

Admissions Policy and Procedures

POLICY SCHEDULE	
Policy Title	Admissions Policy and Procedures
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Policy Lead Contact	Head of Admissions
Approving Body	Academic Board
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Related Documents	Student Disclosure of Criminal Background (DBS) Policy Request for Review of an Admissions Decision Safeguarding Policy Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Applicant Privacy Notice Student Financial Regulations Access and Participation Plan 2025-29
Benchmarked Against	UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025); OfS regulatory framework (August 2025); UCAS admissions reform (2025/26 cycle); DfE Post-16 qualifications reform (March 2026)
Related Legislation	Equality Act 2010 Data Protection Act 2018 UK GDPR Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (as amended to Jan 2026) Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997 Higher Education and Research Act 2017 Consumer Rights Act 2015 Human Rights Act 1998 Freedom of Information Act 2000 UK Borders Act 2007 The Border, Citizenship & Immigration Act 2009 Nationality and Borders Act 2022 Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 2009 Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 The Consumer Protection (Amendment) Regulations 2014 Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA 2024)
Regulatory Framework	OfS Conditions of Registration (A1, B1-B5, C1, C5) QAA UK Quality Code Chapter B2 UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice UK Agent Quality Framework Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
Purpose	This document explains how the University of Cumbria manages its admissions processes and how applications are considered. It sets out what applicants can expect when applying, how decisions are made, and the standards of fairness, transparency and consistency that underpin our approach. It should be read alongside the information provided on course webpages, our terms and conditions, and other applicant guidance to support informed decision-making throughout the application process.

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Part A: Admissions Policy

1. Introduction and Commitment

The mission of the University of Cumbria is to raise aspirations and educational attainment and contribute to the social, cultural and economic well-being and prosperity of our communities.

This policy sets out the University's commitment to a fair, transparent and inclusive admissions process. We welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds, ages and circumstances. Every application is assessed fairly, based solely on merit, ability and potential - regardless of disability, race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, nationality, gender identity or any other protected characteristic.

Our admissions practice is underpinned by the following external frameworks and legislation, current as at May 2026:

- QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission
- UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025 version)
- UK Agent Quality Framework
- The Schwartz Principles of Fair Admissions (as updated through the UUK Fair Admissions Review 2019-2020)
- UCAS Good Practice resources and admissions principles
- Office for Students (OfS) Conditions of Registration, including Conditions A1, B1-B5, C1 and C5
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements where applicable
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Higher Education and Research Act 2017
- Consumer Rights Act 2015 and CMA Higher Education Guidance
- Department for Work and Pensions Apprenticeship Funding Rules
- The Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all credit-bearing programmes of study at the University of Cumbria, including:

- Undergraduate degree and foundation degree programmes (full-time and part-time)
- Integrated Foundation Year
- Postgraduate Taught programmes (PgCert, PgDip, Masters)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)
- Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
- Research degrees
- Collaborative provision with Associate Institutions

The Policy covers both home and international applicants, and applications made via UCAS, DfE Apply, and the University's direct application form. It is aimed at prospective students, applicants, schools, colleges, guidance professionals, and University admissions and academic staff.

3. Our Admissions Principles

The University adopts the following core principles across all admissions activity, consistent with the UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice:

- Transparency - entry criteria are clearly published and communicated to all applicants.

- Fairness - all applicants are assessed consistently against the same published criteria, with individual circumstances considered through contextual admissions.
- Inclusivity - we actively encourage applications from groups currently under-represented in higher education, consistent with our Access and Participation Plan.
- Student interest - admissions decisions are made in the interest of the applicant first and foremost.
- Timeliness - decisions are made and communicated as promptly as possible.
- Confidentiality - applicant information is handled in accordance with our Data Protection obligations.

4. Equality, Diversity, Widening Participation and the Access and Participation Plan

The University actively supports widening participation and is committed to removing barriers to higher education. We encourage applications from people of all ages, backgrounds and qualifications, including those who have taken non-traditional routes into study, care leavers, estranged students, and those with experience of socioeconomic disadvantage.

The University's Access and Participation Plan (APP), approved by the Office for Students, sets out our targets and intervention strategies for improving equality of opportunity across the student lifecycle — from access through to success and progression. Admissions policy and practice is a central mechanism for delivering our APP commitments.

We consider contextual factors alongside academic achievement when assessing applications. Where eligible, applicants may receive a contextual offer, which may include adjusted grade thresholds. Contextual criteria are approved annually, published on the University website, and reported annually to the Office for Students. Where contextual factors have been applied to an offer, this will be clearly stated in the offer communication to the applicant.

Admissions decisions are made independently of any disability or specific learning difficulty. Support needs are assessed separately through our Disability and Student Services team.

