

Student Admissions Policy 2021/22

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1. Introduction and purpose

This policy details the Academy's aims, principles and processes for the recruitment, selection and admission of students to all degrees offered by the Academy-

2. Ownership, responsibility and monitoring arrangements for the Policy

2.1 This policy is the responsibility of the Marketing and Commercial Director and is reviewed annually to take into account changes in legislation. The policy has been written to take account of the QAA Quality Code of Practice, Baseline Regulatory Requirements and current relevant legislation including, without limitation, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulations Equality Act 2010, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Human Rights Act 1998.

2.2 The policy is approved by the Backstage Academy Academic Board with major revisions submitted for approval as and when necessary.

2.3 The web addresses included within this document are correct as of 01 September 2021.

3. Aims and Principles

3.1 The policies, principles and practices of the Academy's recruitment and admissions activities aim to support the strategic plan of the Academy.

3.2 Our goal is to provide high-quality, student focussed programmes and offer an exciting and challenging student experience with high levels of proactive student support and excellent facilities. This will be achieved by building an enriched community of staff, students and collaborators from a wide and diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds.

3.3 We therefore welcome applications from students regardless of their personal background who are able to demonstrate the talent and/or potential to benefit from one of our programmes.

3.4 In order to achieve our strategic goals the Academy is committed to the following principles of recruitment and admissions:

- a) Transparent in procedures and process: ensuring that students are able to make informed decisions by providing clear, complete, accurate, up-to-date, transparent and accessible information about our courses, the student experience, the application process, and fees and costs
- b) Manage clearly, fairly, responsively and professionally: deliver a professional, efficient and effective admissions process which is fair and transparent
- c) Consistent in application and operation: all staff dealing with admissions shall be consistent and clear in giving detailed information about the admissions process to applicants. Applications will be assessed consistently, in accordance with this policy and the published entry requirements for the course and the Academy as a whole.
- d) Accountable to all stakeholders: ensuring clear, consistent and accessible information and guidance is available to all stakeholders in the admissions process e.g. Applicants, parents, advisers and all Academy staff in the admissions process.
- e) Applications are encouraged from the widest range of educational, social and cultural backgrounds.

3.5 Admission to the Academy is solely at the discretion of the Academy.

4. Management of Admissions Policies and Processes

4.1 The Admissions Team is responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of the Admissions service. The Admissions Team works in partnership with Academic staff, Academy Professional Support staff and external partners and agencies to deliver this service.

4.2 The Admissions Team is responsible for the development and delivery of policies, procedures, processes and systems to support the admission of students to the Academy. As a centralised admissions function, the team are responsible for checking applications and issuing offers for places at the Academy, ensuring all compliance checks on students are completed. The team also provides briefing notes and training for academic departments in delivering their responsibilities. Applications are always referred to and reviewed by academic staff for a final decision. Particular consideration will be given where the applicant presents with non-standard qualifications and/or prior work experience which is relevant in the decision; and where an applicant is known to the Academy – through prior study, application or as a member of staff.

4.3 The Academic Team in conjunction with the Marketing and Commercial Director, the Head of Institution, and the Backstage Academy Governing Board are responsible for defining the entry requirements and assessment methods for their programmes. This may include, where relevant, carrying out interviews, overseeing tests, making assessment decisions, recording and communicating decisions to the Admissions Team and providing feedback to students. It is also the responsibility of the academic staff to ensure that detailed information published about their programmes is up-to-date.

5. Information for Prospective Students

5.1 The Academy aims to make the process of admissions as straightforward as possible. We will, therefore provide detailed, accurate and up-to-date information about our programmes, the entry requirements and admissions processes to students to enable them to make informed decisions.

