



The College of  
Animal Welfare

## **Student Admissions and Recruitment Policy**

**Version 1.2**

## 1. Purpose

The College of Animal Welfare is committed to operating a fair, transparent and inclusive admissions and recruitment process, that considers all applicants consistently and without prejudice. This policy details how the College recruits students, identifies additional needs early, makes reasonable adjustments, and ensures vocational programmes include suitable, safe work experience arrangements.

All disclosures are considered fairly, individually and proportionately. Decisions will focus solely on the applicant's ability to meet the programme requirements safely and effectively and will never be based on protected characteristics or health conditions alone. The College will not disadvantage any applicant for making a disclosure, and any identified risks will be assessed objectively with reasonable adjustments explored before any decision is made.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all programmes and modes of study delivered by the College, including full-time, part-time, apprenticeships, online and blended learning, and to all applicants, including UK, international and returning adult learners.

## 3. Principles

- Fairness and transparency in all recruitment decisions
- Early, proactive identification of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
- Timely, proportionate reasonable adjustments and support planning
- Clear communication of work experience requirements on vocational programmes
- Safeguarding, health & safety, and fitness-to-practise considerations embedded throughout
- Compliance with relevant legislation and sector guidance:
  - No applicant will be disadvantaged for refusing to disclose disability, though non-disclosure may limit the ability to put adjustments in place
  - Decisions are based on competence, not health history, unless safety is impacted
- Data protection, confidentiality, and informed consent
- Continuous improvement through monitoring and feedback

## 4. Legal and Policy Context

This policy should be read alongside the College's:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Student Disciplinary Policy
- Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy

The College will have regard to the following:

- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014 (including provisions relating to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs))
- SEND Code of Practice (0–25)
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Relevant awarding organisation and professional body requirements

## **5. Responsibilities**

The Principal has overall responsibility for admissions. Operational accountability is delegated to the Vice Principal Student Services (VPSS), who oversees the implementation and annual review of this policy. Heads of Programme ensure recruitment is standardised across centres. The Admissions Team manages enquiries and process workflow. The Learning Support Team coordinates SEN assessment and reasonable adjustments along with the Examination Team. The Placement Team supports sourcing of work experience and quality assurance. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) ensure safeguarding considerations are applied throughout.

## **6. Entry Requirements**

Entry requirements for each programme are published on our website. Our selection process considers prior qualifications, prior experience, motivation and suitability for the programme, including vocational readiness where applicable. The College welcomes applications from adult returners and will, within awarding organisation constraints, recognise prior learning and experience.

## **7. Admissions Procedures**

Admissions procedures aim to ensure students can successfully complete their chosen course and contribute positively to the learning environment. Each applicant is assessed individually using some, or all of the following:

- Initial assessment of literacy, numeracy and ICT
- Mandatory Pre course discussion meetings or Interview (including vocational conversation where relevant)
- Vocational tests or taster/portfolio review (programme dependent)
- Review of previous qualifications/experience and references
- SEN/EHCP screening and referral to Learning Support where applicable
- Skills Gap Analysis completed for apprenticeship standard applicants

## **8. Inclusive Recruitment Strategy – SEN Identification & Vocational Readiness**

### **8.1 Early Identification of Needs**

- Embed SEN screening questions in application, assessment and interview stages to enable voluntary disclosure of SEND, medical and mental health needs, and existing EHCPs
- Use initial assessment outcomes to flag potential undiagnosed needs for follow-up by Learning Support
- Train interviewing staff to recognise early indicators of SEN and to signpost support sensitively
- A “conditional offer pending SEN review” where significant needs are declared or suspected.
- Completion of the placement readiness screen for all SEN learners

### **8.2 Automatic Referral to Learning Support**

- Applicants who declare SEND or an EHCP are referred to the Learning Support Team prior to confirmation of an offer
- Applicants who declare an EHCP are referred to the Learning Support Team prior to pre-course interview, for an initial discussion around support and programme requirements or at interview/assessment, where additional needs are referred for assessment and reasonable adjustment planning
- The Learning Support Team provides written recommendations to Admissions and Programme Teams