4.1 Armed Forces Covenant and Support for Service Personnel

The University of Cumbria has been awarded the Gold Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Award by the UK Ministry of Defence. This represents the highest level of recognition for employers who demonstrate outstanding and sustained support for the Armed Forces community.

This award reflects the University's commitment, under the Armed Forces Covenant, to supporting serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families through its employment practices, student support arrangements and wider community engagement.

The University recognises the value of the Armed Forces community and will provide appropriate flexibility and support where necessary to facilitate access to higher education.

In support of this commitment, the University accepts funding through the Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Service (ELCAS) and welcomes applications from eligible service leavers. Applicants wishing to use ELCAS funding will be supported through the admissions and enrolment process in accordance with ELCAS requirements.

5. Training and Competency of Admissions Staff

All staff involved in the admissions process must receive appropriate training before undertaking admissions activities. Training covers:

- Admissions legislation and regulatory requirements (including OfS conditions and consumer protection obligations)
- Equality, diversity and unconscious bias
- Data protection and GDPR compliance
- Qualification recognition - including UCAS tariff, UK ENIC, T Levels, BTEC AAQs, V Levels and international qualifications
- The new UCAS personal statement format (three-question structure, from 2026 cycle)
- Identifying and responding appropriately to AI-generated application content
- Interview skills and scoring using published criteria
- Clearing and confirmation procedures
- Department for Work and Pensions Apprenticeship Funding Rules
- The Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007 regarding fee assessments

Training records are maintained by the Admissions team. External training and best practice is obtained through UCAS, UK ENIC, UKCISA and HELOA membership.

6. Recruitment, Marketing and Third-Party Relationships

All recruitment and marketing materials must be accurate, accessible and not misleading at the time of publication. The Admissions, Marketing and Global Engagement teams work jointly to ensure information is updated annually. Programme information is provided to applicants via the University's website at the point of offer and applicants are updated on any changes made to their course throughout the application process.

6.1 Third-Party Relationships - Agents and Collaborative Partners

The University may work with third parties including international education agents, domestic recruitment agents, and collaborative partner associate institutions as part of its recruitment and admissions activities. All third-party relationships must be managed in accordance with the UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code of Practice (October 2025) and the UK Agent Quality Framework.

The University holds responsibility for ensuring that any third party acting on its behalf - including agents, franchise partners, and pathway providers - operates in accordance with this policy and the Fair Admissions Code. This means:

- International education agents must be engaged in line with the UK Agent Quality Framework, including operating in accordance with the Code of Ethical Practice for Education Agents
- Domestic agents may only be used for targeted outreach activity for specifically identified underrepresented student groups, or to facilitate admissions to specific courses.
- The University will maintain clear lines of responsibility, formal governance structures, and evaluation and audit processes for all third-party relationships
- Complaints against both international and domestic agents will be considered within the relevant complaints procedure.
- Franchise and partner institution admissions practices will be subject to periodic review to ensure compliance with this policy

6.2 Our Obligations Under Consumer Law

The University recognises that we have obligations to our applicants and students and that consumer protection law applies to our dealings with them.

In line with the Consumer Rights Act 2015, the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and the Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 (DMCCA 2024) guidance on consumer law for higher education providers, the University will:

- Provide clear, accurate, accessible and timely information to applicants at all stages of the admissions process to enable informed decision-making;
- Ensure that all material information, including course content, delivery, location, duration, assessment, tuition fees and additional costs, is made available prior to offer acceptance;
- Ensure that all pre-contract information is accurate and is treated as contractually binding once an offer is accepted;
- Clearly communicate any potential or actual changes to programmes or services and obtain applicant consent where required;
- Ensure that all terms and conditions are fair, transparent and do not create an imbalance to the detriment of students;
- Maintain clear, accessible and fair complaints, cancellation and refund processes;
- Prohibit any unfair commercial practices in its dealings with prospective students, applicants, and their representatives;
- Comply with relevant regulatory expectations, including those of the Office for Students.

7. Entry Requirements

Entry requirements for all programmes are published on the University website, in the prospectus, and on UCAS/DfE Apply entry profiles. Requirements are reviewed annually and reflect academic and non-academic criteria appropriate to each programme. The University accepts all nationally recognised qualifications. Work experience and non-standard qualifications may be taken into account. A full schedule of acceptable qualifications is in Appendix 1.

Where an applicant does not precisely meet the standard criteria, applications are assessed on individual merit, and discretion may be applied by trained Admissions staff.

Some programmes are part of the Return to Learning Entry Route; the programmes open to apply via this route will be clearly shown on the course page on the University of Cumbria website.

7.1 Contextual Admissions

The University considers contextual factors alongside academic achievement for eligible home undergraduate applicants. Eligible applicants may receive a contextual offer. Contextual criteria are approved annually and published on the University website. Where contextual information has been considered and applied, the applicant will be informed of this in their offer communication.