5.2 We publish annual course guides on our website for our programmes each year and every effort is made to ensure that the information is as accurate as possible at the time of print. The most up-to-date information will be made available on our website www.backstage-academy.co.uk

Course Amendments

5.3 The Academy will take all reasonable steps to provide education services with reasonable care and skill and in the manner set out in its published material. The Academy considers changes to courses very carefully and the content of individual courses are under constant academic review and may change from time to time and any change to a course will be made in consultation with enrolled students and applicants in accordance with the University of Bolton's Modifications to Taught Programmes (available at: www.bolton.ac.uk/studentinformation-policyzone) which will be exercised fairly and reasonably and to which applicants will be entitled to receive fair and reasonable notice.

Where significant changes to a course are made or a decision is taken to suspend a course made between the offer of admission and enrolment we will inform applicants at the earliest possible

opportunity via UCAS (should the applicant have applied through UCAS) and/or directly. We will outline the various options available to the applicant including the option to transfer their application to another course at the Academy or the option to withdraw their application as per the UCAS guidance and rules. Such changes may include:

- a) a change to the course content or modules of a course
- b) the withdrawal or suspension of a course, where the decision to withdraw or suspend a course had not been made at the time the course was advertised
- c) a change to the geographical location of a programme or at a different institution
- d) a change to the work experience, placement, practical elements or in the standing of the programme
- e) a change to the attendance model e.g. different start date.

The above list is not exhaustive. If there is any doubt as to whether a change is 'significant' the Academy's default position will be to inform applicants.

5.4 External factors such as industrial action or other circumstances beyond the control of the Academy may make it impossible for the Academy to provide those education services offered. For this reason the Academy may have to make variations and will make every effort to minimise any disruption that may result from such changes and will seek to provide fair and reasonable remedy to those adversely affected by such disruption.

6. Responsibility of Prospective Students

6.1 It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that their application provides true, accurate and fair reflection of their prior study and experience. Please see Section 10 of this document for further information regarding submission of fraudulent applications.

6.2 Throughout the recruitment and admissions cycle we will communicate with applicants via a range of methods including post, email, text message and telephone/video calls. We will provide applicants with relevant information at the relevant point in the cycle and include all relevant dates and deadlines for you to respond to us or to UCAS. Where applicants fail to respond to us or to UCAS by deadlines provided, we will do our best to ensure that their application is reinstated where possible, however, we reserve the right to withdraw an application or offer to study at the Academy in these circumstances.

7. Assessing Applications and Entry Requirements

Assessing Applications

7.1 We welcome applications from students regardless of their personal background who are able to demonstrate the talent and/or potential to benefit from one of our programmes.

7.2 All applications will be assessed consistently, in accordance with this policy and with the published entry criteria for the course and the Academy as a whole. Applications will be assessed by staff who are trained and equipped to make those decisions.

7.3 Each application is assessed on an individual basis and students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their preparedness for higher education including their skills, achievements, experience and potential. These methods of assessment are fair and valid and are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure fair and equal access to all prospective students who have the

potential to benefit from and contribute to a quality education on their chosen programme. All applicants are invited to an interview by Backstage Academy academic and professional support staff.

7.4 When considering an application the Academy will consider the following:

- a) Subjects and grades achieved in awarded qualifications
- b) Predicted achievement in qualifications still being studied
- c) Personal statement which should demonstrate commitment and motivation for the subject and/or career, details of any work or volunteer experience, extra-curricular activities, achievements and interests
- d) References for confirmation of academic potential, personal qualities and professional suitability.

In cases where an applicant may not have traditional academic qualifications, we may also use additional or alternative assessment methods including:

- a) Telephone or face-to-face interview - these may be carried out one-to-one or in a group situation
- b) Portfolio of work
- c) Admissions/diagnostic tests – including numeracy and/or literacy tests

Entry Requirements

7.5 Each course publishes an academic entry requirement which applicants are required to fulfil. The Academy also has general entry requirements for all of its programmes. These entry criteria are published on the Academy's website at www.backstage-academy.co.uk and in its course guides.

