



# Higher Education Admissions Policy

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## Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose	3
Scope	3
Principles of Fair Admissions	3
HE Admissions Function/ Responsibilities	3
Setting and monitoring of admission criteria	4
Selection criteria	4
Public information	4
Assessing, making offers and communicating with applicants	5
Assessment of Applications	5
Issues in considering application	5
<i>Plagiarism</i>	5
<i>Dishonesty</i>	5
<i>Declared Learning Needs</i>	5
Communication with applicants	5
Assessment at Interviews/Auditions/ Selection and Portfolios	6
Feedback	6
Appeals and complaints	6
Confirmation on offers	6
Enrolment	6
Internal Audit	6
Support and training for admissions staff	7
Annex A - Principles of Fair Admissions	8

### Introduction Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide prospective students of Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College (trading as West London College), staff and partner organisations with a guide to our approach to the Admission of Higher Education Students to the College. The policy has been devised following examination of Supporting Professionals in Admissions (SPA) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and aims to provide an efficient, fair and transparent HE Admission Function for EHWLC.

### Scope

This policy covers admissions to Higher Education courses delivered at Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College (trading as West London College).

### **Principles of Fair Admissions**

West London College seeks to ensure a fair HE admissions system which provides equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability, level of attainment and aspirations. Our approach to the admission of students also upholds the principles of fair admission outlined in the Schwartz report (2004) through being:

1. transparent
2. fair
3. honest
4. consistent
5. accessible
6. personalised
7. timely

Consequently, the principal aim of the Admissions Policy of the college is to offer admission to all suitably students who are likely to benefit from HE irrespective of social, racial, religious and financial considerations.

Two further aims are:

1. aspiration – to encourage applications from groups that are, at present, under-represented in Higher Education
2. fairness – to ensure that each applicant is individually assessed, without partiality or bias, in accordance with the policy on Equal Opportunities, and to ensure that an applicant's chance of admission to the College does not depend on unnecessary barriers or obstacles

Once students are admitted, we ensure that they're given the academic and personal, support necessary for successful completion of their course at West London College.

### **HE Admissions Function/ Responsibilities**

The Student Recruitment and Admissions team have overall responsibility for the functioning of the process. Curriculum teams have the responsibility for providing appropriately qualified staff to carry out interviews and ensuring that the principles and ethos of this policy are implemented and reviewed. Curriculum Managers are responsible for designating appropriately qualified staff to carry out interviews and to identify training needs. Interviewing staff are responsible for conducting the interview within the principles and guidelines of this policy, evaluating the suitability for potential students and making appropriate offers.

### **Setting and monitoring of admission criteria**

Our widening participation policy within the UK has focussed on trying to ensure that students with the ability to succeed at the college aren't deterred from applying by any misconceptions that may surround this level of study. Engagement activities include; transition to Higher Education Courses, supported application evenings, informal HE Open Events, we seek to introduce students to the range of Higher Education courses we offer and to support and enrich the study of subjects at the college. We feel very strongly that applicants should be admitted on their potential to benefit and succeed in their chosen course.

### **Selection criteria**

In all cases we're looking for:

1. academic ability and potential;
2. motivation and suitability for the chosen course;
3. commitment and self-discipline.

Every applicant is considered individually in a holistic assessment using all the information available to us:

1. their academic record, including GCSE and AS (or equivalent) grades and marks and NVQ, BTEC (or equivalent) grades or predictions;
2. the school/college reference
3. the personal statement
4. submitted work, where requested
5. performance in any written assessment
6. performance at interview, if interviewed

The individual programme specifications define the entry requirements for each specific course. Entry requirements are reviewed annually by the Curriculum Manager through the Course Board to ensure a fair admissions system which admits students who are able to succeed. This review will take into account the progression and success of existing students. This will be conducted as part of the annual HE Planning Process. Target Numbers are set through the curriculum planning Annual Planning Process. The recruitment against target is monitored centrally by the Assistant Principal / Curriculum Manager for each individual course. This is reported to the HE Group.

### **Public information**

All course entry requirements, course content, duration and fees will be made public in line with information in the programme specification. Primary site of publication is the Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College, trading as West London College, website. It will be the joint responsibility of Curriculum Manager, Assistant Principal and the marketing department to ensure that all public information is consistent and in line with the definitive record of the programme.

