



Policy on

Higher Education Admissions

Approved

7th September 2026

Approved by

Academic Board

Policy Title	Higher Education Admissions
Document Owner	Director of Higher Education

Directorates and Departments affected by this Policy	All staff involved in higher education admissions, recruitment, marketing,
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	information, advice and guidance, student support, registry and quality processes
Policy Effective From	Aug 2026
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New College Durham is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

If you require this document in an alternative format and/or language, please contact records@newdur.ac.uk

We review our policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. All policies are subject to equality impact assessments which are carried out to determine whether the policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on those with protected characteristics. We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute to these impact assessments and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility of fairness of this and all College policies.

Other policies and procedures mentioned in this document will be published internally and externally in these locations:

[Website](#)

Staff Intranet

Student Intranet

[This policy has been assessed for its compliance with the principles of the OIA Good Practice Framework]

To make suggestions or to see further information please contact:

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1. Scope

This policy applies to the recruitment, selection, offer-making, admission and enrolment of applicants to higher education programmes offered by New College Durham (NCD). It covers activity from initial enquiry and pre-application information through to enrolment and induction, including applications made through UCAS, direct application, internal progression, employer-sponsored routes and applications involving Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The policy supports fair, transparent and consistent admissions practice and ensures applicants receive clear, accurate, accessible and timely information so that they can make informed choices before entering into a student contract with the College.

Sub contractual partners will have their own admissions policy which should align to that of NCD and will be approved by NCD

2. Responsibilities

- The Corporation is responsible for oversight of the College's compliance with legal and regulatory obligations, including arrangements that support fair treatment of applicants and students.
- The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring that admissions arrangements are adequately resourced, monitored and aligned to the college's strategic, regulatory and equality commitments.
- The Director of Higher Education is responsible for the ownership, review and effective implementation of this policy for higher education provision.
- Heads of School, Curriculum Managers and Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring admissions decisions are made in line with published entry criteria, programme requirements, professional/statutory/regulatory body requirements and this policy.
- Marketing, Admissions, Student Services, Registry, CIS and academic teams are responsible for ensuring information given to applicants is accurate, current, consistent, accessible and not misleading.
- All staff involved in applicant-facing activity are responsible for signposting applicants to the correct information, recording material discussions and escalating any concerns about inaccurate information or proposed changes.

3. Relationship with existing policies and regulations

This policy should be read in the context of the following College policies, external requirements and related procedures:

- University Centre Terms and Conditions (2026/27)
- HE Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and procedure
- Relevant Academic Regulations for the programme of study (Core Contract Information)
- Programme specifications and detailed course information, including entry requirements and course fees
- Disclosure of Criminal Convictions (Students) Policy

- HE Admissions Appeals Policy
- HE Tuition Fees, Payments and Refunds Policy
- HE Refund and Compensation Policy
- Higher Education Support Services and HE Learner Support

4. Admissions principles

Admissions decisions will be based on clear, published and consistently applied academic and non-academic criteria. Applicants will be treated fairly and impartially, with reasonable adjustments made where required and appropriate.

The College will not knowingly rely on inaccurate, ambiguous or incomplete information when marketing programmes, advising applicants or making offers. Where information changes, the College will act promptly to correct the information and communicate the change to affected applicants.

- Information provided to applicants will be clear, accurate, accessible, up to date and sufficient to support informed decision-making.
- Entry requirements, selection processes, fees, additional costs and programme information will be made available before an applicant accepts an offer wherever reasonably possible.
- Applicants will be given reasonable opportunity to ask questions, request support and understand the terms attached to any offer.
- Admissions decisions will be recorded and capable of being explained, including where an applicant is not offered a place.

5. Information for applicants and pre-contract information

The College will take reasonable steps to ensure that published and applicant-facing information is accurate at the time of publication and remains under review. Information may be provided through the College website, prospectus, UCAS, open events, emails, offer communications, interviews, applicant days and direct advice from staff. This will include:

Detailed programme information, including entry requirements, course structure, mode of study and current course fees, is published on the [New College Durham course pages](#). Information about tuition fees, funding and other costs is also available on the [Fees and Funding pages](#). Applicants should review the individual course page and the relevant core contractual documents before accepting an offer.

