UCQ
UNIVERSITY
CENTRE QUAYSIDE

Admissions Policy: HE Apprenticeships

2026/27

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1. Policy statement

1.1 University Centre Quayside (UCQ) is committed to operating admissions processes that are fair, transparent, consistent and inclusive. Admissions decisions are made on the basis of published entry requirements, applicants' ability to successfully complete the programme and, where applicable, statutory and regulatory eligibility requirements. UCQ seeks to widen participation in higher education by recognising a range of qualifications, experience and prior learning.

1.1 UCQ will ensure that all applicants receive clear, accurate and timely information to enable informed decisions prior to accepting an offer of admission, in accordance with consumer protection legislation.

1.2 This Policy has been developed with reference to:

- Department for Education Apprenticeship Funding Rules
- Equality Act 2010
- Consumer Rights Act 2015
- Competition and Markets Authority guidance for higher education providers
- Office for Students regulatory framework
- Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University

1.3 UCQ does not accept admission applications through UCAS.

1.4 The initial eligibility benchmarks for Apprenticeship Standards are underpinned by the Department for Education (DfE) apprenticeship funding rules.

1.5 UCQ operates a procedure whereby a student can claim academic credit for relevant previous study or learning experiences, known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The RPL Policy (AD-006) can be found on the UCQ website at https://ucq.ac.uk/policies/

2 Equality and diversity

2.1 UCQ is committed to providing an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation, where all members of its community, including those that seek to apply to UCQ, are treated with respect and dignity. UCQ aim to create a culture of diversity within our community, providing a dynamic working and learning environment, where all members are valued for their contribution and individuality.

2.2 UCQ are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of:

- age
- disability
- ethnicity (including race, colour and nationality)
- gender (including gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy or maternity)
- religion, belief
- sexual orientation (including civil partnership status)

UCQ's Equality and Diversity Policy is applicable to all applicants, students and staff, the full policy can be found at https://ucq.ac.uk/policies/

2.3 Applicants requiring reasonable adjustments during the admissions process are encouraged to notify UCQ so that appropriate arrangements can be considered. Applicants should refer to GP-011 Reasonable Adjustments Policy for further information.

3 Safeguarding and Criminal Convictions

3.1 UCQ is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all learners.

3.2 Students are encouraged to report safeguarding concerns involving themselves or others.

3.3 Safeguarding concerns will be managed in accordance with SA-001 Safeguarding Policy and appendices.

3.4 Students should refer to UCQ's single comprehensive source of information here: https://ucq.ac.uk/safeguarding-and-prevent/

3.5 Applicants are required to declare any relevant unspent criminal convictions as part of the admissions process. For programmes involving regulated activity or placements with children or adults at risk, applicants may also be required to disclose criminal convictions and other information in accordance with applicable safeguarding and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements.

3.6 Where a declaration is made, or where safeguarding information comes to light at any stage before or during a student's studies, UCQ may undertake a safeguarding risk assessment in accordance with its Safeguarding Policy and the Criminal Convictions and Risk Assessment Panel procedure. The purpose of this assessment is to determine whether any identified risks can be appropriately managed and whether any conditions are required to support the student's participation or protect members of the UCQ community.

3.7 Failure to disclose relevant information, or the provision of false or misleading information, may result in an application being rejected, an offer of a place being withdrawn, or disciplinary action up to and including withdrawal from the programme, where appropriate and proportionate.

25.8 Further information about the declaration process, the risk assessment procedure and applicants' rights of appeal is available within UCQ's Safeguarding Policy and its accompanying Appendix A Criminal Convictions and Risk Assessment Panel procedure.

4 Apprenticeship eligibility criteria

4.1 UCQ will at all times seek to operate admissions onto the apprenticeship programme in accordance with the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules; this Admissions Policy should be read alongside the full DfE funding rules.

To be eligible, the **individual** must:

4.1.1 Be at least the minimum age permitted under the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules.

4.1.2 Be able to complete the apprenticeship within the time they have available, including end-point assessment.

4.1.3 Not be asked to contribute financially to the cost of training, on-programme or end-point assessment. This includes both where the individual has completed the apprenticeship successfully and has left the programme early. Costs include any co-investment or additional training and assessment costs, above the funding band, that

the employer has paid directly to the provider, where this is part of the agreed apprenticeship.