7.2 Progression Agreements

The University works in partnership with selected schools, colleges and other educational providers through formal progression agreements designed to support access to higher education and improve student outcomes.

These agreements may include targeted outreach and engagement activities, such as academic support, information, advice and guidance, and transition support.

Where specified within an approved progression agreement, applicants who meet defined criteria and who have successfully engaged with the agreed activities may be eligible for a differentiated or contextual offer.

Any such offers will:

- be clearly defined and published in advance;
- be based on transparent and objective criteria;
- be applied consistently and fairly;
- ensure that applicants can demonstrate the academic potential required to succeed on their chosen programme.

Participation in outreach or progression activities does not guarantee an offer of a place.

7.3 Qualification Reform - T Levels, BTEC AAQs and V Levels

The post-16 qualification landscape is undergoing significant reform. The University's position on the key qualifications is as follows:

- T Levels - two-year technical qualifications, now widely available. Accepted for entry to appropriate programmes. Programme-specific requirements are published on the University website. T Levels include a substantial industry placement component, which supports applicants to understand the subject matter in practice.
- BTEC Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) - the updated BTEC suite (from 2025). These are the current version of BTEC Nationals and are fully accepted. AAQs are distinct from the earlier BTEC Nationals and entry requirement statements should reflect this.
- Original BTEC Nationals - remain valid for applicants who studied them. These programmes are funded until 2026-27 (and in most subject areas until 2027 or 2028 under the phased transition) but will remain valid for entry to undergraduate programmes at the University of Cumbria.
- V Levels - new post-16 vocational qualifications to be introduced from 2027, replacing BTECs in certain subject areas. The University will accept V Levels for entry once available and once UCAS tariff equivalences are confirmed. Entry requirement statements will be updated accordingly.

8. How to Apply

Applications to full-time undergraduate degree and integrated foundation year degree programmes must be made through UCAS (or via an approved agent). PGCE applications are made via the DfE Apply service. Applications for our International College should be made directly to the International College. Applications to our associate partners are made directly to that partner and audited by Admissions at the University of Cumbria. All other programmes - including part-time, postgraduate, apprenticeship and professional development courses - are applied for directly through the University's online application form. Research degree applications are considered by the Head of Research and Graduate School and require a research proposal.

9. The Selection Process

All applications are assessed against published entry criteria by trained Admissions staff. Where a programme requires an interview, portfolio submission, selection test or other activity, this will be clearly stated on the programme entry profile. Interviews are normally conducted online; where a programme requires an in-person interview, this will be clearly stated on the relevant programme page on the University website. For apprenticeship provision, eligibility for apprenticeship funding will be assessed alongside other elements of the selection process.

For competitive programmes, a gathered-field approach operates: all suitably qualified applicants who apply by national closing dates are considered together before decisions are confirmed. Where an application is unsuccessful, the University will, wherever possible, consider whether an alternative programme offer is appropriate.

Where necessary, for PGCE programmes, we will close international applications due to the number of applications received without prior notice.

10. Decisions and Offers

Decisions on undergraduate applications are transmitted through UCAS and made available via UCAS Hub and the University's applicant portal. Decisions on direct applications are communicated via the portal and by email. All offers constitute a legal contract that takes effect when accepted by the applicant. All admissions-related policies, procedures and review processes are detailed on the Applicant Webpages.

When offered a place, applicants will receive information on the University's fees (where applicable), terms and conditions, additional costs and financial regulations. Where an international applicant requires sponsorship under the Student Route, applicants will be assessed against strict criteria set by UK Visas and Immigration. Upon registration, this is supplemented with the academic regulations, and the student code of conduct. Where contextual factors have been applied to an offer, this will be clearly stated in the offer communication.

11. Changes to Programmes

Where material changes are made to a published programme after an offer has been issued, the University will notify affected applicants as soon as possible. Material changes include:

- A change in the approval or accreditation status of the programme
- A change in the location of programme delivery
- Variation to programme fees
- Programme closure or suspension

Applicants are given the option to withdraw their acceptance without penalty, or to be considered for an alternative programme subject to availability and meeting entry requirements. This is consistent with the University's obligations under consumer protection law and OfS Condition C1.

12. Applicants with Disabilities or Specific Learning Difficulties

Applications from disabled students or those with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) are assessed on the same academic criteria as all other applications. Disability or SpLD will never be used as grounds for rejection. Applicants are encouraged to disclose at the earliest opportunity so that the University can explore what support and reasonable adjustments may be needed.

The University has anticipatory duties under the Equality Act 2010 - this means reasonable adjustments must be considered proactively, not only in response to individual requests. In exceptional circumstances where health and safety requirements or professional regulatory criteria cannot be met with reasonable adjustments, the University may, following full discussion, defer or withdraw an offer. Any such decision will be fully explained in writing.

