

Policy Title	Further Education and Apprenticeship Admissions
Policy Category	Compliant
Owner	NCG Assistant Director Quality: TLA
Group Executive Lead	Executive Director of Quality
Date Written	July 2021
Considered By	Quality Forum / Careers Community of Practice
Approved By	Executive
Date Approved	November 2021
Equality Impact Assessment	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics
Freedom of Information	This document will be available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
Review Date	September 2023
Policy Summary	The purpose of this policy is to put in place a Group Policy that is designed to ensure that all applications are considered fairly and consistently and in accordance with professional standards and recommend DfE guidance.

Applicability of Policy	Consultation Undertaken	Applicable To
Newcastle College	Yes	Yes
Newcastle Sixth Form College	Yes	Yes
Carlisle College	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster College	Yes	Yes
Lewisham College	Yes	Yes
Southwark College	Yes	Yes
West Lancashire College	Yes	Yes
Professional Services	Yes	No

Changes to Earlier Versions	
Previous Approval Date	N/A – New Policy, although based on version from Newcastle College
Linked Documents	
NCG Unified Tutorial, Progress and Attainment Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlights approaches to induction, post enrolment
HE Admission Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy for handling HE admissions
NCG Positive Student Behaviour Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out the student code of conduct
NCG Careers Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out the expectations for careers advice at NCG
NCG EDI Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sets out the requirements for fairness and inclusion in all aspects of the Group

Equality Impact Assessment - Sep 2021

	Judgement	Explanatory Note if required
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in 2.0?	Yes	
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?		
Age	No	
Disability / Difficulty	No	
Gender Reassignment	No	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
Race	No	
Religion or Belief	No	
Sex	No	
Sexual Orientation	No	
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?	No	
EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?	No	However, suitability of applicant to programme will depend on several factors including funding regimes, prior attainment and safeguarding
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?	No	
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?	Yes	The policy clarifies the intent to widen participation whoever possible
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	<p>This policy has been reviewed by the QTLA Forum, prior to approval by NCG Executive.</p> <p>The membership of these groups is indicative of the wider population within NCG.</p>	

1. Rationale

NCG has a proud history of promoting access to education, and seeks to widen participation, wherever possible through a stated mission.

NCG mission: *Enabling social mobility and economic prosperity through exceptional education.*

As a group of seven colleges, we provide full access to Further and Higher Education and Apprenticeships for all potential learners, aiming to remove barriers to entry, especially for those overlooked by the education system and from deprived areas or backgrounds.

NCG is committed to creating inclusive teaching and learning communities, where diversity, inclusion and belonging are valued.

A key element in achieving our mission is to enable all students, at every stage of their learning journey, to do their very best, to have the best possible experience of learning and development, and to achieve their educational, economic and social potential.

We are committed to providing access to fair and impartial information through an accompanying policy – the NCG Careers Framework

2. Aim / Purpose and Scope

The scope of the policy covers Further Education (FE) and apprenticeship applicants within an NCG College. Admissions for Higher Education (HE) applicants is subject to a separate admissions policy. References are made to the Higher Education policy regarding progression within this policy. Admissions for International (Non-UK/EU) students is subject to UKBA regulations.

The aims of the Further Education and Apprenticeship Admissions Policy are to ensure that:

- a) all applicants are treated fairly and impartially, and in line with NCG's EDI Policy
- b) all applicants are guided and supported appropriately through the admissions process and a range of guidance is made available to them so they can make informed decisions about their future development, aspirations and career choices
- c) information relating to entry criteria is accurate, is updated annually and accessible to all applicants and related stakeholders
- d) judgements and decision making is sound and based on clear information provided by the applicant and college
- e) the College retains its right to determine the suitability of applicants for enrolment, providing this is based on relevant prior qualifications, skills, knowledge and behaviours, funding and safeguarding – it will not infringe on protected characteristics, or personal choice. Funding mechanism may often impact on the ability of an applicant to access a particular course and staff are

encouraged to be resourceful and investigate all legitimate opportunities, to ensure learners can access provision, where appropriate. Should a learner be refused a place from one NCG college, on the basis of safety, discipline or safeguarding grounds, then admitting managers should evaluate whether or not the same concerns apply before making a different decision. Naturally there may be instances where a learner is suitable for a course of study on the basis of legitimate academic attainment or funding constraints that would be evaluated independently.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the standards for all NCG college admissions processes.

3. Student Entitlements

All students as part of NCG, and our constituent colleges, are entitled to:

- a) be treated equally and with fairness. No applicant will be refused admission on the basis of protected characteristics (race, sex, marriage/civil partnership disability, age, religion/belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity or sexual orientation). All suitable applicants are offered course choices, where relevant and possible. Applicants deemed not suitable for a course, through a fair and reasonable process, will be offered suitable alternative options and funding streams, either at the College or by referral externally;
- b) receive up-to date information about courses, entry criteria and student support available. This will be through a range of marketing platforms including prospectuses, online through the college website and specifically within course information literature. Alternative formats, when requested, will be made available, wherever possible.
- c) visit the college to view and experience the facilities prior to the commencement of a course, providing the opportunity to meet a full range of college staff to reinforce their decision-making.
- d) be assessed for their potential to contribute to and benefit from their proposed programme or study, course or apprenticeship.
- e) be interviewed, if relevant to their study programme, and receive confidential and impartial information, advice and guidance prior to commencing study at the college.
- f) be offered a place on a programme of study based on the assessment of a range of criteria including academic qualifications, professional and personal experience.
- g) be offered appropriate support as part of their course. All applicants are proactively encouraged to declare a learning difficulty/disability prior to commencing a course. This allows appropriate referral to a range of central support services to be arranged and undertaken

3.1. References and DBS

Formal references will not typically be required from applicants, unless specific conditions apply. Some courses do require Disclose and Baring Service checks (DBS) and additional reference checks, for example teacher training, childcare, or where it is a requirement of a work placement. This will be specified as part of the offer letter to an applicant. (See Appendix A for more details).