4.1.4 Not use a student loan to pay for their apprenticeship. Where an individual transfers to an apprenticeship from a full-time further education or higher education course, and that course has been funded by a student loan, the loan must be terminated by the individual and UCQ must be satisfied that this has occurred.

4.1.5 Not benefit from funding for any part of their apprenticeship that duplicates training or assessment they have received from any other source.

4.1.6 Not benefit from funding for any part of their programme that duplicates training or assessment they have received from any other source.

4.1.7 Spend at least 50% of their working hours in England over the duration of the apprenticeship. This also applies to remote and hybrid working. For working hours to be counted in the 50% limit, they must be regular, planned, and known at the start of the apprenticeship.

4.1.8 Have the right to work in England.

4.1.9 Have an eligible residency status (information can be found in the residency eligibility section in Annex A of the DfE funding rules 2025/2026).

4.1.10 For full eligibility criteria please refer to the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules .

4.2 Employment

4.2.1 Unless the apprentice is on an alternative English apprenticeship, they must be employed and working under a contract of employment that is long enough for the apprentice to complete the apprenticeship, including end-point assessment.

4.2.2 The apprentice must be included in the PAYE scheme of the employer declared in the apprenticeship service account.

4.2.3 If the apprentice has more than one employer at any time (e.g. two part-time job roles), then only one of these employers can be used for the purposes of the apprenticeship. This is so it is clear who is undertaking the role of 'employer', as defined by the funding rules.

4.2.4 The minimum duration of each apprenticeship is based on the apprentice working at least 30 hours per week, including any off-the-job training they undertake. Working fewer than 30 hours per week or having a zero-hours contract must not be a barrier to successfully completing an apprenticeship

4.2.5 All full-time apprentices (those that work 30 hours per week or more) must spend, as a minimum, an average of 6 hours per week, over the planned duration of the practical period, on off-the-job training. This training is received during the individual's normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprenticeship.

4.2.6 In all instances, the apprentice must be starting a new job role or in an existing and suitable job role, where they require significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

4.2.7 For full employment eligibility criteria please refer to the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules .

4.3 Prior qualifications

4.3.1 An apprentice can undertake an apprenticeship at the same, or at a higher or lower level than a qualification they already hold, if the apprenticeship will allow the individual to acquire substantive new skills and the content of the training is materially different from any prior qualification or previous apprenticeship.

4.3.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) may be considered in accordance with the UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University.

4.3.3 For full prior qualification eligibility criteria please refer to the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules for the current academic year.

4.4 English and maths

4.4.1 Apprentices who began their apprenticeship training when aged 16-18 will be subject to the mandatory requirement to study towards and achieve English and maths. Apprentices who began their apprenticeship training when aged 19+ will no longer be subject to the mandatory requirement to study towards and achieve English and maths.

4.4.2 For apprentices aged 19+, the apprentice or their employer can still choose for the apprentice to study towards an approved level 2 qualification in English and maths where they do not already hold a suitable equivalent qualification and they and their employer choose to complete it as part of the training plan.

4.4.3 Where an apprentice is not required to undertake English and/or maths qualifications, they must engage with UCQ to receive appropriate support where identified through initial assessment.

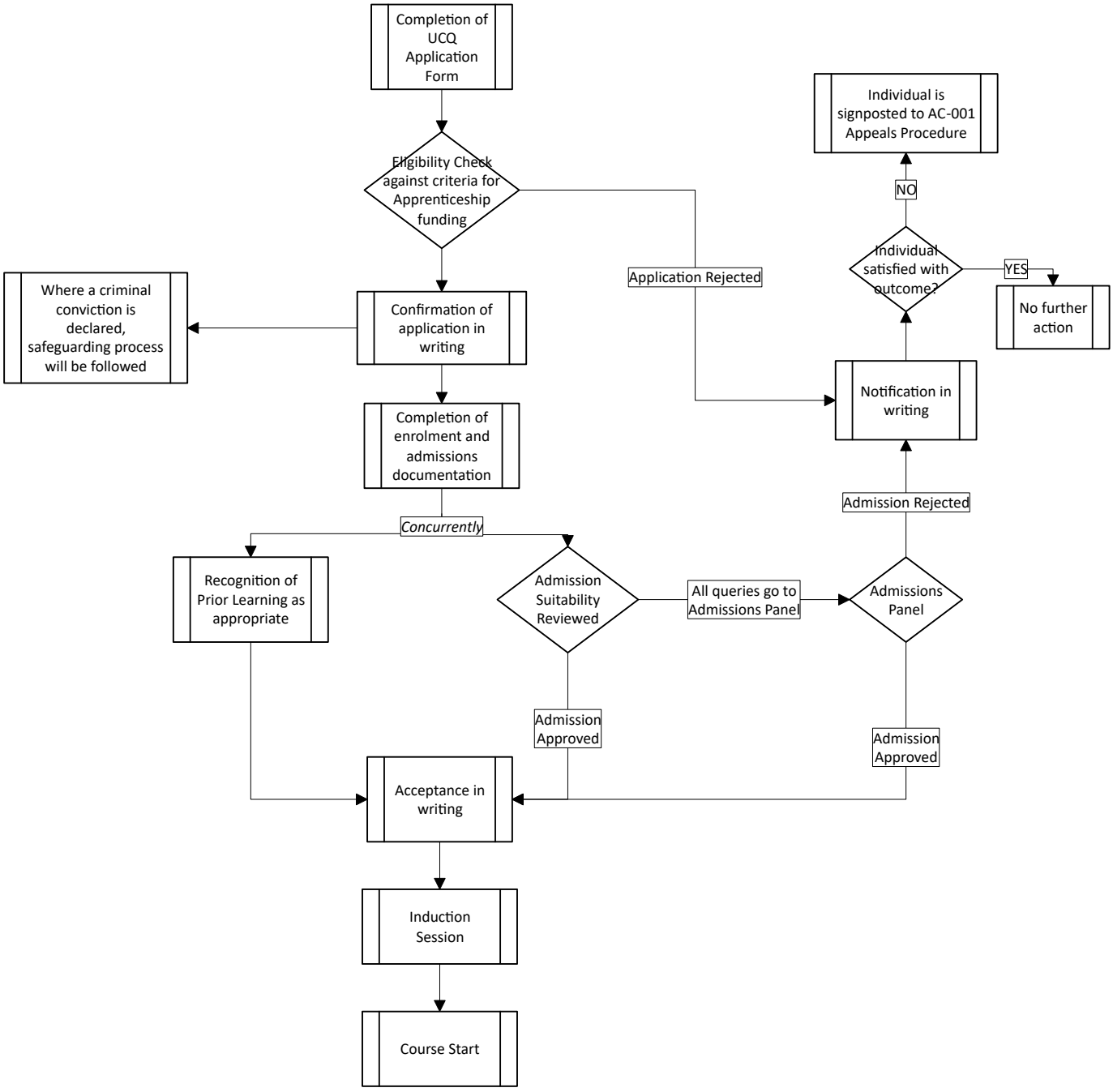
4.4.4 Apprentices who undertake English and maths functional skills during their programme will be given one year to achieve the qualification/s.

4.5 Further information

4.5.1 Eligibility for the apprenticeship programme is based upon the DfE apprenticeship funding rules that are in force on the apprenticeship start date. The eligibility rules at the point of start will continue to be in effect for the duration of the apprenticeship even if the rules subsequently change.

4.5.2 For further information or clarity on the eligibility criteria for Apprenticeship Standards please refer to the suite of documents within the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules.

5 Admissions process



5.1 Application

5.1.1 There is no opening or closing dates for applications.

5.1.2 The applicant must complete an application form (available upon request from admissions@ucq.ac.uk). The applicant will also be required to complete BKSB numeracy and literacy initial assessments. These initial assessments are separate to the English and maths components that form part of the apprenticeship Standard detailed in section 3.4.