13. Criminal Background Checks (DBS) and Occupational Health

Some programmes - including those in Education, Nursing, Midwifery, Allied Health Professions, Social Work and Counselling - require an Enhanced DBS check and/or an Occupational Health assessment before admission. This is clearly stated on the programme entry profile. Full details are in the Student Disclosure of Criminal Background (DBS) Policy, which reflects the current legislative position, including the ROA (Exceptions) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2025 (in force 21 January 2026).

Where any student has an unfiltered conviction, a self-disclosure process must be followed before registering on programme.

Candidates for teacher training courses must be assessed as physically and mentally fit for teaching in accordance with DfE entry criteria (Updated 1 September 2022) and have met the Secretary of State's requirements for physical and mental fitness to teach.

Candidates for Nursing, Midwifery, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Paramedic Science, Social Work and Diagnostic Radiography are required to undertake an occupational health check for medical fitness and will have an appointment with the University-designated Occupational Health Team to administer appropriate vaccination screening.

Most medical clearances will be achieved via the completion of a University Medical Questionnaire, but where further investigation via physical examination or via a consultant's reports is required, this will be arranged either face-to-face or through other means.

14. Applicants with Criminal Convictions

Having a criminal record is not an automatic barrier to study at the University of Cumbria. Each case is assessed individually. Applicants on programmes exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 must disclose all convictions as required under the Exceptions Order. Failure to disclose relevant information may result in withdrawal of an offer. All decisions are made using a fair, proportionate and risk-based approach, taking into account safeguarding responsibilities, relevant legislation, professional body requirements and the individual circumstances of the applicant. Full details are in the Student Disclosure of Criminal Background (DBS) Policy.

15. References

All applicants must provide at least one suitable reference. Applicants who have studied in the last three years are expected to provide an academic reference. For those returning to learning after a break of over three years, a suitable professional reference is acceptable. For some programmes, two references will be required. Applicants to programmes in Primary Education leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), where the applicant has worked, volunteered or had an extensive work placement with children, will be expected to provide a character reference from that provider detailing suitability to work with children and confirming there are no safeguarding risks.

16. Under 18 and Safeguarding

The University has a specific duty of care towards students under 18. Applicants under 18 are subject to additional safeguarding procedures set out in the Safeguarding Policy. Any applicant who has not reached 18 by registration for the course may be admitted but on the understanding that their parents or guardians have given written agreement in advance acknowledging that the University will not act in loco parentis. Individual risk assessments may be carried out depending on the course content. Some healthcare and professional programmes have age requirements due to placement and regulatory requirements. International College students must be 18 at point of entry.

17. International Applicants

The University welcomes applications from international students. Qualifications are assessed against UK ENIC equivalences by our specialist International Admissions team. All international students must satisfy UKVI Student Route requirements. Information and support on visa applications is available at www.cumbria.ac.uk.

17.1 English Language Requirements

Applicants whose first language is not English must demonstrate English language competency through a recognised test (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL iBT, University of Cumbria Password Plus Test). Minimum scores are published on the University website and vary by programme and level.

17.2 Deposits and Visas

A deposit may be required for international applicants as a condition of release of a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). Full details are published on the University website and within offer letters. Requirements for deposits and student financial requirements are detailed within [the Student Financial Regulations](#)

18. Fraudulent, Misleading or AI-Generated Applications

All information provided in an application must be accurate and complete. The University reserves the right to withdraw any offer, or, where a student has already enrolled, to terminate registration, if

information is found to have been falsified, misrepresented or materially incomplete. Cases are reported to UCAS and other relevant bodies. The same protocols apply to scholarship applications.

18.1 Use of Artificial Intelligence in Personal Statements

In relation to personal statements, applicants must ensure their submission is their own original work. Generating and submitting personal statement content from an artificial intelligence tool (such as a large language model or AI writing assistant) and presenting it as the applicant's own words may constitute a fraudulent application and be treated accordingly. UCAS operates similarity detection on personal statements and the University may conduct its own assessment of authenticity where concerns arise.

Applicants are encouraged to use AI tools for legitimate purposes such as research assistance and structural planning, but the submitted content must be the applicant's own.

18.2 Use of Artificial Intelligence in Interviews

The University of Cumbria expects all applicants to engage authentically in the admissions interview process. The use of artificial intelligence tools, including but not limited to large language models, AI writing assistants, or real-time prompt tools to generate or inform responses during an interview is not permitted.

Interviews are designed to assess an applicant's genuine values, motivations, and suitability for their chosen programme; AI-assisted responses undermine the integrity of that assessment and may misrepresent an applicant's true capabilities.

19. Applicant Conduct

The University is committed to treating all applicants with courtesy and respect and expects the same in return. Abusive, threatening, aggressive or inappropriate behaviour - whether verbal, written, expressed online, on social media, or via any other digital channel - towards University staff, other applicants or students will not be tolerated and may result in an offer being withdrawn or an application being rejected. Where behaviour constitutes a criminal offence, it will be referred to the relevant authorities.