### **Assessing, making offers and communicating with applicants**

All applications are received and further assessment such as an interview, audition, or portfolio or written assignment are used to aid the application process and help place the applicant on an appropriate course.. Admissions will make the initial contact with students and communicate with them in the way described in annex A. Where an applicant directly contacts a member of curriculum team an interview is to be offered as soon as is possible, however in order to enable us to monitor our

applicants the potential student will need to complete the application process when they attend the interview.

### **Assessment of Applications**

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Academic achievement or predicted achievement – do they meet the entry requirements;
- Personal statements – to understand skills, motivation and interest in subject;
- References;
- Interview/Portfolios/audition and selection events – to assess any non-academic requirements, such as level of self-awareness for counselling;
- to be assessed by tutors.

### **Issues in considering application**

All students will need to attend interview with proof of identity

All students will need to provide original copies of certificates before enrolment.

#### *Plagiarism*

If West London College detects plagiarism in personal statements, we reserve the right to decline the application or withdraw any offers made.

#### *Dishonesty*

If West London College detects dishonesty in academic achievement, we reserve the right to decline the application or withdraw any offers made.

#### *Declared Learning Needs*

West London College aims to support all learners regardless of their support needs. For applicants with a declared learning need we will conduct an assessment to ensure that the college can make the required, reasonable adjustment to support learning.

### **Communication with applicants**

Decisions reached following assessment will be communicated to the applicant directly from Admissions. In the regular admission cycle and where interviews are not required the applicant will usually receive an offer or decision letter within 3 weeks of the application being received.

The decision to interview/ audition is communicated to the applicant directly from Admissions. In the regular admission cycle applicants will usually receive an invitation to interview email within 3 weeks of the application being received. Any course specific additional information required for interview will also be sent with the invitation. There will be a minimum of 1- 2 weeks' notice given prior to interview dates. If the decision not to offer an interview is made, notification will be sent to the applicant within 3 weeks of the application being received. For applicants who are unable to travel to interview, it may be possible to conduct an online interview or upload portfolios of evidence/ auditions for assessment. Requests for this will be dealt with on a case by case basis.

### **Assessment at Interviews/Auditions/ Selection and Portfolios**

The college tutor will conduct the assessment at interview/audition/selection or portfolio. Following the assessment, the offer decision, type of offer and/or conditions of offer will be communicated within two weeks of interview directly to the applicant by letter.

### **Feedback**

Consistent generic feedback will be provided to applicants who are not invited for interview/audition/selection or who are subsequently not offered a place. More specific individualised feedback may be available on request.

### **Appeals and complaints**

Unsuccessful applicants have the right of appeal in writing to an Assistant Principal within five working days of being refused admission to the college, explaining the reasons why the college should reconsider its decision. Appeals will be considered by a Panel chaired by the Assistant Principal, whose decision is final.

### **Confirmation on offers**

Student Recruitment and Admissions will be responsible for confirming conditional offers. In all cases it will be the responsibility of the applicant to provide evidence of qualifications to enable confirmation decision to be made.

### **Enrolment**

Letters with enrolment times and dates will be sent out to all confirmed applicants from the beginning of August. The enrolment letter will include clear guidance on the next steps, what to bring to enrolment and a contact for any queries. All prior qualifications must be available and recorded before enrolment takes place.

### **Internal Audit**

A record of all decisions relating to applications will be kept centrally. Clear and consistent decisions, based on offers/entry requirements will be recorded and available to applicants on request. Details of students' responses to questions MUST be recorded on the college system.

This will include

- Interview approval process and subsequent communication to student.
- Evidence of interview outcome form

Where an applicant is not successful, the reasons for rejection will be recorded.

### **Support and training for Admissions Staff**

Staff will continue to attend Student Loan Company training events as required for CPD. Regular training on Admissions processes will be conducted by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Manager and other relevant Senior Managers.

## Annex A - Principles of Fair Admissions

September 2004 saw the publication of “The Admissions to Higher Education Review - Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice to Higher Education” the report was written by Steven Schwartz, Vice-Chancellor, Brunel University and Chair of the Admissions to Higher Education Review.

The report outlined the following 6 principles to fair admissions which this policy seeks to uphold.