### **8.3 Enhanced Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)**

- Provide applicants with clear information about programme demands, support available, and how adjustments are agreed
- Explain rights and responsibilities for young people aged 16–25 (including consent and decision-making for adults)
- Signpost external services where appropriate (e.g., careers, wellbeing, disability support)

## **9. Work Experience and Placement Readiness (Vocational Programmes)**

- Work experience is integral to vocational success and forms part of assessment and professional conduct expectations
- Prior experience in an animal care or veterinary setting, voluntary or paid is highly valued and recommended to strengthen your application and help demonstrate suitability
- Placement suitability must align with both the applicant’s needs and programme outcomes, including mentor capacity and learning opportunities

- Risk assessments are completed for applicants with medical/behavioural needs to establish potential risks and support needs e.g. Seizures, tics, sensory sensitivities, prior to sourcing a placement
- With consent, the College provides employers with a concise support plan outlining agreed reasonable adjustments and communication protocols
- The Placement Team will assist sourcing placements for applicants who need additional support

## **10. Fitness to Practise, Health & Safety and Professional Requirements**

- Programmes with clinical or animal-handling components may require occupational health screening and vaccinations e.g. tetanus, in line with programme/industry standards
- Applicants must disclose relevant medical information to enable safe planning; non-disclosure may affect admission where safety is compromised
- Where risks are identified, a pre-admission risk assessment and reasonable adjustment plan will be agreed
- Where risks cannot be mitigated, the College will provide impartial guidance and signpost alternative pathways

Before any restrictive decision is taken, the College will always consider reasonable adjustments and explore whether risks can be mitigated appropriately. Decisions will not be based on health conditions alone, but on objective, evidence-based assessment of relevant risks and professional standards.

If you have previously been investigated for any Fitness to Practise and/or Fitness to Study concerns, this must be declared prior to proceeding with an application. Applicants should be made aware that any documentation relating to the investigations undertaken must be provided and that we will liaise with the previous training provider (if applicable) regarding any concerns flagged. Consent to contact them will be obtained in writing from the applicant. Failure to disclose such information may result in the student being exited from the programme if not declared at the time of an application enquiry.

## **11. Reasonable Adjustments and Support Planning**

- The College will make reasonable adjustments to avoid substantial disadvantage for disabled applicants
- Adjustments and support are based on evidence and individual need, and are recorded in an agreed plan shared on a need-to-know basis
- Adjustments should not compromise safety, learning outcomes or professional standards
- Applicants are strongly encouraged, but not required, to disclose relevant needs, however, non-disclosure affects the ability to make adjustments

- Funding for support is drawn from appropriate sources e.g. notional SEN budgets, High Needs funding via EHCPs, or other agreed mechanisms, where or if available

## **12. Applicants with EHCPs (Ages 16–25)**

- The Local Authority (LA) prepares and maintains EHCPs and funds special educational provision specified in Section F (which details the special educational provision required for the learner)
- The College provides evidence for reviews and delivers the provision/adjustments within its remit
- At 16+, decision-making rights rest with the young person unless a lack of capacity is established for a specific decision
- Where needs escalate, the College may request an early/emergency review from the LA
- Consent is required from adult applicants (18+) to share information with parents/carers, unless safeguarding necessitates otherwise

## **13. Management and Organisation**

- VP Student Services is the policy owner and is responsible for oversight of the policy
- Heads of Programme are responsible for ensuring consistent recruitment practice and chair selection panels as needed
- Programme Teams are responsible for conducting interviews and initial assessments, and to collaborate on support plans
- The Admissions Team manage applications, correspondence and conditional/unconditional offers
- Learning Support Team are responsible for completing SEN assessments and for the recommendation of adjustments
- The Placement Team are responsible for verifying and quality assuring placements
- DSLs are responsible for providing advice on safeguarding considerations throughout

## **14. Data Protection and Information Sharing**

- Personal data will be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018; Personal data will be retained only as long as necessary in accordance with the College's retention schedule
- Sensitive (special category) data, including health information, is processed with explicit consent or other lawful bases
- For applicants aged 18+, consent is required to share information with parents/carers unless safeguarding necessitates disclosure

- Information will be shared with placement providers on a need-to-know basis, with the applicant's consent, to enable safe and effective support