20. Messaging and Communications

The University may contact applicants via SMS, email, WhatsApp or similar messaging platforms during the admissions process. All messages will be relevant to the progress of the application and will be approved by an Admissions Officer before sending. Applicants can opt in or out of messaging services at any time. Messaging content is limited to critical communications such as interview invitations, DBS reminders and offer-related information.

21. Fee Status Assessment

The University assesses the fee status of all applicants in accordance with the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997 (as amended). In most cases, fee status can be determined from the information provided on the application form. Where this is not possible, a formal fee status assessment is carried out by a trained Admissions Administrator.

Applicants who wish to appeal a fee status assessment must do so within three months of the assessment being carried out, or at the point of registration - whichever comes first. Appeals should be submitted to the Head of Admissions. The University reserves the right to amend a fee status assessment if new information comes to light; any change takes effect from the next billing point.

22. Right to Study

The University must obtain from the applicant appropriate evidence of their right to study in the UK to meet our obligations with UK Visa and Immigration.

All applicants that have applied for financial support from the Student Loan Company, Lifelong Learning Entitlement or are in receipt of a Government bursary or scholarship must provide satisfactory documentary evidence before they register on programme. Information about acceptable documents will be supplied to applicants once they have accepted a place.

23. Review of Admissions Decisions

Applicants who are dissatisfied with an admissions decision may request a review on the following grounds:

- A material administrative error or procedural irregularity which affected the decision
- Evidence of unfair treatment, bias or perception of bias in the admissions process
- Dissatisfaction with the service received from Admissions staff

There is no right of appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making admissions decisions. A review request must be submitted within 10 working days of the relevant decision. The three-stage process (Informal / Formal / Final Review) is set out in full in Part B and the Request for Review of an Admissions Decision.

Requests for reviews of Admissions Decisions made by Collaborative Partners should be submitted through the partner Admissions processes,

24. Complaints

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the service they have received may raise a complaint under the University's Complaints Policy. The Complaints Procedure cannot be used to change an admissions decision but may lead to a review. Where both are submitted simultaneously, the review is addressed first.

25. Fees, Scholarships and Financial Support

Tuition fees are reviewed annually and published on the University website. Bursaries, scholarships and financial support are detailed on the University website. The University operates a transparent fee policy in line with its obligations under consumer protection law and the OfS regulatory framework.

26. Data Protection

All personal information processed during the admissions process is subject to the UK General Data Protection Regulation, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information is used for admissions purposes only and forms part of the student record if an offer is accepted. Data is not disclosed to third parties other than those involved in the admissions process without written consent, or as required by law.

Data relating to unsuccessful applicants is normally destroyed one Autumn Term after they would have been admitted. For further information, see the Applicant Privacy Notice on the University website.

Part B: Admissions Procedures

1. Enquiries and Recruitment

The University's Course Enquiry Centre manages all enquiries by email, phone and face to face, and aims to respond within 4 working days. The University runs open days, offer holder days and campus tours throughout the year. Targeted outreach is carried out by the Recruitment team in schools, colleges and community groups. Staff providing information and advice are members of HELOA and attend regular training.

All recruitment activity involving third parties (agents, partner organisations) must comply with the requirements set out in Section 6.1 of Part A. The University does not permit general domestic recruitment agency activity - domestic agents may only be used for targeted widening participation outreach or recruitment to a specific programme.

2. Management of Admissions

The University operates a centralised admissions model. Full-time undergraduate and foundation degree applications are managed through UCAS. PGCE applications are managed through DfE Apply. All other programmes are applied for via the University's online application form or via an approved agent. The applicant portal is the primary channel through which decisions, offers, and pre-registration conditions are detailed.

3. Objectivity and Confidentiality

Staff with a personal, social or family relationship with an applicant must declare a conflict of interest to their line manager and recuse themselves from that application. Selection will not normally be made on the basis of information received outside the formal application process. Candidate information is not disclosed to third parties without written consent, or as required under the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR or Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023.

4. Selection Criteria

Criteria for selection are published on the University website and in UCAS and DfE entry profiles. Criteria are determined and reviewed annually by the relevant academic area and Head of Admissions and approved at Academic Board. Academic, personal suitability and (where applicable) professional suitability criteria are applied consistently.

5. Academic, Personal and Professional Suitability

5.1 Academic Suitability

Academic suitability is assessed on the basis of qualifications held and predicted, including contextual factors where applicable. The University accepts all nationally recognised Level 3 qualifications, including A levels, T Levels, BTEC AAQs, BTEC Nationals, Access to HE Diplomas, Scottish Highers,

International Baccalaureate, and other qualifications detailed in Appendix 1. V Levels will be accepted from the 2027 entry cycle once UCAS tariff equivalences are confirmed.

