Admissions Policy: Higher Education

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 against published entry requirements and are based upon applicants' ability to successfully complete their chosen programme. UCQ seeks to widen participation by recognising a range of qualifications, professional experience and prior learning.

1.2 UCQ does not accept admission applications through UCAS. UCQ welcomes applications from mature learners and recognises that applicants may demonstrate their suitability through a combination of qualifications, professional experience and prior learning.

1.3 UCQ operates a procedure whereby a student can claim entry or academic credit for relevant previous study or learning experiences, known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). UCQ operates RPL arrangements in accordance with the UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University. The RPL Policy (AD-006) can be found on the UCQ website at https://ucq.ac.uk/policies/.

2 Legislative framework

2.1 This Policy has been developed with reference to:

- 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

3 Equality, diversity and inclusion

3.1 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.

3.2 UCQ are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all, irrespective of any protected characteristic including, but not limited to:

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

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

4. Safeguarding and Criminal Convictions

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

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

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

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

4.5 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.

4.6 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.

4.7 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.

4.8 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.

5. Admission with Advanced Standing

5.1 Applicants may be considered for admission with advanced standing where they have successfully completed previous higher education study or other recognised learning that is considered equivalent to part of the programme to which they are applying.

5.2 Advanced standing may be awarded through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), including Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL), in accordance with the UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (AD-006) and the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University.

5.3 Applicants may be considered for exemption where they have successfully completed recognised qualifications or learning that demonstrates achievement of the required programme learning outcomes and academic credit at the appropriate level and within the required timescale.

5.4 Examples of recognised prior learning may include, but are not limited to:

- Relevant UCQ apprenticeship programmes;
- Relevant Higher National Certificates (HNCs);
- Relevant Higher National Diplomas (HNDs);
- Relevant Foundation Degrees;
- Relevant CertHE, DipHE or other recognised higher education qualifications;
- credit previously achieved at another recognised higher education provider.

5.5 Admission with advanced standing is subject to:

- successful completion of the relevant prior learning;
- the applicant meeting any additional published entry requirements for the programme;
- demonstrates achievement of the relevant programme and/or module learning outcomes;
- compliance with the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University; and
- approval by UCQ in accordance with the UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

6. Entry criteria

6.1 UCQ will at all times seek to operate admissions onto non-apprenticeship HE programmes in a fair and transparent way.

6.2 To apply, the **individual** must:

6.2.1 Be currently employed in a role that provides appropriate opportunities to undertake and achieve the work-based learning and assessment requirements of the programme.

6.2.2 Applicants must have achieved a minimum level two in English and maths prior to enrolment and be able to evidence certification.

6.2.3 Applicants must be able to complete the programme within the maximum period of registration permitted under the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University.