5.1.3 To maintain UCQ's safeguarding arrangements, all applicants must declare on their application forms whether they have any unspent criminal convictions. If this is declared, the applicant will receive SA-004 Applicant Letter for Conviction Disclosure and QD OPS 005 Disclosure of Unspent Criminal Offences Form for completion. The completed form will be sent to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for review and subsequent action where required.

5.1.4 The completed and signed documentation must be returned to UCQ and confirmation of receipt will be provided within two working days. The HE Admissions Manager can be contacted on 03330048470 or admissions@ucq.ac.uk for further questions regarding the application process. The application form and tests should be completed in full. If this is not the case these will be returned to the applicant for completion.

5.1.5 The HE Admissions Manager will assess the initial eligibility of the applicant against the ESFA apprenticeship funding rules for the relevant academic year.

5.1.6 NB: Applications cannot be processed unless an application form is completed in full and within the timescales provided.

5.2 Suitability check

5.2.1 If all initial eligibility criteria has been met, the applicant will be asked to submit suitability information to support their application. The suitability check is designed to:

- Establish a sound understanding of the prior attainment, experience, and existing skills, knowledge and behaviours of the apprentice
- Understand any difficulties or barriers that may challenge full engagement in learning and timely achievement of the target standard, so that relevant support plans can be put in place.
- Establish whether the apprenticeship is an appropriate programme for the individual; and to ensure that the target programme will provide for the development of substantial skills, knowledge and behaviours (i.e. there will be 'distance travelled' in learning)
- Inform the creation of the Individual Learning Plan which ensures that training already undertaken is not repeated
- Inform any related fees for the programme
- Inform the information, advice and guidance provided to individuals (and their employer) where it is found that the target apprenticeship is not appropriate for them.

5.2.2 The assessment may include a review of:

- Career aspirations and suitability
- Functional skills requirements
- Learning difficulties
- Potential barriers to learning
- Personal behaviours and effectiveness
- RPL
- Qualifications and achievements
- Job role, experience and contract
- Employer arrangements and support

5.3 Additional work

5.3.1 Where UCQ receives more eligible applications than places they are able to accommodate, all eligible applicants will be asked to carry out an additional piece of work such as a research activity. Prior to commencement of the research activity, the applicant will be provided clear marking criteria. All marking will be undertaken by a member of the Academic Programme Team.

5.4 Review and decisions

5.4.1 The Admissions Team will review the application in a way that is consistent with UCQ's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (GP-001). The application will also be reviewed against the DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules for the relevant academic year. These strict eligibility criteria must be adhered to and UCQ will be unable to admit applicants that exceed their allocated offer numbers (where provided by the Employer).

5.5 Offers

5.5.1 Following completion of the admissions process, UCQ will determine whether an applicant has met the published entry requirements and is suitable for admission to the apprenticeship programme.

5.5.2 Where an application is successful, UCQ will normally issue either:

- an **unconditional offer**, where all entry requirements and enrolment conditions have been satisfied; or
- a **conditional offer**, where specified conditions remain outstanding prior to enrolment.

5.5.3 Conditions attached to an offer may include, but are not limited to:

- confirmation of employer support and continued employment in an eligible role;
- confirmation of apprenticeship funding eligibility and compliance with the current Department for Education Apprenticeship Funding Rules;
- verification of qualifications, certifications or other evidence required to demonstrate that published entry requirements have been met;
- completion of any Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment, where applicable; and
- completion of any outstanding admissions or enrolment documentation required by UCQ.

5.5.4 Any conditions attached to an offer will be clearly communicated to the applicant, together with the evidence required and the deadline by which the conditions must be satisfied.

5.5.5 Where the conditions of a conditional offer are not satisfied by the specified deadline, UCQ reserves the right to withdraw the offer of admission.

5.5.6 All applicants shall be contacted by UCQ within 20 working days of their *finalised* application being received; this includes completed suitability checks and RPL documentation where applicable. If successful, a Letter of Acceptance will be sent to the applicant or provided in person by a UCQ representative.