The UCAS personal statement comprises three structured questions. Admissions staff will assess all three answers holistically to understand the applicant's motivation, academic preparation and wider experience.

5.2 Personal Suitability

Personal suitability is assessed through the personal statement and reference. The personal statement is evaluated for quality of content, motivation, and evidence of suitability for the programme. The referee's report is considered alongside the personal statement but rejection will not be based solely on a referee's comments. From the 2026 cycle, for undergraduate programmes the teacher reference has also been simplified - it now covers a general school/college statement, extenuating circumstances, and course-specific support information.

5.3 Professional Suitability

For programmes leading to professional recognition, professional suitability criteria are applied in addition to academic and personal suitability. These are published on the programme entry profile. References for professional programmes should address both academic ability and suitability for the intended profession.

For Early Years programmes leading to QTS, references will be required for all Early Years placements/employment an applicant may have undertaken/held.

6. Identifying Fraudulent or AI-Generated Application Content

Admissions staff are alert to the following indicators in personal statements and other submitted materials:

- Generic, impersonal language without specific references to the applicant's own experiences or context
- Similarity in language or structure across multiple applications (UCAS similarity detection will flag this)
- Inconsistency between the sophistication of written application materials and performance at interview
- Use of language or terminology beyond what would reasonably be expected from the applicant's background

Where concerns arise, the application will be referred to the Head of Admissions before a decision is made. If a decision has already been made, the matter should still be reported. All confirmed cases of fraudulent applications are reported to UCAS/DfE.

7. Interview Policy and Procedures

Interviews are used where they form part of the published selection process. Interviews are normally conducted online. Where an in-person interview is required, this will be clearly stated on the programme page on the University website. Interviews use a structured scoring framework reviewed annually. Discussions about disability, support needs, or DBS matters take place outside the formal selection interview.

Written selection tests forming part of the selection process are designed to be free from bias.

Candidates qualifying for extra time in assessments will receive an appropriate concession.

Where the University has reasonable grounds to believe that an applicant has utilised AI assistance during an interview, it reserves the right to reject the application or to require the applicant to attend a further interview in a face-to-face format before any offer is made. Any such decision will be made in accordance with the University's admissions principles of fairness, transparency, and consistency.

The University remains committed to making reasonable adjustments for applicants with disabilities or additional needs that may affect how they communicate or process information during an interview; applicants are encouraged to disclose any such needs in advance so that appropriate support can be arranged. The use of AI tools is distinct from, and is not considered an equivalent to, a reasonable adjustment.

8. Initial Selection and Gathered Field

Initial selection is criterion-driven. For competitive programmes, a gathered-field approach is used: all suitably qualified applicants who apply by national closing dates are considered together before decisions are confirmed. Scoring frameworks ensure fairness. Delays are kept to a minimum; applicants are kept informed where decisions take longer.

9. Place Offers

All offers are made in writing and constitute a legal contract upon acceptance. Offers are communicated via UCAS Hub or the applicant portal. Where contextual factors have been applied, this is stated in the offer communication. Applicants with a disability or SpLD receive offers based on academic criteria - assessment of support needs is conducted separately and does not delay offer-making.

10. Rejections

No application may be rejected without the agreement of two members of staff. Applicants rejected via the central system are given feedback on request. Applicants rejected after interview receive written feedback based on the interview record. Applicants who are not offered their original choice may be considered for an alternative programme. Unless informed otherwise, future applications will be considered (outside the same academic year of entry).

11. Verification of Qualifications

All applicants must provide documentary evidence of all qualifications claimed. Verification must be completed by the date of registration. International students may provide notarised copies at application but must provide originals at registration. Where a student is unable to provide verification, the University reserves the right to withdraw the place.

12. Deferred Entry

Requests for deferred entry are considered individually, subject to course availability and any changes in entry requirements. Programme-specific restrictions on deferral may apply - these will be noted on the programme entry profile. Applicants wishing to defer should notify the Admissions team at the earliest opportunity.

13. Transitional Arrangements and Pre-Registration Support

Once an offer has been accepted, the University provides a range of pre-registration support including the online Head-Start programme (where appropriate), regular email communications on student finance and accommodation, and contact from Student Ambassadors. Offer Holder Days are held for most undergraduate programmes. Applicants are directed to the Programme Specification on the course webpage and will be informed of material changes to their programme as soon as they are approved.

14. Provisional Registration (CPE status)

Students who have yet to meet the non-academic conditions of their offer at the start of their programme may commence the programme as a provisionally enrolled (CPE) student.

Where an Enhanced DBS or Occupational Health check has been submitted no later than 4 weeks after registration, students will be allowed to remain on programme up to a maximum of 8 weeks from the course start date. If a provisionally enrolled student has not submitted their DBS or Medical information 4 weeks after registration, they will be deregistered from programme. Provisionally enrolled students have a maximum of 8 weeks to successfully pass all conditions of registration. CPE students will be deregistered at week 8 if any checks are still outstanding.

