

Writtle College

Admissions Code of Practice

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Writtle College
Code of Practice – Admissions

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Code of Practice for the Admission to Writtle College

1. Introduction

This document sets out to describe the principles and practices that underpin the admissions process at Writtle College. It relates to all Higher Education courses and modes of attendance and is informed by the recommendations for Good Practice as specified by QAA, SPA and UCAS.

2. General Principles

Writtle College operates an open Admissions Policy that ensures fair and equitable treatment of all applicants and is committed to providing a flexible, high quality teaching and learning environment, focused on supporting students in achieving their full potential. The College offers a wide range of Postgraduate, Undergraduate and Foundation Degree awards validated by the University of Essex.

The College is fully committed and supportive of equal access and inclusion and aims to avoid unfair discrimination on any grounds. The College is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and aims to provide a learning and social environment that is free from unfair discrimination. We believe that a student body which is diverse in terms of background and experience contributes to a stimulating learning environment.

3. The Admissions Office

The College operates a centralised Admission Office ensuring a common and transparent approach. All applications are processed and recorded through the central Admissions Office. All applications for undergraduate courses should normally be received by the deadline date of 15 January; however, the College will continue to consider late applications. The Admissions Office is responsible for processing, co-ordinating and supporting the admissions process where appropriate and advising on matters related to admissions, entry criteria and fee assessment. The Admissions Team works within the boundaries and regulations of external departments and regulating bodies.

The central Admissions Office is also responsible for all communications with UCAS, including the transmission of decisions. Admissions staff make standard offers based on agreed and confirmed course entry criteria and work closely with subject specialist admissions officers to ensure that all offers are fair and concise. Applications are distributed to Schools and Departments for assessment and approval.

Applications for full-time undergraduate courses should be made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The College observes the procedures and deadlines for the handling of applications as set out by UCAS. All applications for admissions to full-time undergraduate degree courses must be made through UCAS. Applications for part time study, postgraduate, further education and those applying through the Erasmus scheme should be made direct to the College.

UCAS charge an application fee of £19 for 2-5 choices and £9 for a single choice (2010 Admissions Cycle)

The admission procedure for undergraduate students is undertaken in accordance with published codes of practice, including the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education section 10: Admissions to Higher Education – September 2006, the SPA Good Practice for Admissions Policies and the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) regulations, and complies with current legislation affecting the admissions of students.

All of the admissions team are encouraged to participate in continuous professional development activities. All maintain a Professional Development Plan.

4. The Admissions Process

4.1 Enquiries

The College is committed to accurate, timely, appropriate pre-entry information and support to prospective applicants in order to ensure that they are enabled to make an informed decision about whether to apply for a course.

Enquiries are processed efficiently and within agreed timescales published in the Admissions Service Level Agreement. Requests for admissions information are processed within 2 working days. Enquiries via the website are processed within 24 hours. An automated system captures the enquiry data and populates the central enquiry database. An enquiry matching process minimises duplication, improves compliance and delivers a faster service to the customer. Customer Satisfaction Surveys are issued periodically.

4.2 Entry Criteria

The Heads of Schools, Course Managers and Admissions Officers review the entry criteria and provide annual departmental entry requirements for individual courses. This entry criteria is then reviewed, approved and monitored annually by the Academic Standards Committee.

Writtle College accepts a wide range of entry qualifications. Specific course requirements are available from the Prospectus, College website and UCAS Entry Profiles. The College's website, UCAS and printed publications provides clear information and guidance on all entry requirements, grades and subjects including G/VCE A-Level tariff scores, BTEC Higher and National Diplomas, Certificates and Awards, IB, Advanced Diploma and Cambridge Pre-U, key skills, GCSEs and desirable experience.

The College welcomes applications from those with vocational qualifications, who are returning to education, who do not have the specified formal qualifications and those who are not applying directly from or within a year of leaving school or college, who have non-standard qualifications or who request work or life experience to be taken into account as part of their application.

Applicants undergo an 'academic screening' by subject specific Admissions Officer. They consider and check the level of academic qualification and predicted grades.

In addition to academic qualifications the College will consider whether the applicant is suitably motivated to successfully complete their chosen course. The College considers the personal statement and reference as additional supporting information.