Principle 1: A fair admissions system should be transparent

Principle 2: A fair admissions system should enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and their potential

Principle 3: A fair admissions system should strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid

Principle 4: A fair admissions system should seek to minimise barriers for

Applicants

Principle 5: A fair admissions system should be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes

Principle 1: A fair admissions system should be transparent

*Universities and colleges should provide, consistently and efficiently through appropriate mechanisms, the information applicants need to make an informed choice. This should include the institution’s admissions policy and detailed criteria for admission to courses, along with an explanation of admissions processes. It should include a general indication of the weight given to prior academic achievement and potential demonstrated by other means. The latest available information should also be provided about the entry qualifications of applicants accepted on each course, and procedures for complaints and appeals. Institutions should conduct and publish a periodic analysis of admissions data, and provide feedback on request to unsuccessful applicants.*

Principle 2: A fair admissions system should enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and their potential

*Ability to complete the course must be an essential criterion for admission. In assessing applicants’ merit and potential, institutions may legitimately consider other factors in addition to examination results, including: the educational context of an applicant’s formal achievement; other indicators of potential and capability (such as the results of additional testing or assessment, including interviews, or non-academic experiences and relevant skills); and how an individual applicant’s experiences, skills and perspectives could contribute to the learning environment. However, applicants should be assessed as individuals: it is not appropriate to treat one applicant automatically more or less favourably by virtue of his or her background, school or college. At any stage in the admissions process, all applicants should be given an equal opportunity to provide relevant information or demonstrate relevant skills. Admissions criteria should not include factors irrelevant to the assessment of merit: for example, institutions should not give preference to the relatives of graduates or benefactors. Admissions staff have the discretion to vary the weight they give to examination results and other indicators of achievement and potential and therefore to vary the offer that they make to applicants, providing this is done in a way which is consistent with the principles of fair admissions.*



## Admissions to Higher Education

Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice and This policy considers the core aims of the Office for Students regulatory framework, which are as follows:

- Are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education.
- Receive a high-quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of provider, campus or course closure.
- Are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time.
- Receive value for money

This policy applies to all staff involved in the recruitment and admission of students onto higher education awards and students undertaking a higher education award at West London College. Its purpose is to ensure that the institution follows the QAA's UK Quality Code "Advice and Guidance on Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access" and that these Guidelines are applied consistently across the organisation.

The QAA expectation for quality is that: From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

The guidance sets out principles of core practice:

- The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.
- The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.
- The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students
- Information provided to prospective students for recruitment and widening access purposes supports students in making informed decisions.
- Policies and procedures for selection and admission to higher education should be readily accessible by prospective students and their supporters, and clearly articulate how the application and selection process operates.
- Higher education providers use fair, reliable and appropriate assessment methods that enable them to select students with the potential to complete the course successfully.
- Higher education providers reduce or remove unnecessary barriers for prospective students.
- Information provided to prospective students for recruitment and widening access purposes supports students in making informed decisions.
- All staff, representatives and partners engaged in the delivery of admissions, recruitment and widening access are appropriately trained and resourced. As result this policy is fully informed by the QAA guidance located at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/adviceand-guidance>

Principle 3: A fair admissions system should strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid.

*Assessment can legitimately include a broad range of factors. Some of these factors are amenable to 'hard' quantifiable measures, while others rely on qualitative judgements. This should continue: both legal and lay opinion place value on the use of discretion and the assessment of applicants as individuals. Admissions policies and procedures should be informed and guided by current research and good practice. Where possible, universities and colleges using quantifiable measures should use tests and approaches that have already been shown to predict undergraduate success. Where existing tests are*

*unsuited to a course's entry requirements, institutions may develop alternatives, but should be able to demonstrate that their methods are relevant, reliable and valid. Where qualitative judgements are used, contextual criteria against which applicants are judged should accord with the Steering Group's guidelines. Universities and colleges should monitor and evaluate the link between their admissions policies and undergraduate performance and retention, and review their policies to address any issues identified.*

Principle 4: A fair admissions system should seek to minimise barriers for Applicants

*Admissions processes should seek to minimise any barriers that are irrelevant to satisfying admissions requirements. This could include barriers arising from the means of assessment; the varying resources and support available to applicants; disability; and the type of an applicant's qualifications (e.g. vocational or academic).*

Principle 5: A fair admissions system should be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes

*An institution's structures and processes should be designed to facilitate a high quality, efficient admissions system and a professional service to applicants. Structures and processes should feature: clear lines of responsibility across the institution to ensure consistency; allocation of resources appropriate to the task; and clear guidelines for the appointment, training and induction of all staff involved in admissions. The Steering Group suggests that institutions would find it simpler and cheaper to implement these guidelines if at least part of the admissions process were conducted by centrally located staff.*