15. Confirmation and Clearing

The University participates in UCAS Clearing and Confirmation processes. Entry grades for Clearing are agreed in advance by the relevant committee. All applicants are provided with guidance on confirming results. All applicants are invited to complete online registration in advance of their start date.

16. Re-admission Following Failure, Withdrawal or Adjudication

Students applying to return following academic failure, withdrawal, or an outstanding adjudication process will be subject to specific conditions. Any outstanding disciplinary processes or sanctions must be resolved before re-admission. Continuation is at the discretion of the admitting programme team, subject to Academic Regulations and PSRB requirements. Only programmes that have a specific requirement under the PSRB requirements will readmit students following academic failure.

17. Advanced Entry — Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University recognises that learning may take place outside formal education and supports Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as part of its admissions process.

RPL may include:

- Accredited Prior Learning (APL) – certificated learning from recognised institutions
- Accredited Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) – learning gained through work or life experience

Applicants may be admitted with advanced standing or granted exemptions from elements of a programme where appropriate.

All RPL applications:

- are assessed in line with the University's academic regulations
- must demonstrate that prior learning is relevant, current and at an appropriate level
- are subject to academic judgement

RPL applications are processed by a designated RPL Officer within the Assessments Team. Further information is available from rpl@cumbria.ac.uk.

18. Students in Debt

Any student in debt to the University will not be admitted onto a new course until the outstanding debt has been paid, or agreed settlement arrangements are in place with the Finance Department.

19. Withdrawal of Offer Prior to Registration

The University may withdraw an offer prior to registration if: the applicant fails to meet conditions of the offer; information comes to light making it inappropriate for the applicant to study at the University; the applicant is not fit for study or to practise; or the applicant has provided false or misleading information (including fraudulent application content).

The University may also withdraw a course if it cannot be provided due to unforeseen circumstances, insufficient recruitment, or strategic change. In such cases, the University will notify applicants and assist them in finding an alternative place, consistent with its consumer protection obligations under OfS Condition C1.

20. Monitoring and Review

The University regularly monitors and reviews its admissions policies and procedures to ensure they remain fit for purpose and compliant with current regulatory requirements. Reports on admissions data - including contextual offer-making, widening participation outcomes, and review/complaints data - are presented to Academic Board. This document is reviewed fully biennially (or sooner when regulatory changes require immediate update).

21. Roles and Responsibilities

The University's Admissions Policy and Procedure is the responsibility of the Pro Vice Chancellor Student Journey and Academic Registrar. Key roles:

- Course Enquiry Centre - manages all home pre-application enquiries
- Global Engagement Office - manages all international pre-application enquiries
- Admissions Team - manages post-application communications, offer-making, portal, UCAS and DfE compliance
- Admissions Tutors / Administrators - initial scrutiny and interview selection within Academic Institutes
- Head of Admissions - dispute, problem and special needs cases
- Pro Vice Chancellor Student Journey and Academic Registrar - overall responsibility for the policy and its operation

22. Collaborative Provision

Where collaborative provision is offered, the Partnership Agreement will set out roles and responsibilities for admissions to ensure a common understanding of practices and procedures. Partners are responsible for selecting students in adherence to the criteria agreed at validation and for complying with the UUK/GuildHE Fair Admissions Code. Collaborative provision admissions will be subject to periodic audit and review by the University.

23. Review of Admissions Decisions — Full Procedure

23.1 Grounds for Review

A request for reconsideration may be made on the following grounds:

- Material administrative error, regulatory or procedural irregularity which affected the outcome
- Unfair treatment, bias or perception of bias in the admissions process
- Dissatisfaction with the service delivered by Admissions staff

The following are not valid grounds: disagreement with a decision made appropriately in line with this Policy; disagreement with academic or professional judgement. Appeals made against a DBS Panel outcome will follow the same timescales and process at Stage 3 of the appeals process.

23.2 Process and Timescales

Stage	Action / Responsibility	Timescale	Counted from
Stage 1: Informal	Discussion with Admissions Administrator/Officer. Most concerns resolved here.	10 working days	Date Admissions activity sent to applicant
Stage 2a: Eligibility	Head of Admissions assesses validity of stated grounds. Written acknowledgement issued.	10 working days	Date written request received
Stage 2b: Formal outcome	Head of Admissions investigates and issues formal written response: decision unchanged (with rationale), decision amended (with rationale), or service improvement noted.	20 working days	Date eligibility acknowledged
Stage 3: Final review/ DBS Outcome Appeal	Pro Vice Chancellor Student Journey and Academic Registrar considers. Decision is FINAL — procedure then exhausted.	10 working days	Date Stage 2 response dispatched

Review requests must be submitted on the Applicant Request for Review of an Admissions Decision Form (available at uocadmissions@cumbria.ac.uk) within 10 working days of the relevant decision. All supporting evidence must be included at the point of submission. The University reserves the right to terminate a review request in cases of abusive, threatening or vexatious behaviour.