7.6 We welcome a wide range of UK, European and International qualifications but we cannot currently offer places to international students.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the Academy consults with students and makes a wide range of reasonable adjustments to its provisions, criteria and practices to accommodate the needs of disabled students throughout the student life-cycle from admission to graduation.

The Academy recognises that the application of a competence standard does not come under the definition of a provision, criterion or practice such that the Act does not require it to make reasonable adjustments to the standards themselves. We will, however, take all reasonable steps to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged in demonstrating their competence whilst protecting the integrity of academic standards and learning outcomes. This may include alternative assessment tasks and, if necessary, consideration of transfer to another suitable course.

Applicants without formal academic qualifications

7.7 Applications from students without formal academic qualifications may also be considered by the Academy. Students may have obtained the ability and knowledge to succeed on a course from professional, work or personal contexts. In such cases, the Course Leader is able to use academic discretion to recommend an offer to study on their programme and is required to complete a Non-Standard Entry Form available from the University of Bolton's Admissions Team. Students will still be subject to non-academic entry criteria.

Applicants with evidence of prior learning (RPL)

7.8 Where an applicant has completed prior study, work experience or other training relevant to the course, the Course Leader may, subject to professional body requirements, consider an applicant for advanced entry to the course. In consideration of the application, the Course Leader will consider whether prior learning outcomes and aims, progression and assessment outcomes have been met. The University of Bolton's Standards and Enhancement Office has oversight of this process and the policy on RPL may be found at:

www.bolton.ac.uk/studentinformation-policyzone

8. Applying for a course

8.1 There are two different application methods depending on what type of course you wish to apply for.

Full-time, undergraduate applicants

8.2 Applications for full-time undergraduate courses from UK students should be made through UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) for September/October entry. Further information can be found at www.backstage-academy.co.uk and www.ucas.com.

Short courses and all postgraduate applicants – full and part time

8.3 Applications for these types of courses are made directly to the Academy using the online application form via the Academy website.

9. Keeping in touch and making a decision on your application

9.1 The Academy aims to assess applications and make decisions as quickly as possible. Given the range and diversity of applications, the varying entry requirements and compliance checks we have to complete, it is not always possible to make a decision immediately. Where a decision is delayed for any reason we will write to the applicant with this information and let them know when they should expect a decision.

9.2 The Academy recognises the importance of keeping applicants informed throughout the application process. We will communicate with applicants regularly during the application cycle usually via email or the Backstage Academy app and in the following circumstances:

- a) We will send an acknowledgement SMS message and email when the application arrives at the Academy (note this does not happen immediately after sending your application through UCAS).
- b) An invitation to an interview, to attend an open day or visit day (where relevant)
- c) To request further information
- d) To make an offer of a place to study on a course and to confirm the terms and conditions of the offer
- e) To let a student know that we are unable to make an offer for a course
- f) Confirmation of reasons for a rejection if an application has been unsuccessful
- g) To confirm that an applicant has met the conditions of the offer
- h) To confirm enrolment and induction information

9.3 The Academy may also send additional information, helpful advice and guidance, reminders and requests for further information during the application cycle.

Offers

9.4 Once we have considered your application we may make one of two types of offer to you. The terms and conditions of that offer will be provided to you at the point of offer.

1. Conditional Offer – requiring you to meet further academic or other conditions before you will be eligible for entry. Within the confines of this policy, we are able to vary the offer we make to applicants for the same course dependent on the individual's circumstances.

2. Unconditional Offer – where we are satisfied you have met the conditions of entry for that course. In exceptional circumstances we may make unconditional offers to applicants who are yet to complete their studies where we are confident they have the potential and/or talent to succeed on the course. Unconditional offers made to applicants yet to complete their studies are made solely at the discretion of the Academy.

