrestricted at the University. It is not possible for the University to limit access to any particular sites or categories of information. Students under 18 will be expected to observe the same rules and regulations about acceptable use of the internet as all other students.

## **5.9 Admission with Credit**

5.9.1 The University or Partner College will consider applicants with prior learning (certificated or uncertificated) which fulfils some of the learning outcomes of a course for admission with credit to an appropriate point on that course.

5.9.2 The recognition of prior learning is determined in relation to a specific course. Students are required to reapply for assessment of prior learning if they subsequently change course.

5.9.3 The assessment of prior learning for credit is governed by procedures approved by the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee. For more information, please contact Admissions Staff on [uadmissions@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:uadmissions@uclan.ac.uk)

## **5.10 Training for Admissions Tutors and Admissions Staff**

5.10.1 Admissions Tutors and Admissions staff who are making decisions on whether a place can be offered will be given the knowledge and skills necessary to make those decisions in a fair and consistent way without bias.

5.10.2 The University recognises the need to provide appropriate training for Admissions Tutors and Admissions staff especially in the following areas:

- Interviewing techniques
- Diversity
- Selection criteria
- Disability awareness

The provision of training will be co-ordinated by Human Resources in consultation with the Head of Admissions.

- 5.10.3 The University's central Admissions Office will provide awareness and briefing sessions on the procedural aspects of admissions to University and Partner College staff.

## **5.11 Monitoring and Review**

- 5.11.1 Changes in the Admissions Policy which impact on Academic Regulations will be considered and approved by Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee.
- 5.11.2 The University will monitor, through all its admissions offices, the impact of any subsequent changes to processes and entry requirements on all applicants.
- 5.11.3 The Admissions Manager in the Admissions Office will review all rejected Preston, Burnley and Westlakes Campus applications as a double check for consistency and bias.
- 5.11.4 The Admissions Manager will liaise with FE providers and awarding bodies where changes in course provision or curriculum prevents applicants from obtaining an offer for their chosen course at UCLan.

## **5.12 Archive of Applicant Records**

- 5.12.1 Records created on the University's student record system will be removed or archived as determined by the University's computer record archive policy.
- 5.12.2 Application forms (paper and electronic) and all associated correspondence will be sent to the relevant Schools following enrolment for all those applicants who have enrolled on a course at the University.
- 5.12.3 Paper application forms and all associated correspondence for those applicants who have not enrolled on a course at the University or a Partner College will be destroyed two years after the standard enrolment period for the course to which they have applied for..

## **5.13 Applicant Complaints Procedure**

- 5.13.1 Applicants who wish to complain about the operation of the University's admissions process should submit their complaint in writing to the Head of Admissions within 10 working days of the issue arising. The Head of Admissions, or nominee, will investigate the complaint and respond in writing within 15 working days.
- 5.13.2 If the complaint relates to the Head of Admissions or nominee, the complaint should be directed to the Director of UK Recruitment & Partnerships, External Relations who will deal with it in the manner prescribed above.

#### 5.13.3 Complaints will not be considered:

- About matters of academic judgement regarding an applicant's suitability to study a programme;
- About an applicant's failure to satisfy non-academic requirements specified by external agencies for a particular programme (except in respect of criminal records checks – these complaints will be considered);
- If they are submitted anonymously.

If the complaint is upheld the University may decide to either:

- i. uphold the complaint, in which case the matter will be referred back to the Head of Admissions to reconsider the application; or
- ii. reject the complaint.

Where an applicant has already enrolled at the University, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued informing him/her about the scheme of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

#### **5.14 Requests for Applicant Information**

- 5.14.1 Information concerning applicants is confidential as between the individual applicant and University admissions staff. Requests for information from other individuals or organisations will be referred to the University Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer.