Admissions Policy

Aims

1. The College aims, as defined in its Mission Statement, include:
   - Providing part-time higher education courses which meet the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of adults; in particular those who live or work in the London region.
   - Enabling adult students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses.

2. The College aims, through the procedures which it uses to assess applications and offers places, for its admissions decisions to be:
   - easily understood by candidates
   - transparent
   - fair
   - based on principles that are applied consistently across the College.

3. This policy applies to all taught programmes of study offered by the College.

4. For the purposes of this Policy, an applicant is defined as any person that has submitted a written application to the College to be registered upon a programme offered by the College, and who has not yet been accepted onto that programme.

5. Decisions on admission to programmes of the College will be taken before any decision on the accreditation of prior learning (APL) is made by a sub-board of examiners. College policy on the accreditation of prior learning is defined in the College Policy & Procedure on the Assessment of Accredited Prior Learning.

Transparency

6. The College's website and printed publications will make available clear information on admissions criteria for each programme. The College will publish on its website advice to applicants on what the College is looking for in personal statements and to referees on the elements that are helpful in a reference.

7. Admissions decisions are formally the responsibility of the appropriate sub-board of examiners; sub-boards will normally delegate decision making to admissions tutors or programme directors, referring matters up to the chair of the sub-board when appropriate.
Consistency

8. The College acknowledges that procedures will vary to some extent across subject areas. For example, in addition to academic ability, admissions decisions may also be based on practical ability, and in some subjects judgements may need to be made on “fitness to practice”.

9. In order to ensure appropriate consistency, Schools are required to submit each year, on behalf of sub-boards of examiners, an Admissions Statement, approved by the Executive Dean of the School, on the entry requirements and local procedures they intend to follow for each programme. Schools may prefer to submit Admissions Statements at programme or departmental level.

10. Admissions Tutors are required to undergo training provided by the College before they first assume the role and are required to attend a brief refresher session at least every 3 years to ensure they are up to date with relevant changes in legislation, research and qualifications, as well as College policy and practice. Training providers will include staff with professional expertise in the relevant areas of legislation and policy as well as experienced Admissions Tutors.

11. The College will require all Departments/Schools to publish, on behalf of sub-boards of examiners, entry profiles for each programme, which will be published in the College prospectus and web-based programme information.

Responsibility

12. It is the responsibility of the Executive Dean of School to appoint Admissions Tutors and /or Programme Directors, and to ensure that they are in a position to understand and support the College’s Admissions Policy, are competent to make sound and fair judgments, are appropriately trained and have sufficient resources and time to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

13. The Executive Dean of any School may nominate an appropriate staff member to appoint Admissions Tutors such as the Assistant Dean with responsibility for the appropriate subject unit or the Assistant Dean (Recruitment & Retention) for the relevant School.

Process

14. In order to ensure consistency and fairness, the general principles and procedures set out in this Policy must be followed when considering admission to a programme of the College. Each School’s Admissions Statement will include:

• the method by which they will support the principles and implement the procedures set out in this Policy;
• specific criteria against which they will assess applicants;
• an indication of how different criteria will be weighted;
• the process for considering forms and assessing candidates;
• arrangements for cross-School admissions;

15. Initial consideration for admission will be based on information supplied to the College in each applicant’s application form. Decisions on admission may be made solely on the basis of this form; alternatively admissions tutors may require additional information to be supplied before making any decision.

16. In general, the College does not require applicants to be interviewed. Sub-boards of examiners may interview applicants, subject to clearly explaining why and how the interview will be used in assessing the applicants, and to following College-approved procedures. These are:

• All applicants must be treated on an equal and fair basis. This does not necessarily mean that if one applicant is interviewed, then all the others must be interviewed as well. It may, for example, be appropriate to interview applicants who proceed to a second stage of selection or shortlist, to distinguish between applicants with similar profiles, or to interview an applicant whose form does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g., an applicant presenting non-standard qualifications).
• Interviews intended to select students must normally be conducted by two members of the academic staff teaching on the programme in question or closely associated programmes. This should include a member of staff who has undergone training on fair and effective recruitment techniques.
• The interview and consequent decision-making will be consistent with the College’s policy on equal opportunities. Questions related to the race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion or age of the applicant must not be raised either at the interview or in subsequent discussion. However, staff should encourage applicants to disclose any disability to the College, to help ensure that any necessary adjustments can be planned to support their education.
• The sub-board of examiners must set criteria for measuring an applicant’s performance, which are to be included in the Admissions Statement.
• A standard format note of the interview must be taken and submitted to the Admissions Tutor.

17. In general, the College does not require applicants to provide supplementary written work. Applicants may be asked for an example of their work, or set them a written task, subject to a clear explanation of why and how this will be used in assessing the applicant. It may, for example, be appropriate to set work for applicants who proceed to a second stage of selection or shortlist, to distinguish between applicants with similar profiles, or to give further consideration to an applicant whose form does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g., an applicant presenting non-standard qualifications).
18. In general, the College does not require applicants to undertake further tests, other than, in certain circumstances, English language tests (see paragraph 23). Applicants may be set an additional test, subject to a clear explanation of why and how this will be used in assessing the applicant, and to treating all applicants on an equal and fair basis, as for interviews. It may, for example, be appropriate to set a test for applicants who proceed to a second stage of selection or shortlist, to distinguish between applicants with similar profiles, or to give further consideration to an applicant whose form does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g., an applicant presenting non-standard qualifications).

Criteria for assessing candidates

19. The College reserves the right to reject applicants to its programmes for any lawful reason where it considers it is in its interests to do so. The College publishes its terms and conditions of registration at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules.