International qualifications are also welcomed together with a relevant level of English Language. International qualifications are evaluated by referring to independently published guides such as UK NARIC and the UCAS Guide to International Qualifications.

4.3 English Language Requirements

4.3.1 An applicant for study at Writtle College whose first language is not English is required to provide evidence that their level of English is sufficient to follow the course of study for which they are applying. Native speakers of English from outside the UK, that is, speakers whose secondary education has been in English, and whose first language is English, are not normally required to provide evidence of their level of English.

4.3.2 Non-EEA nationals (see appendix A) whose first language is not English must prove that they are sufficiently able to understand and express themselves in both spoken and written English. Writtle College requires that these applicants have:

- a. An IELTS score of 5.5, or a TOEFL PBT score of 527 (or CBT 197 or iBT 71), dated within two years of date of application to Writtle, for entry onto any undergraduate or Further Education course,
- b. An IELTS score of 6.5, or a TOEFL PBT score of 577 (or CBT 233 or iBT 90), dated within two years of date of application to Writtle, for any postgraduate course.

4.3.3 The only exceptions to rule 1 are:

- a) Applicants with one of the alternative English language qualifications listed in appendix C, which are dated to within two years of the date of application to Writtle, and are at a level appropriate for their course of study.
- b) Applicants entering one of the pre-sessional English language courses, which have specific rules as listed in appendix B.
- c) Applicants who have attended an English-medium school, college or university for at least three years, including a minimum of two years post-16, and can provide documentation from the school which clearly gives evidence that the applicant has a sufficient level of English to follow the course they wish to take at Writtle. This education must have been completed within five years of the date of application to Writtle.
- d) Applicants who are nationals of Ghana and Nigeria.

Any additions or amendments to these appendices must be approved by the College's Academic Standards Committee.

4.3.4 EEA applicants whose first language is not English must be able to provide evidence that they have sufficient English to follow the course they wish to take at Writtle. This will require evidence of successful study of the English language of at least 4 years, with the date of their highest level English language exam being within five years of the date of application. Applicants who are unable to fulfil these requirements are subject to the same rules as for non-EEA applicants at 2) and 3).

4.3.5 An applicant who is classed as a UK resident, but is a national of another country, is subject to same rules regarding levels of English in 1) – 4) above apply, depending on whether they are EEA or non-EEA nationals.

4.3.6 The above regulations may be waived in individual cases by the Head of Higher Education.

4.4 Portfolio Guidelines

For courses invested in the School of Design, applications are expected to demonstrate an interest in design and creative studies. It is recommended that applicants submit a portfolio of design work during the application process. The portfolio may include work produced from a recognised Art and Design course or personal work. For example:

Drawing/painting studies – work from observation of life/figure, man-made structures, and/or organic and living structures

Developmental design work in sketchbooks, note books and/or worksheets

Finished art and design work – graphic design, textiles, painting, printing, 3D and spatial design and photography

An appreciation of art and design history:

Photography
Sculpture
Ceramics

Applicants without a portfolio or limited art and design experience should not be discouraged from applying and should seek guidance from the School of Design

Detailed Portfolio Guidelines are available from the School of Design.
www.writtle.ac.uk/design

4.5 Applications

All applicants are considered for admission on the basis of educational performance and/or professional experience that provides evidence of ability to meet the demands of the chosen course. Writtle welcomes applications from candidates with the potential to succeed at Writtle College. Applicants are evaluated as individuals, considering both academic and vocational achievements, potential to achieve and to meet higher education outcomes.

Applications from mature students who are not applying directly from, or within a year of leaving, school or college, who have non-standard qualifications or who wish work experience to be taken into account as part of their application, will be considered on an individual basis.

Applications from international students will be considered and processed consistently in line with Home/EU applications. However, unconditional letters will include the necessary text to comply with the UK Border Agency Points Based System (Tier 4) entry procedure. International applicants will be expected to have achieved the equivalent of the minimum entry requirement. The Admissions Officer will make an assessment using both UK NARIC and the UCAS Guide to International Qualifications. International applicants must be proficient in English.