- award title, level, duration, mode of study, location and validating or awarding body
- core and optional modules, where these are confirmed, and the circumstances in which modules may change or may not run
- teaching, learning and assessment methods, including the extent of any online, blended, work-based or placement learning
- entry requirements, interview/audition/portfolio requirements and any non-academic criteria

- professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements, including disclosure and barring, occupational health, fitness to practise, placement, attendance or conduct requirements where applicable
- tuition fees, any known additional compulsory costs, optional costs and funding information or signposts
- terms and conditions, applicant obligations, cancellation rights where applicable, refund arrangements and relevant complaints and appeals routes
- arrangements for support needs, reasonable adjustments and declaration of disability or learning difficulty.

Admissions process and expected timescales

Applications may be made throughout the year unless a published course page states a specific closing date. Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible, particularly where a programme includes an interview, audition, portfolio, placement, occupational health or DBS requirement. The current application route is explained on the [How to Apply page](#). The following are the College's expected timescales; where a longer period is needed, the applicant will be kept informed.

- Application received: The College will normally acknowledge receipt of an application within 5 working days. Where further evidence is required, the applicant will be told what is needed and how to provide it.
- Initial review and selection: Applications will be reviewed against the published entry and programme requirements. Where an interview, audition, portfolio review or "meet the tutor" discussion is required, the College will normally contact the applicant within 10 working days of receiving a complete application to arrange the next stage.
- Additional information and checks: Applicants should provide requested qualifications, references or other evidence as soon as possible. Applications requiring RPL, occupational health, DBS, right-to-study, placement or professional suitability checks may take longer; the applicant will be advised of the additional steps and any expected delay.
- Decision: The College will normally communicate an admissions decision within 10 working days of the application being complete and, where relevant, the final selection activity taking place. If a decision cannot be made within this period, the applicant will receive an update.
- Offer and acceptance: Successful applicants will receive an offer setting out whether it is conditional or unconditional, any outstanding conditions, the response deadline, key course information and the terms and conditions that apply. The applicant should accept or decline the offer by the stated deadline.
- Pre-enrolment and enrolment: Once conditions have been met, applicants will receive information about any remaining checks, enrolment, induction and the programme start. Communications may be by email, applicant portal, telephone, letter or other published College systems, depending on the stage of the process.

Applicants who would like confidential advice or guidance about applying, finance, personal circumstances, disability or additional support can access the College's [Higher Education Support Services](#). Information disclosed for support purposes will be handled in accordance with the

College's data protection arrangements and shared only where necessary to provide support or meet legal, safeguarding, professional or regulatory requirements.

Applicants with disabilities or additional support needs

Applicants are encouraged to tell the College about a disability, learning difficulty, medical condition or other support need at application or as soon as possible after accepting an offer. A disclosure will not in itself disadvantage an application. With the applicant's agreement, Admissions or the programme team will refer the applicant to the HE Access Adviser/Learner Support service for an early discussion of needs and possible reasonable adjustments. Further information and contact arrangements are available through [HE Learner Support](#).

Where support needs are identified, the College will normally make initial contact within 10 working days of the referral and will aim to agree and communicate a Reasonable Adjustment Plan before enrolment, and wherever practicable at least 10 working days before the programme starts. This may depend on the applicant providing relevant evidence and on the complexity of the adjustments. Late disclosure will not prevent support being considered; the College will put reasonable arrangements in place as soon as practicable.

6. Selection decisions and offers

Selection decisions will be made by appropriately trained staff with reference to published criteria and the evidence supplied by the applicant. Decisions must be made without unlawful discrimination and with due regard to equality, safeguarding, professional requirements and the College's academic standards.

Offers may be unconditional, conditional or subject to further checks. Offer communications will be clear about the nature of the offer, the conditions to be met, the deadline for response, any evidence required, and the point at which a contract with the College is formed.

Where an offer is conditional on qualifications, references, occupational health, criminal records checks, RPL outcomes, right to study, placement requirements or other checks, these conditions will be clearly explained. The College reserves the right to withdraw or amend an offer where an applicant does not meet the conditions, provides inaccurate or misleading information, or where external requirements prevent admission.

Applicants are required to declare relevant unspent criminal convictions where requested as part of the admissions or enrolment process. For some programmes, particularly where there are professional, statutory, regulatory or placement requirements, applicants will also be required to complete a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. A declaration or DBS information will be considered in accordance with the [Disclosure of Criminal Convictions \(Students\) Policy](#) and will not automatically result in refusal of admission.

Cancellation and 14-day cooling-off right

An applicant who accepts an offer has a statutory right to cancel that acceptance within 14 calendar days of accepting the offer, without giving a reason and without incurring liability. This is separate from any additional College arrangements concerning fee liability after enrolment or the programme start date.