9.5 Once the conditions of a conditional offer have been satisfied, the offer will become unconditional. This change will be communicated via UCAS (for applicants who have applied via UCAS) or with a new offer letter directly from the Academy. The Academy may take into account circumstances which may have impacted on an applicant's final qualifications. In order for these circumstances to be considered, the applicant should provide written evidence in good time, for example from the academic referee or medical practitioner.

9.6 If you do not, or are not likely to meet the entry criteria for the course you have applied for then we may make an offer to you for an alternative course. In cases where we are unable to offer an alternative we may not be able to make you an offer.

Feedback on unsuccessful applications

9.7 The Academy will provide feedback to unsuccessful applications in response to a request in writing by email or letter to the Admissions Team admissions@backstage-academy.co.uk We aim to respond to requests for feedback within 28 working days of receipt of the request. The response will be in writing. For information about appeals or complaints please see Section 16 of this document.

Deferred Entry

9.8 The Academy does not allow applicants to defer their application once an offer has been made. In exceptional circumstances, and at the Academy's discretion deferrals may be granted. Any deferrals are subject to completion of a deferral status form closer to the time of enrolment to confirm any change of circumstances.

10. Verification of qualifications, disclosure of relevant information, fraud and omission of Information

10.1 All applicants are required to provide evidence of their qualifications on which their offer is based. For many UCAS applicants, UCAS verifies and supplies the results directly to the Academy. Other applicants will be asked to upload their certificates and other relevant information at the point of application.

10.2 The Academy reserves the right to withdraw an offer to study where an application is found to:

- contain fraudulent or falsified documents

- contain misleading or false information
- have omitted key information from their application (including failure to declare a criminal conviction – see section 12)
- involve collusion (where the content of the application submitted is not the work of the applicant
 - be plagiarised
 -

Any student admitted on this basis may also have their enrolment and studies at the Academy terminated, even if they are already attending.

Applicants with prior study at the Academy

10.3 If a student has previously studied at the Academy, we require that they indicate this in their application. If an applicant has been withdrawn from studies for any reason then the decision to re-admit the applicant will need to be approved by the Course Leader responsible for the course applied for.

11. Vulnerable Adults

11.1 In situations where the Academy is made aware during the application or admissions process of an applicant's personal circumstances under which they may be considered a vulnerable adult, the applicant will be treated with the same standard of care as that offered to children and young people. In these circumstances, a similar process to that for 'Under 18' students in the Academy's Safeguarding Policy may be undertaken including a risk assessment. This will be carried out in conjunction with the applicant, any carers or guardians and the local authority where relevant.

12. Applicants with Criminal Convictions

12.1 Having a criminal conviction will not necessarily prevent an applicant being successful in securing a place at the Academy although there may be requirements for some projects and work opportunities on the course that may require a risk assessment.

12.2 The Academy does not ask applicants to declare spent convictions or convictions that are not relevant to their course of study or to actively becoming part of the Academy's wider community.

12.3 As part of the Academy's duty of care and associated fiduciary duties to its staff, students and wider community we ask all applicants to disclose relevant unspent criminal convictions. By relevant offences, we mean offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, or offences involving the unlawful supply or use of controlled drugs or substances. If the course involves regular contact with children or vulnerable adults, the Academy would consider it a high risk to enrol anyone who has been convicted at any time of any the following offences: murder; manslaughter; rape; other serious sexual offences; grievous bodily harm or other serious acts of violence; serious class A drug related offences; robbery; burglary; theft; deception or fraud.

12.4 For courses that are exempt under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974) we will ask for any convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings that are not protected i.e. eligible for filtering under the ROA (1974) to be declared.

12.5 In the event that relevant information (whether in relation to previous convictions or otherwise) is declared by an applicant during the application process or obtained through a

DBS check, the Academy will consider the following (non-exhaustive) factors before reaching a decision on whether to permit the applicant to commence study:

- whether the conviction or other matter revealed is relevant to the or course in question;
- the nature and seriousness of any offence or other matter revealed;
- the length of time since the offence or other matter occurred;
- whether the applicant has a pattern of behaviour or other relevant matters;
- whether the applicant's circumstances have changed since the offending behaviour and whether there have been efforts made not to reoffend; and
- the circumstances surrounding the offence and the explanation(s) offered by the applicant.