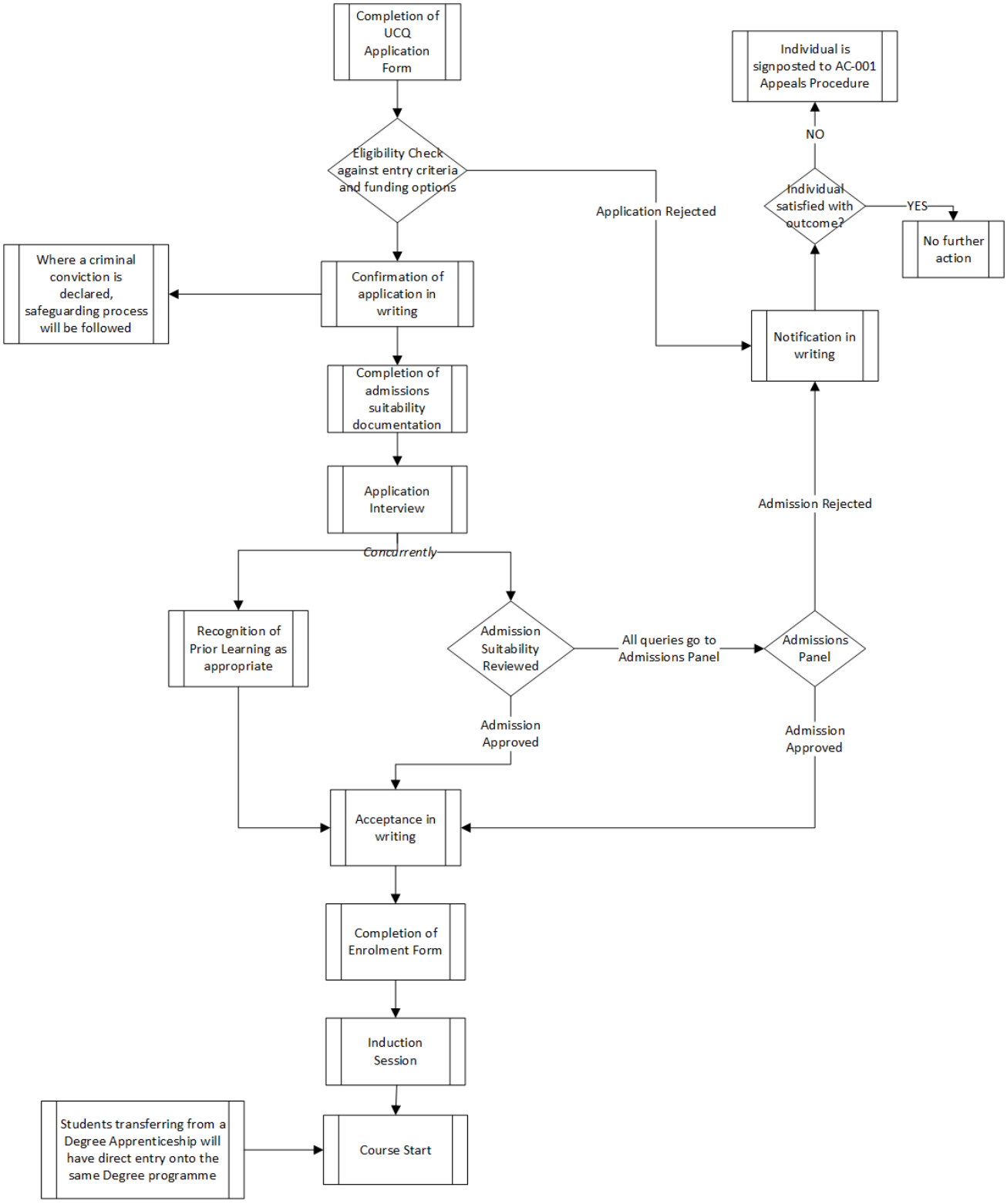
6.2.4 Tuition fees, payment arrangements, fee liability and cancellation rights are governed by the UCQ Tuition Fee Policy and the UCQ Higher Education Student Terms and Conditions.

6.2.5 Applicants will normally participate in an admissions interview to assess their motivation, preparedness for higher education, relevant experience, support requirements and overall suitability for the programme.

6.3 Prior qualifications

6.3.1 An assessment of the applicant's prior learning will be undertaken prior to commencement of the programme. Please refer to the UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy (AD-006) for further information: https://ucq.ac.uk/policies/

7 Admissions process



7.1 Application

7.1.1 There is no opening or closing dates for applications.

7.1.2 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 requirement outlined in section 4.2.2.

7.1.3 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.

7.1.4 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.

7.1.5 The HE Admissions Manager will assess the initial eligibility of the applicant before arranging interview with the academic team.

7.1.6 Applicants are responsible for ensuring that all information and supporting evidence provided during the admissions process is accurate and complete. UCQ reserves the right to withdraw an offer where false, misleading or fraudulent information has been provided.

7.1.7 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.

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

7.2 Suitability check

7.2.1 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:

The suitability check is designed to:

- establish the applicant's prior qualifications, experience and existing knowledge;
- identify any support requirements or barriers to successful participation;
- determine whether the programme is appropriate;
- inform Recognition of Prior Learning where applicable;
- inform appropriate Information, Advice and Guidance.

7.2.2 As outlined in TLA-015 Initial Assessment for Work-based Learning Process, the assessment may include a review of:

- Career aspirations and suitability
- Learning difficulties
- Potential barriers to learning
- Personal behaviours and effectiveness
- RPL
- Qualifications and achievements
- Job role, experience and support

7.3 Interviews

7.3.1 Interviews will be held to further ascertain an applicant's suitability to undertake the programme; the applicant will be notified in writing within 10 working days of the application being received.

7.3.2 Interviews will be conducted by suitable members of the HE Team. The interview will collect additional information to form a detailed and coherent assessment of an individual's experience and abilities.

7.3.3 The interview will cover the following areas of discussion:

- Job role and experience
- Qualifications and achievements
- Employer arrangements and support
- RPL
- Career aspirations and suitability
- Potential barriers to learning
- Learning difficulties

7.4 Additional work

7.4.1 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.