5.6 Unsuccessful applications

5.6.1 Should an application be unsuccessful the applicant will be notified in writing explaining the outcome in general terms. If the applicant is not satisfied with this response they may appeal the decision through the Appeals Procedure (AC-001). This procedure is available from the UCQ website https://ucq.ac.uk/policies/

6. Reasonable Adjustments

6.1 UCQ is committed to ensuring that applicants are not disadvantaged during the admissions process because of a disability or other protected characteristic, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

6.2 Applicants who require reasonable adjustments at any stage of the admissions process are encouraged to notify UCQ as early as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be considered.

6.3 Reasonable adjustments may be considered in relation to, but are not limited to:

- completion of the application process;
- admissions interviews;
- admissions assessments or suitability activities;
- provision of documentation in alternative formats; and
- any other aspect of the admissions process where a reasonable adjustment may be appropriate.

6.4 Requests for reasonable adjustments will be considered on an individual basis, taking account of the applicant's circumstances, the requirements of the programme and UCQ's legal obligations.

6.5 The provision of a reasonable adjustment does not remove or alter the published academic or professional entry requirements for admission.

7. Admissions Complaints

7.1 UCQ aims to ensure that all admissions applications are handled fairly, consistently, transparently and in accordance with this Policy.

7.2 Applicants who have concerns regarding the administration of the admissions process, the conduct of staff, or any aspect of the admissions service may raise those concerns in accordance with the UCQ Complaints Policy.

7.3 Where a concern relates to an admissions decision rather than the administration of the admissions process, applicants should refer to the UCQ Appeals Procedure.

8. Admissions Appeals

8.1 Applicants who wish to challenge an admissions decision may do so only in accordance with the UCQ Appeals Procedure (AC-001).

8.2 Admissions appeals will only be considered on the grounds and in accordance with the requirements set out within the UCQ Appeals Procedure.

8.3 The Admissions Policy does not establish a separate admissions appeals process. Applicants should refer to the UCQ Appeals Procedure for:

- the grounds upon which an appeal may be submitted;
- the timescales for submitting an appeal;
- the evidence required in support of an appeal;
- the process for consideration of an appeal;
- the possible outcomes of an appeal; and
- any further rights of review or escalation.

8.4 Nothing within this Policy overrides or replaces the UCQ Appeals Procedure, which shall be the definitive procedure governing admissions appeals.

9. Monitoring and Review

9.1 UCQ will monitor the effectiveness of its admissions arrangements to ensure that admissions processes remain fair, transparent, consistent and inclusive.

9.2 Admissions data may be reviewed periodically to monitor, where appropriate:

- applications received;
- offers made;
- admissions decisions;
- applicant characteristics;
- equality of opportunity;
- admissions outcomes; and
- compliance with regulatory, awarding organisation and legislative requirements.

9.3 Findings from admissions monitoring may be used to inform continuous improvement of admissions practices, staff development, widening participation initiatives and policy review.

9.4 This Policy will be reviewed periodically, or earlier where required, to reflect changes in legislation, regulatory requirements, awarding organisation requirements or UCQ policies and procedures.

10. Questions and additional feedback

10.1 Further information about UCQ can be found at www.ucq.ac.uk

10.2 Additional questions or feedback can be emailed to admissions@ucq.ac.uk

11. Document history

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
15	30/05/2025	All	Tara Henderson	Periodic review conducted in preparation for the 2025/26 academic year; Reference to ESFA updated throughout; S3: Eligibility criteria updated to reflect most recently published funding rules at time of writing; P3.4: English and maths qualification requirements updated to reflect sector policy change; S6 document history added; Section numbers updated accordingly
16	17/07/2026	All	Tara Henderson	The Admissions Policy: HE Apprenticeships has been comprehensively reviewed and updated in preparation for the 2026/27 academic year to strengthen alignment with the Department for Education Apprenticeship Funding Rules, The Open University Regulations for Validated Awards, consumer protection requirements and sector good practice, including the Fair Admissions Code of Practice. The review has enhanced transparency by clarifying admissions principles, offer types, applicant support, reasonable adjustments and decision-making processes, whilst improving consistency with UCQ's wider policy framework through clear signposting to the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, Complaints Policy and Appeals Procedure. Amendments have also been made to reduce duplication of detailed procedural information, ensuring a single point of truth across related policies, improve consistency of terminology, and strengthen the policy's emphasis on fairness, equality of opportunity and informed applicant decision-making.