4.6 Applicants with additional support needs/disabilities

Applicants with disabilities or additional needs are considered on the same academic grounds as all other applicants. Applicants are encouraged to disclose their additional support needs or disability at the point of application or earlier to ensure appropriate levels of support are available from the outset of the course. A team of specialist support staff are available to discuss any aspect of individual needs, prior to and during the admission cycle and on programme.

The disclosure of additional support needs/disabilities is recorded early in the applications cycle within the central admissions database. Detailed guidance and a Self Assessment Form are issued direct to the applicant. The Self Assessment Form enables the Student Support Unit to make reasonable adjustments and assist with arranging appropriate support. Any information supplied will be used in a positive manner to enable equality of access. All information will be stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

4.7 Applicants disclosing a criminal record

The admission of students with a declared criminal conviction is subject to assessment by the internal Applications Committee in relation to the duty of care to the wider College community. All information disclosed to the Applications Committee is confidential and will be held as such by the committee in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1988.

Applicants who declare a criminal conviction will first be judged against the admissions criteria of the course, if this should result in an offer being made, the Admissions Office will refer the file to the Applications Committee. The applicant will then receive a letter accompanied by a criminal conviction disclosure form. The disclosure form requests further information about the nature of the conviction. This information will be then be reviewed by the Applications Committee.

The Applications Committee Terms of Reference, including the detailed procedure is available from the College Secretary.

4.8 Offers/decisions

On receiving an application the candidate will be issued with an acknowledgement within 2 working days, however, during busy periods particularly during Christmas closure turnaround times may vary.

Where possible decisions will normally be made within 5-10 working days and offers dispatched either electronically via UCAS and/or directly through the post. Any offer and/or subsequent registrations are made on the basis of the information supplied by the applicant, which should be true, accurate and complete.

In some cases where an applicant has applied for one course and is unsuccessful, an alternative course may be offered, in which case this will be officially communicated to the applicant by the Admissions Office.

Applicants via UCAS can keep track the progress of their application via the UCAS Track facility. This allows the applicant to view the status of their application, informs the applicant of dates when they must reply to offers and reminds them of any action they may need to take.

4.9 Open Days

The College encourages all applicants to visit the campus. This may, for some courses, involve an interview. All applicants have the opportunity to visit the College or attend an Open Day through the application cycle. Dates are published on the College website at www.writtle.ac.uk

Pre-registration is required for all College Open Days. Enquiries and applicants are required to complete an online booking form available on the College website. Once registered the Admissions Office will issue confirmation together with a Open Day Programme.

4.10 Clearing and Adjustment

Clearing course vacancies and information will be published via the College website. Official course vacancy lists are published via UCAS.

UCAS Clearing is available between July and September and is available to applicants who have applied through UCAS as follows:

The applicant:

- has not received any offers.
- has declined all offers or not responded by the due date.
- has not confirmed offers because they have not met the conditions
- has declined a changed course, a changed date of entry and/or changed point of entry offer.
- has applied for one course which has been declined/unsuccessful and has paid the full UCAS application fee

Adjustment is only available to UCAS applicants who have met or exceeded the original conditions of offer and who have secured an unconditional firm (U/F) place at their first choice course. Applicants who wish to use this service are required to register on UCAS Track and then contact and discuss possible vacancies with institutions. There are no published vacancy lists for adjustment.

Full guidance and eligibility are available at www.ucas.com/students

4.11 Equivalent Level Qualifications (ELQ)

Writtle College receives two elements of funding, one is the tuition fee charged to students and the other is an institutional grant we receive from the Government via the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). In September 2007 the government announced that it would no longer be providing this funding to teach students who studied for a second degree at the same, or a lower, level than a qualification which they already hold. This is referred to as the funding of Equivalent or Lower Qualifications, or ELQs. This policy came into effect from the 2008-09 academic year.

This means that, for applicants who find themselves in this position, the College will have to charge a higher fee level, to make up the difference in funding that no longer comes from the government.

The Government has also agreed a number of exemptions to this policy. These include students studying Foundation Degrees; students in receipt of Disability Support Allowance (DSA); and students studying non-HEFCE funded courses.