7.5 Review and decisions

7.5.1 Admissions decisions will be made following consideration of the application, supporting documentation, interview outcome, suitability assessment and any additional information requested by UCQ.

7.5.2 Admissions decisions will normally be made by appropriately authorised members of staff in accordance with this Policy.

7.6 Offers

7.6.1 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.

7.6.2 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.

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

- verification of qualifications or other evidence demonstrating that published entry requirements have been met;
- completion of any Recognition of Prior Learning assessment, where applicable
- confirmation of tuition fee or student finance arrangements;
- completion of any outstanding admissions or enrolment documentation; and
- verification of identity or any other documentation required by UCQ.

7.6.4 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.

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

7.7 Unsuccessful applications

7.7.1 Applicants whose application is unsuccessful will normally be notified in writing.

7.7.2 Where appropriate, UCQ may provide feedback regarding the admissions decision and information about alternative programmes or future applications.

8. Reasonable Adjustments

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 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.

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

9. Admissions Complaints

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

9.2 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.

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

10. Admissions Appeals

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

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

10.3 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.

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

11. Monitoring and Review

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

11.2 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.

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

11.4 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.

12. Pre-contract Information

12.1 Prior to accepting an offer of admission, applicants will be provided with sufficient pre-contract information to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their proposed programme of study.

12.2 Pre-contract information will normally include details of the programme, tuition fees, additional programme costs (where applicable), relevant policies, student support arrangements and the UCQ Higher Education Student Terms and Conditions.

12.3 Applicants are responsible for reviewing the information provided prior to accepting an offer of admission.

12.4 The UCQ Higher Education Student Terms and Conditions set out the contractual relationship between UCQ and students following acceptance of an offer and enrolment and should be read alongside this Policy.

13. Questions and additional feedback

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

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

14. Document history

ISSUE NO.	DATE	PAGE	REVIEWER	DETAIL OF AMENDMENT
6	25/07/2025	All	Tara Henderson	Periodic review conducted in preparation for the 2025/26 academic year; P5.1.6: added stipulation applicants must submit documentation within timescales provided before enrolment can take place; S6 document history added; Section numbers updated accordingly
7	17/07/2026	All	Tara Henderson	Comprehensive review undertaken in preparation for the 2026/27 academic year. The Policy has been updated to strengthen alignment with the Regulations for Validated Awards of The Open University, the UCQ Higher Education Student Terms and Conditions, consumer protection requirements and sector good practice, including the Fair Admissions Code of Practice. Amendments include strengthened admissions principles, clearer entry and advanced standing requirements through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), enhanced transparency of admissions decision-making and offer arrangements, provision for reasonable adjustments, and the introduction of monitoring arrangements. The Policy has also been updated to improve consistency of terminology, remove duplication through signposting to the Complaints Policy, Appeals Procedure and other related policies, and reinforce a single point of truth across UCQ's higher education policy framework.

15. 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-002 Admissions Policy: Higher Education	
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.
- 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

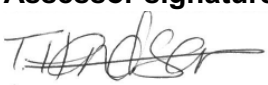
- UCQ Higher Education Student Terms and Conditions.
- UCQ Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy.
- UCQ Access and Participation Statement.
- UCQ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- UCQ Complaints Policy.
- UCQ Appeals Procedure.
- UCQ Safeguarding Policy.
- Consultation with SLT

1. Describe the aims, objectives or purpose of the policy/procedure	This Policy establishes the framework for the admission of applicants to UCQ's non-apprenticeship higher education programmes leading to awards validated by The Open University. The Policy aims to ensure that admissions arrangements are fair, transparent, consistent and inclusive, enabling applicants to make informed decisions regarding their studies. Admissions decisions are based upon published entry requirements, applicants' ability to successfully complete their chosen programme and, where appropriate, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The Policy promotes equality of opportunity by recognising a range of qualifications, professional experience and prior learning, whilst ensuring applicants are treated fairly and without unlawful discrimination. It also establishes clear arrangements for admissions decisions, reasonable adjustments, offers of admission, complaints, appeals and applicant information, supported through signposting to related UCQ policies and procedures.
2. Which stakeholders/groups are intended to benefit	• Prospective applicants. • Applicants. • UCQ admissions staff. • Academic staff involved in admissions decisions.

from this policy/procedure?	• 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	The programme is primarily designed for mature learners with appropriate professional experience. Applicants who do not meet the standard entry requirements may nevertheless be considered where they can demonstrate equivalent knowledge, skills and experience.	The criteria reflect the academic and professional nature of the programme and support widening participation through flexible admissions arrangements.
	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