20. Sub-boards of examiners, or their delegated officer(s), must set criteria that support the College's Admissions aims and be in accordance with this policy.

21. Admissions staff are expected to use academic judgement in assessing the academic potential of individual applicants; offers of admission should be based on a judgement as to the likely success of the applicant in successfully completing the programme applied for. In exercising their judgement, admissions staff must operate in a way that is consistent with this Policy.

22. Sub-boards of examiners or their delegated officer may set minimum entry requirements and may insist on specific criteria; for instance a minimum grade achieved at examination in a particular subject and/or at a particular level may be specified as a criterion.

23. Sub-boards of examiners or their delegated officer must be confident that the applicant has the proficiency in the English language necessary to succeed in the chosen course or programme. Applicants may be required to take an IELTS or similar test; an appropriate standard requirement for performance will be set in this test.

24. All relevant data will be considered when assessing an application, which may include, in addition to educational qualifications:

- Academic references
- Personal statement
- Professional qualifications
- Relevant work experience
25. Consideration of applications from students who declare a disability is based on the same criteria and principles as for other applicants. The College seeks to reduce any barriers that might confront a student with a disability seeking to study. A decision may need to take into account any overriding health and safety concerns, barriers relating to professional requirements, or the College’s ability or inability to make any necessary adjustments. Such cases will be addressed on an individual basis. Implementation of the Admissions Policy will be sensitive to the different experiences of disabled applicants, and will take into account their response to the opportunities and challenges they have encountered, on the understanding that these may be individual to the applicant. Applicants with a disability are encouraged to disclose this to the College, to enable any necessary adjustments to be planned in support of their education. Failure to do so may impact on the ability to make any necessary reasonable adjustments.

26. Attending a non-accredited preparatory course or summer school provided by the College or other agency does not in itself guarantee a place, although it may be taken into account as an indicator of motivation and commitment.

27. Admissions staff will disregard any criminal convictions which are spent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, unless the programme of study is likely to bring the student into contact with children or vulnerable adults. If this is the case, a disclosure will be sought through the Criminal Records Bureau. Where an applicant has an unspent conviction, a decision on whether to offer a place will be made by the sub-board of examiners, or their delegated officer(s) in consultation with the Academic Registrar or nominee. Details of unspent convictions or relevant spent convictions must be disclosed upon application to the College; failure to disclose such convictions at that point will normally result in rejection of the application, cancellation of any offer or cancellation of registration.

28. The College is not prepared to admit applicants on the strength of information believed to be either fraudulent or plagiarised, and reserves the right to reject or cancel an application or offer under these circumstances.

29. Birkbeck requires that approval be given by the Academic Registrar before a student under the age of 18 is admitted. This is to ensure that appropriate pastoral provision is provided to the student and that all Child Protection requirements have been met. Admissions tutors wishing to recommend the admission of student under the age of 18 should consult the Policy on Admission of Students Under the Age of 18 Years at http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules. The Academic Registrar will require written confirmation from the parents (or legal guardian) of the student of their willingness to allow the student to study at Birkbeck. An assurance will also be required from the Department that it will offer enhanced tutorial and pastoral support. In addition, the Department must agree to undertake the completion of all necessary Disclosure Barring Service checks.
30. The College recognises that as part of its Highly Trusted Sponsor status, it is required to identify both the intent and ability of applicants who require a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK. The College uses a combination of controls as described above, as well as additional background checks on previous immigration history, to ensure only genuine students who have the ability to study in the UK are offered visa sponsorship.

Offers

31. Wherever possible, all applicants are contacted by the College within 4 weeks of their application being received, to establish contact and inform the applicant of the process to be followed.

32. Conditional offers made must normally be in line with published entry requirements and should not normally vary substantially from these.

33. Different levels of offer may be made to applicants, to meet individual circumstances.

Applicants to whom an offer is not made

34. The College aims to send a letter or email to all unsuccessful applicants, in order to explain the outcome in general terms by providing contextual data about competition levels, and the admissions procedures followed. Where possible, admissions tutors will refer applicants to a suitable alternative programme in the College. In some instances, where previously agreed between programmes, sub-boards of examiners, or their delegated officer(s) may make offers for programmes other than the one applied for.

35. The College will correspond about a decision only with the candidate. There is no right of appeal, and the decision will not be reviewed, (although feedback may be provided at the discretion of the sub-board of examiners or their delegated officer(s)). However, concerns that the College’s Admissions Policy has been incorrectly implemented may be investigated under the Student Complaints Policy, at the discretion of the College.

Conditional Offers

36. On occasion, the College will make conditional offers to applicants. The College will outline clearly what any conditions of admission are as part of the Offer made by the College (please see paragraph 31).

37. Applicants who fulfil the conditions required by any conditional offer will have their place confirmed as soon as possible once the College has been notified of the fulfilment of any condition. Applications from those students who have not fulfilled the conditions are reviewed and their places may be confirmed if there are places still available on their programme.
38. Should exceptional circumstances occur that prevent an applicant from demonstrating that they had achieved the conditions of admission, the College will make every possible effort, once fulfilment of the conditions is confirmed, to offer places to candidates retrospectively who had achieved the terms of their offers but who had not been previously been allocated a place. Depending on the timescale and availability of places, it might be necessary to offer a place for the following (i.e., deferred entry) academic year.

39. The College may also establish “waiting lists” for applicants who are judged to be eligible for admission to a programme where the number of eligible candidates exceeds the number of places available. The College reserves the right to exercise its academic judgement when considering who should be offered a place on such programmes and who should be offered a place on the waiting list. Applicants on the waiting list will be notified should a place become available and can then decide whether to take up any offer on the relevant programme at that point.

Academic Board

March 2015