Further details about the Government policy and a full list of exemptions can be found at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/funding/elq/>
<http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/hefunding.html>

4.12 Admissions with academic credit / direct entry

Applicants are welcomed with non-standard entry qualifications and those with prior experience and achievements. Some applicants may be able to transfer credit for previous learning or claim credit for some elements of the course. Details are available upon request.

4.13 Standard Letters

All text used in our standard letters is approved by the Head of Registry and the Head of Marketing.

4.14 Responsibilities of the applicant

Applicants offered a unconditional place on a course who accept this offer must adhere to the following guidance:

- ensure that information provided is accurate, true and supports their application
- allow Writtle College to use the data supplied and share this with colleagues in respect of making decisions and use the information to compile a student record for subsequent data returns
- applicants should inform the College of any changes to personal data or change of circumstance during the application process, e.g. change of contact details
- applicants should supply copies of relevant entry level academic achievements
- disclose support needs at the early stages of the application cycle so that suitable support arrangements and adjustments can be made, as appropriate
- be responsible for timely payment of all relevant fees

4.15 Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

The College is committed to and undertakes to provide appropriate feedback to unsuccessful applicants and where possible considers alternate courses of study. This communication, should provide details as to why the applicant was unsuccessful in gaining an offer and where possible options for alternative courses of study at the College.

Applicants are requested to read the following before communicating with the College:

- Admissions Officer are prepared to provide written feedback upon request from the applicant.
- Feedback will be made direct to the applicant unless the College receives a written request from the applicant to share information with other individuals.
- Applicants should put their request in writing to the Head of Registry and Admissions and include their UCAS ID number and full postal address.
- The College will respond to each request within 14 working days of receipt of the request
- If, during the feedback process, it becomes apparent that there is significant additional information which was not forthcoming with the original application, the College will review the original admissions decision in light of this new information.
- The review of feedback will be considered by two admissions officers.

4.16 Late Admission

All applications for undergraduate courses should normally be received by the UCAS deadline date of 15 January; however, the College will continue to consider late applications with equal consideration. For Art and Design courses, the deadline date is 24 March.

4.17 Deferred Entry

Applicants may wish to defer their entry. The College generally welcomes applications from candidates who intend to defer their entry for a year (a gap year). If this is the case the applicant should contact the College Admissions Office or UCAS. Applicants who apply via UCAS must follow UCAS deferral procedures. The College will not normally allow an applicant to defer entry for more than one year. If the applicant requests to defer for more than one year, the applicant must re-apply.

4.18 Information to Applicants

The College will ensure that promotional materials are accurate and relevant and accessible to enquiries, applicants and students.

5. Fraudulent statements, omissions and similarity detection

UCAS provides a Similarity Detection Service, which identifies potential plagiarism in applicants' personal statements. Full details are published on the UCAS website www.ucas.com for HE Staff.

The following is the policy and procedure that Writtle College will adopt:

- where UCAS reports an applicant under the Similarity Detection Service and the percentage of similarity is equal to or above 40% the Head of Admissions will contact the applicant and invite him/her to submit a revised personal statement within 14 days. The applicants file will be held in central Admissions
- on receipt of a revised personal statement the application will be sent to the relevant subject Admissions Tutor and a decision made following the standard admissions procedure
- where no revised statement is received within 14 days a reminder will be sent to the applicant by the Head of Admissions, giving a further 7 days notice and a notification of a possible course rejection if no response is received
- where no revised statement is received after the two notifications the applicant's file will be passed to the relevant subject Admissions Tutor with the percentage score in order to make a decision

6. Fees & Finances

If an applicant is offered and accepts a place on a course, they are responsible for the payment of the relevant tuition fees. Arrangements can be made to invoice a third party, e.g. an employer, sponsor but this does not excuse the applicant from liability for the tuition fee. Tuition fees for Home/EU students can be paid by instalments, in accordance with the relevant scheme laid down by the Finance Office. International students are required to pay their fees in full, prior to or at enrolment.

Information regarding current fees can be located on the College website www.writtle.ac.uk, Student Info / Money Matters and are also published in the Higher Education Fees – Financial Information and Regulations for Students.

