

University Campus Oldham (UCO) HE Admissions Policy

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1. General Statement

The University Campus Oldham (UCO) Admissions Policy sets out the means by which we will encourage and welcome applicants with different educational and social backgrounds and ensure that no student with the potential to meet our standard entry requirements is deterred from applying. All applications are considered and evaluated on the basis of individual potential.

This policy is aligned with the UCO HE and Higher Skills Strategic Plan and is consistent with good admissions practice in higher education, as defined in the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice¹, The Schwartz Recommendations for Good Practice² and the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions project³ and complies with current legislation affecting the admission of students.

This policy covers admission for all undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses, full and part time mode of delivery.

This document has been agreed by the UCO Quality Improve Committee and represents the UCOs policy on the admission of 'Taught' students. The policy is the responsibility of the Vice Principal - HE and Higher Skills and will be subject to a major review every three years, with minor updates being made in the interim, as required.

2. Admissions Criteria and Selection

2.1 Qualifications for Entry

UCO welcomes applications from appropriately qualified applicants offering a wide range of qualifications. The overriding principle is that UCO is satisfied that the applicant has the necessary background and skills to benefit from their studies. UCO does not discriminate against applicants who have re-taken part or all of a qualification and will treat an achieved or predicted grade in the same way irrespective of whether or not re-takes are involved.

Entry requirements are available on the UCAS site and Course Pages on the UCO website and Prospectus. Additional requirements, for example the requirement to attend an audition or interview, are clearly detailed.

¹ The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2013) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admissions to higher (2013)*
² Admissions to Higher education Steering Group (2004) *Fair admissions to higher education: Recommendations for good practice*
³ Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Policies: *Admissions Policies – April 2014*

2.2 Competence in English Language

Teaching and assessment will normally take place in English therefore applicants must be competent in the English language and most courses require GCSE English grade C/4, or an equivalent qualification.

Applicants who have not completed their education in an English-speaking country must satisfy the UCO and awarding body language requirements before admission to a course. This requirement means that they must have a satisfactory command of the English language in terms of reading, writing, listening and speaking. The minimum currently acceptable qualifications are detailed on our UCAS entries.

3. Commitment to fairness transparency and consistency

To ensure a fair and consistent admissions process, UCO will ensure that the following principles are adhered to:

- All courses will clearly state their entry criteria, including academic qualifications, along with appropriate experience and skills required for entry
- Entry criteria will be easily accessible through our UCAS entries, website and prospectus
- Applicants will be informed in general terms how they can demonstrate their achievements (both academic and experiential) and motivation to study
- We will provide clear information on required entry points or points ranges. Any amendments made after points or points ranges have been printed in the UCO prospectus will be publicised on the UCO website and through the UCAS website
- Offers will normally be made within the publicised points range
- An offer below the normal points range may be made in exceptional circumstances where there is evidence that the applicant's grades may have been affected by individual extenuating circumstances.

Where courses include interviews, portfolio submission or auditions as part of their selection criteria we will make this explicit to applicants, and provide details on how the interviews will be conducted and the criteria used to select successful candidates.

4. Feedback to applicants

Successful applicants will be informed via UCAS or direct communication from UCO as appropriate. Information will be issued providing full details of the enrolment process.

Feedback to unsuccessful applicants will be provided on request and will usually only be provided to the applicant themselves and not to any third party e.g. parent, teacher unless specific permission has been granted. Where a student has been unsuccessful, consideration for other courses will be actively undertaken by the UCO.

5. Late applications

Applicants to undergraduate courses who apply by the required UCAS deadline will receive equal consideration. Applications received after the UCAS deadline will be considered on an individual basis, and only where there are still places available on the course to which they have applied.

6. Admissions procedures

UCO is committed to providing a professional admissions operation in order to provide the best service to applicants and to the institution. In order to achieve this we operate a centralised admissions process for some courses. Within the centralised admissions process, Admissions tutors remain involved and are responsible for agreeing the entry criteria and selection processes and for setting offer-ranges for each of their courses.

The consideration of individual applications for courses is undertaken by experienced admissions staff who review the application on the basis of achieved and predicted qualifications, alongside the personal statement and reference. Where the applicant has non-standard qualifications or on occasions where the applicant narrowly misses the qualifications for the standard offer for a course, the application is always referred to the Admissions tutor for consideration.