12.6 Where these factors present a conflict to the Academy's duty of care and associated fiduciary duties, the Academy reserves the right not to make an offer to study (or to withdraw an offer to study made in advance of a criminal conviction declaration and not disclosed prior to enrolment) where it considers it has a lawful basis to do so.

12.7 Risk Assessment of Declared Convictions

It is important that suitable applicants are not refused a place the Academy because of offences which are not relevant and do not make them a risk to staff, students or the wider community. The process therefore may include a risk assessment which is appropriate to the project or work opportunity which has to be carried out.

Stage 1 includes completion of a risk assessment by a nominated member(s) of staff.

Stage 2 Appeal – an applicant may appeal the decision via the Complaints and Appeals Process for Applicants, the final stage of which includes a review by an external appeal officer nominated by the Head of Institution.

12.8 Applicants who fail to disclose a criminal conviction at the point of application or when subsequently asked to do so are subject to the same sanctions under section 10.

12.9 Applicants whose circumstances change in the period between application and enrolment must declare such changes to the Admissions Team prior to enrolment so that these can be taken into consideration.

13. Applicants with additional support requirements

13.1 The Academy takes all reasonable steps to meet both general access needs and applicants with additional support requirements. Applications from students with additional support requirements are considered via the same policies and procedures set out in this policy and any support requirements are considered entirely separately.

13.2 Applicants are encouraged to speak to our Disability support team in advance of their application and entry to the Academy to explore how we may be able to meet those requirements. Once an offer has been made an assessment of requirements is carried out to ensure that Academy can provide that support. In the event that the Academy considers the adjustments that need to be made as not reasonable, then we will communicate that information to the student as soon as possible.

14. Assessment of fees and access to funding

14.1 The Academy will make an assessment regarding your fee status and whether you are eligible to pay 'Home/EU' fees or 'overseas' fees. We will make this decision based on information you provide in your application but may ask you for further information.

14.2 The Academy has a responsibility to its prospective students to ensure that they are able to pay their tuition fees and living expenses during their studies. We may, therefore, at a point before offer ask you to confirm that you have funding organised for your studies or whether you will self-fund your studies. Our Registry staff are able to offer advice and guidance on student funding, scholarships and bursaries, the availability of funding for students that have previously studied at HE level, are studying part-time or on a postgraduate course. More information is available from www.backstage-academy.co.uk

15. Data Protection and Security

15.1 Data supplied by applicants as part of the application and admissions process forms part of the student's record and is used to assess the suitability of an applicant for study at the Academy. Anonymised data is also used by the Academy for statistical, research and reporting purposes.

15.2 Data for applicants who are not admitted to the Academy is destroyed in accordance with government guidelines.

15.3 The Academy complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation, in its use of applicant data. Further information about data protection at the Academy can be found at <https://www.backstage-academy.co.uk/about/governance>

16. Appeals and complaints

16.1 Applicants who experience a problem with any service provided by the Academy should initially raise the matter with the person responsible for the service. If informal discussion does not resolve the situation satisfactorily, then applicants should email the Marketing and Commercial Director at : admissions@backstage-academy.co.uk

16.2 Should an applicant wish to request a review of the decision made on their application or wish to make a complaint about the admissions process, the Academy's 'Complaints and Appeals Process for Applicants' should be consulted. The Academy's Complaints and Appeals Process for applicants can be found at <https://www.backstage-academy.co.uk/about/governance>

16.3 Applicants may not raise concerns about academic judgement.

17. Further information

Further information about the Academy, how to apply, entry requirements and contact details can be found at <https://www.backstage-academy.co.uk/about/governance>