Colleges teams reserve the right to contact feeder schools/employers for references, and in some cases sharing arrangements may be in place already to support the transition of learners, particularly for those who may have additional or complex needs.

3.2. Place of study

NCG reserves the right to refuse a place of study should the application pose risk or concern in terms of safeguarding, security, safety, reputation, integrity of the college. The decision whether or not to award a place of study ultimately rests with the Principal as the accountable officer. The entitlement to funding may also be a barrier in some cases, as set out annually in relevant funding guidance.

Should an applicant wish to challenge the admission decision, they should do so by writing to the Head of Student Services (or equivalent post holder) who will first consider the merits of the case, check internal records, and if necessary consult with the Principal. There is no appeal process, however an applicant may wish to complain via the NCG Complaints Policy, should they feel they have been treated unfairly.

Additionally, college staff involved with apprenticeship applications should be aware of the entry requirements set out in the NCG Apprenticeship Prospectus (available on the NCG intranet, via the Apprenticeship Portal) when considering a candidate for an apprenticeship.

4. Student Responsibilities

Student entitlements are most likely to be met in full when a student fully acknowledges and actively engage in fulfilling their responsibilities by:

- a) providing honest and accurate information and documentation about themselves in order for the college to provide informed advice regarding their study programme and progression.
- b) ensuring students notify the college of any criminal convictions that they have or may received in the past, or any pending court appearances.
- c) ensure students inform the college of any change in circumstances, personal details such as address or emergency contact details.
- d) informing the college at the earliest opportunity of any disability and/or learning difficulties they have which may require support, or may need additional arrangements to ensure that they can succeed on the course.

- e) take personal responsibility for promoting a safe, secure and healthy environment and comply with the terms of the college and codes of practice as a student of any of the NCG Colleges.
- f) being prompt, efficient and courteous in dealing with the college, its staff and fellow peers.
- g) on enrolment the student will be expected to adhere to the required of the student charter as laid down in the Student Positive Behaviour Policy.

5. Staff Responsibilities

Teaching and support staff will ensure that (collectively):

- a) provide appropriate and accurate information and support to help the student to make informed decisions and choices at relevant stages of the admissions process.
- b) ensure applicants are made an offer that is reflective and appropriate to both the student aspirations and course entry requirements.
- c) ensure that applicants are provided with guidance where course entry criteria is not met providing an alternative offer in relation to their current academic and achievement levels.
- d) responsibility is taken to continuously keep updated on national career benchmarks on course entry criteria in relationship with related internal and external policies, procedures and guidelines.
- e) to support current students with securing their intended destination through the provision of, or signposting high quality careers guidance.

6. NCG Colleges Management Responsibilities:

Management responsibilities should ensure that:

- a) all staff involved at each stage of the FE and Apprenticeship Admissions process are informed and are clear about their roles and responsibilities and have received relevant training and development to ensure they are effective and efficient in their roles.
- b) annual review of all aspects relating to the FE and Apprenticeship Admissions procedures will take place and be recorded which will include.
 - 1) reflecting and responding to external curriculum changes in the post 16 qualification sector considering applicant data relating to protected characteristics.
 - 2) regular review of admissions entry criteria for each course by curriculum heads.
 - 3) determining generic and specific entry criteria by subject level in response to the academic and vocational content of the course e.g. portfolio, interview or audition requirements.

- 4) changes to procedures will be approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of each NCG College and communicated internally and externally to all relevant stakeholders in a timely manner as part of the recruitment and admissions cycle.
- 5) developing appropriate links with external partners to continuously improve transition arrangements between all NCG Colleges and associated education partner organisations.
- 6) allocation of responsibilities will be annually reviewed, led by each NCG Principalship Team and Senior Leadership Teams and Heads of Services to ensure the policy is implemented and delivered accurately and in a timely manner.

7. Standards by which the success of this policy can be evaluated:

- a) Staff Awareness: All NCG staff involved in admissions are fully conversant with the policy and their specific area of responsibility.
- b) Student Satisfaction: High levels of student satisfaction reported through positive student feedback from induction learner surveys, learner representation at focus groups and forums.
- c) Stakeholder Engagement: Positive feedback from associated stakeholders including parents, employers and education organisations as part of external reviews.
- d) Retention and Destination: High levels of student retention and positive destination data through strategic KPIs.
- e) A review of Gatsby benchmarks using the Compass tool for self-evaluation – this will be presented annually in the College Careers Report.

8. Responsibility for implementing this policy:

Responsibility resides at all levels for each NCG College:

- a) NCG Principals have the overall responsibility for implementing this policy.
- b) Senior Leadership Teams are responsible for overseeing the operation of this policy.
- c) Heads of Curriculum and Heads of Services are responsible for working collaboratively to implement the requirements of the policy.

Appendix A – Seeking DBS Checks and additional references

Courses requiring DBS and/or reference checks can be identified from the prospectus and course information on each of NCG's college websites.

Curriculum managers are required to inform the relevant College Student Services Team of any new, or additional provision, requiring these checks. DBS checks are generally required where the student will be working in regulated activity and are therefore governed by statutory requirements, and/or will be in a trusted position and are therefore required by relevant industry and sector occupational standards.

Additionally, references may be sought from at least one unrelated and responsible person if at any time, a student of any age is considered to pose a risk to themselves, staff, or students. If the student refuses to provide a suitable referee, the application cannot progress further.