The UCO Admissions Team is responsible for all communications with UCAS, including the transmission of admissions decisions. The team is also responsible for providing statistical information to enable the UCO to monitor numbers of applications, offers and acceptances within each application cycle.

7. Responsibility of applicants in the application process

It is the responsibility of applicants to provide full and accurate information in an application and to notify UCO of any changes or corrections to the original application.

By accepting an offer of admission, the applicant agrees to abide by the rules and regulations of UCO and its awarding partners.

In the light of additional information, which was not available at the time of offer, an offer may be amended or, in exceptional circumstances, withdrawn. UCO also reserves the right to correct errors where they have been made in the communication of decisions and offers, but will only withdraw an offer made in error where all conditions have been satisfied with the applicant's consent. If someone is found to have provided fraudulent documentation in support of a University or UK visa application any offer from the University will be invalid.

UCO reserves the right to exclude an applicant who is considered on justifiable grounds to be unsuitable for a place on a particular course according to individual circumstances and following the guidelines laid down in its awarding partners 'Fitness to Practice' regulations.

At all times, UCO expects staff involved in the admissions process and applicants to act in a courteous manner.

8. The offer making process

On receiving an application, the applicant will be contacted to acknowledge receipt of the application.

Where an applicant has applied through UCAS, UCO will communicate its decision through the official channels provided. Where an applicant has applied directly to UCO, a formal decision will be made and communicated directly to the applicant by the Admissions Team.

In some cases where an applicant has applied for one course and is not successful, an alternative course may be offered. The alternative offer will be officially communicated via UCAS, where appropriate, and applicants will also be contacted by UCO to confirm and discuss a changed offer decision.

An offer, whether conditional or unconditional, will be made in good faith taking into account information as supplied by the applicant. In some circumstances, an offer may be conditional upon non-academic requirements e.g. a Disclosure and Barring Service check or health assessment which is deemed satisfactory.

9. Confirmation of results

The confirmation process is the procedure involved in analysing examination results in relation to the offer made by UCO. If an applicant has met their academic and non-academic conditions, UCO will be in a position to 'Confirm' their place. Applications from candidates who have not met the required grades exactly are reviewed and their places may be confirmed at the University's discretion if places are available, although no guarantee is made this this will be possible.

The confirmation procedure uses information systems to confirm places via UCAS (where appropriate).

UCO will consider each and every application on individual merit. Any details of extenuating circumstances provided by an applicant will be considered when identifying applications that have not met their required qualification grades.

10. Fraudulent statements/omissions and Plagiarism

Applicants suspected of providing, or found to have provided, false information will be referred to UCAS, if their application was made via UCAS. The same is true of applicants who are suspected of omitting, or found to have omitted, information that they are required to disclose.

Applications identified by UCAS' Similarity Detection software to contain plagiarised material will be considered on an individual basis by Admissions tutors, taking into account the nature, relevance and importance of the plagiarism. In such cases, Admissions tutors may contact applicants to discuss their application in more detail.

UCO reserves the right to cancel an application or withdraw any offer if it is found that an application contains false, plagiarised or misleading information. UCO also reserves the right to withdraw a student from a course following enrolment if fraudulent activity is subsequently found to have taken place.

11. Equal Opportunities

UCO is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and aims to provide a working, learning and social environment that is free from unfair discrimination. UCO's admissions process must therefore ensure that it is transparent, fair and consistent regardless of age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex or sexual orientation.

12. Students under 18

UCO welcomes applications from people of all ages and applications will be considered on their individual merits. If an offer of a place is made to an applicant who will be under the age of 18 at the time of admission, certain legislative procedures may be necessary in order to fulfil our duty of care for students. Further information can be request via the Admissions Team.

13. Disability

UCO welcomes applications from students with disabilities and aims to ensure that their participation in both the academic and social life of the Campus is as successful as that of other students. Applicants who declare a disability are considered according to the same principles as for other candidates. If made the offer of a place, applicants who have declared a disability are contacted by the Admissions Team and asked to complete a questionnaire which enables them to discuss their likely requirements with the HE Disability Officer, to reduce any barriers that might confront them when seeking to study at UCO and provide appropriate support for their studies. A decision may need to take into account any overriding health and safety concerns, barriers relating to professional body requirements or UCO's ability or inability to make any reasonable adjustments. In such instances, cases will be considered on an individual basis.