12. Initial equalities impact assessment

Department: All	**Completed by:** Tara Henderson, Head of Policy & Governance	**Date of initial assessment:** 17/07/2026
Area to be assessed:	AD-001 Admissions Policy: HE Apprenticeships	
Existing or new policy/procedure:	Existing	

What evidence has been used to inform the assessment and policy? (please list only)

External guidance and requirements

- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- DfE Apprenticeship Funding Rules
- Consumer Rights Act 2015.
- Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance for higher education providers.
- Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework and consumer protection requirements.
- Fair Admissions Code of Practice.
- Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University.
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Assurance Agency), particularly the Advice and Guidance on Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Internal guidance and requirements

- UCQ Higher Education Student Terms and Conditions.
- UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.
- UCQ Access and Participation Statement.
- UCQ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- UCQ Complaints Policy.
- UCQ Appeals Procedure.
- UCQ Safeguarding Policy.
- Consultation with SLT

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure	This Policy establishes the framework for the admission of apprentices onto higher education apprenticeship programmes delivered by UCQ. The Policy aims to ensure that admissions arrangements are fair, transparent, consistent and inclusive whilst complying with the Department for Education Apprenticeship Funding Rules and the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University. Admissions decisions are based upon published entry requirements, apprenticeship eligibility, applicants' ability to successfully complete the programme and, where appropriate, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The Policy also establishes arrangements for reasonable adjustments, admissions decisions, offers, complaints, appeals and ongoing monitoring to support equality of opportunity and informed applicant decision-making.
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit from this policy/procedure?	• Prospective applicants. • Applicants. • UCQ admissions staff. • Academic staff involved in admissions decisions. • University Centre Quayside. • The Open University (as validating partner).

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to have 'due regard' to the need to:- (1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization (2) Advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and (3) Foster good relations between different groups		**3. Could the policy/procedure have a disproportionately negative effect impact in terms of the aims set out in (1) to (3) of the Act on any of the protected characteristics?:-** **High** **Medium** **Low** **No effect**	**4. Briefly explain how the policy/procedure furthers or prevents the aims set out in (1) to (3).**	**5. If there is a disproportionately negative impact on any protected characteristics, can it be justified on the grounds of promoting equality or any other reason? If yes, please explain.**
Protected characteristics	**Age**	Low	Minimum age and eligibility requirements are determined by the Department for Education Apprenticeship Funding Rules.	UCQ applies nationally prescribed eligibility requirements and does not impose additional age restrictions. Admissions decisions are otherwise based upon published entry requirements and programme suitability.
	Disability	No effect	Applicants may request reasonable adjustments throughout the admissions process and each request is considered individually. Admissions decisions are based on published entry requirements and academic suitability rather than disability.	Reasonable adjustments are provided in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
	Gender	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Gender reassignment	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Pregnancy and Maternity	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Race	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Religion or Belief	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable
	Sexual Orientation	No effect	Not applicable	Not applicable

6. Has there been any consultation/engagement with the appropriate protected characteristics?	Yes. See full Equality Analysis for consultation details
7. What action(s) will you take to reduce any disproportionately negative impact, if any?	No specific mitigating actions are required. The Policy includes provisions for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), reasonable adjustments, flexible entry routes and clear admissions information to support equality of opportunity. Admissions outcomes will be monitored periodically to identify any emerging equality issues and inform future policy review.
8. Based on the information in sections 1 to 7, should this policy/procedure proceed to Full Impact Assessment? (recommended if one or more 'High' under section 3)	Yes. Although the Initial Equalities Impact Assessment has identified no high adverse impact on any protected characteristic, a Full Impact Assessment has been undertaken to consider the wider positive socio-economic impacts of the Policy, including its contribution to widening participation, flexible access to higher education through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and opportunities for mature learners and working professionals to access higher education through alternative entry routes. This approach reflects sector good practice and The Open University's expectations in relation to equality, access and participation.

Assessor signature:	**Approved by:** **Michelle Elliott**	**Date approved:** 17/07/2026