### **15. Admission for High Demand Programmes**

- Admission windows are advertised on the website and may vary by programme
- Offers may include conditions relating to academic criteria, financial conditions e.g. loan approval, payment, placement readiness, or SEN assessment outcomes
- Where demand exceeds capacity, applicants may be offered the most appropriate route or a place on a waiting list/in the next available intake

### **16. Rejection of Applications and Appeals**

- Applications may be rejected following a panel decision approved by the Head of Programme and VP of the school
- Unsuccessful applicants receive impartial IAG and, on request, a written explanation
- Appeals may be submitted to the Principal within five working days of the decision; a response will be issued within five working days of receipt

### **17. Applicants with a Disclosure (Criminal Records)**

- Applicants must disclose criminal convictions, cautions or pending charges at application
- Disclosures are reviewed by the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) and may be referred to a Fitness to Practise Panel
- Decisions consider programme requirements, context of the disclosure, safeguarding and health & safety
- The DBS Code of Practice and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 will be followed

Applicants are informed of the outcome of the review in writing and may appeal. An annual review is undertaken for any changes to the disclosure of a criminal offence within professional programmes.

### **18. Admittance Procedures Following Panel Decisions**

- Where conditions are set, a Tutor will monitor compliance and liaise with the DSP as needed
- Breaches are managed through the Student Disciplinary Process
- Regulatory bodies will be notified where required for fitness-to-practise concerns

## **19. Monitoring and Quality Assurance**

- Monthly admissions data is reported to the Senior Management Team
- Feedback from applicants is encouraged and informs continuous improvement
- Equality impact reviews and audit of adjustments/placement outcomes occur annually
- KPIs include time-to-offer, SEN referral timeliness, placement verification rates and applicant satisfaction

## **20. Policy Review**

This policy is reviewed annually by the Vice Principal Student Services and approved through the College's governance processes. Interim updates may be made in response to legislative changes or audit findings.

## **Supplementary Information**

### **1. Admissions Process – FE Study Programmes**

- Online application submitted
- Pre-screening by Programme Team
- Initial assessments (literacy/numeracy/ICT) + SEN/EHCP screening
- Interview and, where relevant, vocational test/taster/portfolio review
- Automatic referral to Learning Support if SEND/EHCP disclosed or suspected
- Placement readiness discussion for vocational programmes
- Conditional offer e.g. academic criteria, placement verification, Financial, SEN plan, or rejection with IAG
- For conditional offers: upload evidence (qualifications, references, EHCP/medical, placement details)
- Learning Support confirms adjustments; Placement Team verifies placement
- Unconditional offer and induction materials released

### **2. Roles and Key Contacts (Summary)**

- Admissions Team – application processing, communications, offer letters
- Learning Support Team – assessments, adjustments, EHCP liaison
- Placement Team – employer engagement, verification and risk assessment
- Heads of Programme – selection panels, final academic decisions
- Designated Safeguarding Lead – safeguarding advice and oversight
- Vice Principal Student Services – policy owner and oversight

### 3. Course Eligibility Criteria

Course-specific eligibility criteria are maintained as a controlled document and reflected on course information sheets. Criteria are reviewed regularly to ensure alignment with awarding organisation and professional requirements. (The content of the previous Appendix remains in force unless superseded by programme updates).

### 4. Placement Readiness Checklist (for Applicants)

- Confirmed or prospective placement identified by the agreed deadline
- Named mentor/supervisor available with appropriate experience
- Travel and scheduling feasible for required hours
- Risk assessment completed where medical/behavioural needs are identified
- Reasonable adjustments discussed and agreed (with consent for information sharing)
- Understanding of professional conduct and PPE requirements

### 5. Information Sharing and Consent (Ages 16–25)

- Applicants aged 18+ control who receives information about their application and support
- Consent (written/email) is required to share information with parents/carers
- Where capacity is in doubt, a decision-specific capacity assessment will be considered
- Safeguarding concerns may require information sharing without consent in line with policy

### 6. Definitions

SEN/SEND	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan maintained by the Local Authority
Reasonable Adjustments	Practical changes to remove substantial disadvantage for disabled applicants
Fitness to Practise	Suitability to engage safely and effectively in programme activities and placements

Policy owner	Vice Principal Student Services
Approved by	Principal
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