The applicant may exercise this right by notifying the College clearly in writing, including by email to registry@newdur.ac.uk, or by using the Model Cancellation Form at Appendix 1. A copy of the model form will be provided or signposted with the relevant offer/contract information. The College will confirm receipt of the cancellation and that the applicant's acceptance has been cancelled in writing, normally by email. The applicant should retain the confirmation for their records. Further contractual information is set out in the [University Centre Terms and Conditions](#).

7. Changes to course information before enrolment

The College will seek to avoid making changes to material information after an applicant has accepted an offer. Where a material change becomes necessary before enrolment, affected applicants will be informed as soon as reasonably practicable and provided with clear information about the nature of the change, the reason for the change and the options available.

- continuing with the amended programme where the change is reasonable and the applicant agrees to proceed
- being considered for a suitable alternative programme, where available
- withdrawing from the offer without penalty where the change is material and the applicant does not wish to proceed
- receiving guidance on any relevant refund or compensation arrangements where applicable.

Staff must not make informal promises to applicants about programme content, timetables, placements, accreditation, fees or support that are not supported by approved and published information.

8. Applicant responsibilities

- familiarise themselves with the admissions process and entry requirements for the programme they are applying to
- provide accurate, honest and complete information at each stage of the application and admissions process
- inform the College promptly about any change in circumstances that may affect their application or ability to meet offer conditions
- declare disability, learning difficulty, support needs, criminal convictions, professional suitability matters, or other relevant information at the earliest appropriate stage where required or where support may be needed
- respond to offers and requests for evidence within the stated timescales
- read the relevant terms and conditions before accepting an offer
- engage with enrolment, induction and orientation arrangements once a place is accepted.

9. Recognition of prior learning and non-standard entry

Applicants may be considered for Recognition of Prior Learning or other non-standard entry routes where this is permitted by the relevant academic regulations and validating or awarding body requirements. Applicants will be given information about the evidence required, the process

to be followed, the likely timescale and the impact of any RPL decision on fees, duration or progression where relevant.

Full requirements, evidence expectations, approval arrangements and student entitlements are set out in the [HE Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) Policy](#). Applicants who intend to rely on prior study or experience are encouraged to raise this before accepting an offer so that the implications for entry point, credit, programme duration and fees can be explained.

Where an RPL or non-standard entry decision affects admission or entry point, the applicant will be given a clear explanation of the decision and any associated conditions.

10. Feedback, unsuccessful applications and appeals

Applicants who are not offered a place may request in writing feedback on the reason for the decision. Requested feedback will normally explain the basis of the decision in relation to the published criteria and, where appropriate, may signpost alternative options.

An applicant may appeal an admissions decision where there are permitted grounds under the [HE Admissions Appeals Policy](#). The policy explains the permissible and non-permissible grounds, the procedure, expected timescales and how to submit an appeal. The appeals process is not a mechanism for challenging academic or professional judgement where the admissions process has been properly followed.

11. Exceptions

This policy does not override statutory requirements, safeguarding requirements, immigration or right to study requirements, validating or awarding body regulations, PSRB requirements, or any requirement imposed by placement providers where those requirements are integral to admission or continuation on a programme.

Where exceptional circumstances require urgent action to protect applicants, students, staff, placement users, professional standards or the integrity of admissions decisions, the College may depart from normal operational steps provided the decision is fair, proportionate, documented and approved by an appropriate senior manager.

12. Evaluation and review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored annually and reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where there are changes to legislation, CMA guidance, OfS requirements, OIA guidance, awarding body requirements or College practice.

All external links and references within this policy will be checked as part of the annual review to ensure applicants can readily access the current version of the relevant policy, procedure, programme information and contractual documentation.

- feedback from applicants, students and staff
- admissions conversion and progression data
- appeals, complaints and applicant queries

- internal quality assurance, audit and external review outcomes
- evidence that course information, offer communications and terms and conditions remain accurate and accessible.

Appendix 1 – Cancellation Form

This form may be used by an applicant who wishes to cancel acceptance of an offer within the statutory 14-day cooling-off period. An applicant does not have to use this form; any clear written statement of cancellation is acceptable.

To: Academic Registry, New College Durham – registry@newdur.ac.uk

I hereby give notice that I cancel my acceptance of the offer of a place on the following higher education programme:

Programme title: _____

Applicant name: _____

Applicant/Student ID (if known): _____

Date offer accepted: _____

Date of cancellation: _____

Signature (if submitted on paper): _____

The College will confirm the cancellation in writing, normally by email, and the applicant should keep that confirmation.