Appendix 1: Academic Entry Requirements

1. General Entry Requirements — Standard Undergraduate Level Courses

Applicants must demonstrate competence in English Language, evidence of a range of study at GCSE level, and hold qualifications equivalent to a minimum of two GCE A Levels at Level 3. For initial teacher training: GCSE grade 4/C in English Language and Mathematics (and Science for primary). The minimum Level 3 requirement is a 120 credit / 720 GLH profile, which may comprise:

- Two A level subjects
- One A level plus one 60-credit / 360 GLH Level 3 qualification
- One full 120-credit / 720 GLH Level 3 qualification
- Two 60-credit / 360 GLH qualifications, or one Access to HE Diploma (60 credits)
- Two Advanced Highers
- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma / National Extended Diploma (original or AAQ version)
- One T Level
- V Level (from 2027, once tariff equivalences confirmed)
- Advanced Diploma, OCR National Awards, or other Level 3 qualifications assessed against UK equivalences

2. Standard Undergraduate Entry Qualifications

Qualification	University position (2026)
A levels	All A level subjects accepted including General Studies; subjects should have non-overlapping content
BTEC Nationals (original)	Fully accepted; remain funded through 2026-27 in most subject areas
BTEC AAQs (from 2025)	Fully accepted - these are the current/updated version of BTEC Nationals. Treated equivalently to original BTECs for tariff purposes.
T Levels	Accepted for appropriate programmes. Includes a substantial industry placement component. Programme-specific requirements published on website.
V Levels	Will be accepted from 2027 entry cycle. Tariff equivalences to be confirmed by UCAS. Entry requirement statements will be updated when confirmed.
Access to HE Diplomas	Accepted, must be QAA-recognised (e.g. Ascentis, NOCN)
Scottish Highers	Minimum four passes at Grade C; Advanced Highers equivalent to A levels
Irish Leaving Certificate	Four to five higher/honours grade passes at Grade C2/H4
International Baccalaureate	Meet Tariff entry profile for programme; European Baccalaureate minimum 70%
Open University	One foundation level credit equivalent to one A level requirement
Professional nursing qualifications	RGN, RNM, RNMH, RSCN, RCN, RM satisfy general entry requirements
NVQ Level 3 (pre-2014)	Considered individually; NVQ Level 3 post-2014 considered alongside another Level 3 qualification
International qualifications	Assessed in accordance with UK ENIC guidelines

3. Entry Requirements for Other Awards

Award	Entry Requirement
Integrated Foundation Year	Minimum A level or equivalent; GCSE English competence; minimum UCAS tariff points for subject. Non-standard applicants may require interview and pre-entry assessment.
Foundation Degree (FdA/FdSc)	One A level or equivalent (typically 40-64 UCAS tariff points). Non-standard entrants may be considered via portfolio, diagnostic assessment or professional experience.
DipHE	Two A levels or equivalent, plus evidence of recent additional Level 3 study.
CertHE	As DipHE for standard entrants. Non-standard entrants may be considered following interview and a written piece.
Graduate Certificate / Graduate Diploma	Honours degree (minimum 2:2) or equivalent; professional competence evidence required for professionally-focused awards.
PGCE	Honours degree (minimum 2:2); GCSE grade 4/C in English Language and Maths. Primary PGCE: also GCSE 4/C in Science. Secondary PGCE: 50% of degree normally in subject to be taught.
PgCert, PgDip, Masters	Honours degree (minimum 2:2). Candidates without a qualifying degree may be considered with significant relevant experience, interview, and/or a Level 7 module or portfolio.
Research Degrees	Honours degree (minimum 2:1) or equivalent; research proposal required. Considered by Head of Research and Graduate School.
Top-up Degree	Minimum 240 credits at Levels 4 and 5 (120 each) in a relevant subject studied in the last 5 years.
Higher and Degree Apprenticeships	University entry criteria plus apprenticeship standard requirements — subject and level specific.
Collaborative Provision	Students must meet the admissions criteria agreed by the University at validation. Partners are responsible for selecting students in adherence to agreed criteria and the Fair Admissions Code.

4. English Language Requirements — International Applicants

Minimum scores vary by programme and level. Refer to the University [website](#) for current requirements.

Accepted qualifications:

IELTS Academic

University of Cumbria Password Plus English test

TOEFL iBT

LanguageCert Academic SELT B2

Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)

Cambridge English: First (FCE)

Oxford Test of English

Oxford ELLT Digital

Trinity College ISEII

Contact Information

Admissions Team | University of Cumbria

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