14. In care/'Looked after' Students

UCO welcomes applications from 'Looked after' students. If made the offer of a place, applicants who have made a declaration are contacted by the Admissions Team. The Course Administrator can signpost to appropriate support as applicable, prior to entry and during the transition to study at UCO.

15. Mature students

UCO encourages applications from non-school and college leavers. We recognise that some applicants will offer a range of experience and perhaps non-traditional qualifications, which will be taken into account when the application is considered. Each application will be considered on its individual merits. Non-school leavers may be required to show that they have undertaken some recognised systematic course of study within recent years.

16. Procedures for Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

For certain courses, as specified by government, UCO is required to undertake a criminal record check of the applicant in conjunction with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

The DBS is a non-departmental public body of the Home Office. Its Disclosure Service offers organisations such as UCO, a means to check the background of applicants to ensure that they do not have a history which would make them unsuitable for the training/employment they will be undertaking.

Disclosure checks are required for all students joining courses which lead to employment in areas involving contact with children and/or vulnerable adults, for example courses which are governed by professional bodies such as The National College for Teaching and Leadership, The Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council.

At an early stage in the application process, applicants are required to complete and deliver a self-declaration disclosure form to UCO in order that any issues may be identified. For applicants who accept the offer of a place on such courses the applicant will also be required to apply to the DBS for a disclosure check.

UCO reserves the right to exclude a student from the course should he/she have omitted to declare relevant information on a self-declaration disclosure form or DBS application.

Disclosure information will be:

- Passed only to those who are authorised to receive it in the course of their duties, which may in certain circumstances include external agencies;
- Used only for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given;
- Stored separately and securely with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties;
- Destroyed by suitable secure means and not retained for longer than is necessary;

UCO will not unfairly discriminate against the subject of disclosure information on the basis of conviction or other details received.

17. Applicants who disclose a criminal conviction

UCO actively promotes equality of opportunity for all and considers applicants who disclose a criminal conviction on an individual basis, and in the light of the course applied for, having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from studying with us. This will depend on the nature of the course applied for and the circumstances and background of your offence(s). An interview/risk assessment may take place with the Faculty Lead and/or Director of HE Curriculum to ensure the safe and fair admission of an applicant with a criminal record.

18. Deferred Applications

UCO is normally happy to consider applicants who intend to take a gap year between school/college and university. Applicants should indicate what they intend to do during this year on their application form so that this can be taken into account as part of the selection process. It should be noted that for some courses, where demand exceeds the number of places available, it may not always be possible to offer deferred places. In such cases applicants will be advised to re-apply the following year.

19. Complaints Policy

Applicants who wish to complain about the operation of the College's admissions process should submit their complaint in writing to the Head of HE Quality and Registry within 10 working days of the issue arising. The Head of HE Quality and Registry, or nominee, will investigate the complaint and respond in writing within 15 working days.

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.

20. Discussing your application with others

In line with Data Protection legislation, UCO will not discuss an application with any person(s) other than the applicant themselves, although information being given to UCO will be accepted without confirmation that the applicant is applying to UCO.

Where applicants have given the names of third parties to act as a point of reference (referee), then it is assumed by UCO that the provision of this information gives UCO permission to contact the third party for further information in support of the application.

In the case of international applicants applying through educational agents or consultants, the individual will be asked to confirm that they agree to the sharing of information with the third party.

21. Nominated Representative

In exceptional circumstances, such as via the UCAS application process, applicants may nominate one individual to discuss their application. This person will not be able to make any decisions regarding the application or change any of the applicant's personal details such as current address.

22. Interview Policy

Some courses use interviews/selection days as part of the admissions process. Applicants will be informed of the format of the interview/selection day at the time of invitation and advised of any examples of work they are required to bring with them.

23. Credit transfer arrangements

UCO, in accordance with its awarding partners, operates a system of accrediting prior learning and experience. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their application for accreditation with Admissions tutors who will be able to offer guidance and support for the processes involved. Applications for direct entry to second or subsequent years of a course should clearly indicate the point of entry and the reasons for this. Claims for the accreditation of prior learning and experience should normally be processed and confirmed prior to enrolment on a course. Where this is not possible or where the subsequent confirmation awards less equivalent credit than originally claimed, UCO and its awarding partners reserves the right to require the student to take the additional credit in order to achieve the overall qualification.