The College reserves the right to change the level of Home/EU tuition fees subject to the provision of our current Access Agreement for undergraduates as approved by The Office of Fair Access.

Fees for overseas students are fixed annually and therefore a small increase will be applied during the duration of the student's course.

7. Confidentiality of Information

The Admissions Office is not in the position to share applicant's personal details with a third party, unless we receive confirmation from the applicant in writing. All application data is treated in strict confidence and is shared between the applicant, the Admissions Officer and admissions staff within the appropriate School and Department involved in admissions processes. All application data is stored centrally in the Admissions Office. Application data of successful applicants forms the basis of the student record. All data is held and processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

8. Discontinued Courses

New courses are continually being introduced and optional modules and minor lines revised so applicants are advised to either contact the Admissions Office for up-to-date course information or view information on the College website. www.writtle.ac.uk/courses

The College reserves the right to withdraw courses or parts of courses where there is insufficient demand, to charge a registration fee to cover aspects such as study visits and learning materials and to vary modes of delivery.

Where it is necessary to discontinue a course or where there are significant changes to a course between the time an offer is made and enrolment, the central Admissions Office, with guidance from the subject Admissions Officer, will inform the applicants and advise them of the options available.

All decisions to suspend or discontinue a course will be taken in good time and be made as early as possible in the application cycle in order to give applicants the best opportunity to obtain a place on another course either at Writtle College or at a different institution. Writtle College will do everything possible to assist the applicant in securing a place on an alternate course. Action taken may vary according to the applicants' status and the timing of the decision described in the UCAS Admissions Guide.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Admissions Policy is monitored and reviewed annually by the Academic Standards Committee.

Admission profiles in respect of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, disability, age and qualifications on entry are considered and monitored by the Equality and Diversity Group. A student representative is included in the membership of this group.

The Academic Standards Committee meets to consider and monitor entry requirements, recommend changes to the tariff and monitor entry criteria.

Central Admissions periodically audits offers made, timescales and turnaround times.

The College makes every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate when it is published. We provide printed materials such as the prospectus and subject-specific literature more than 12 months before a course begins. Applicants should therefore refer to our website for the most up-to-date information about course content, selection criteria, processes and financial matters.

The College is committed to providing a fair and accessible admissions system. To achieve this all staff involved in recruitment and selection are appropriately trained for their roles.

10. Complaints

It is recognised that very occasionally applicants may have reason to question or express an opinion to the College about its decision or the way in which their application has been handled. Applicants in this situation should direct their query initially to the Admissions Tutor for the course they have applied. If they remain dissatisfied, the query should be directed to the Head of Registry & Admissions, who will conduct a review of the situation.

If, at any time during the admissions cycle, an applicant has cause to complain about an operational or administration matter, they should contact the Head of Admissions. If there is cause to continue with the complaint the applicant should put forward their complaint through the College's formal Complaints Procedure, available upon request from the College Secretary.

11. Data Protection

By signing the UCAS/Writtle application form, applicants give their permission to the institution (Writtle College) to process their personal data for the purposes of selection and admission. The information on the application will form a key part of the individual student record. This information will be used to make statutory returns to various bodies such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). All data is held and processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Anonymised applicant data is analysed by the College for statutory monitoring, planning, teaching and learning, in order to ensure that the processes are fair and effective.

A full and detailed declaration is available upon request.

This Code of Practice is supplementary to other Admissions procedures and practices and is published in good faith. This Admission Code of Practice will be reviewed annually to ensure that it continues to support the mission of the College and is current and valid.

Appendix A

EEA nationals

1. EEA nationals are passport holders of the following countries:

The United Kingdom (including the Irish Republic)
Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Cyprus
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Slovenia
Slovak Republic
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland (not in the EEA but have the same rights as)

2. Therefore, all other passport holders are classed as “Non-EEA Nationals”.

Appendix B

Pre-sessional English language courses.

English level entry requirements to pre-sessional English Language courses are as follows:

Pre-sessional Extra course (20 weeks)

- For students not progressing onto a Writtle College FE or HE course. IELTS 4.5 or TOEFL PBT 475 (CBT152/ iBT50)
- For students progressing onto a Writtle College FE or undergraduate course. IELTS 4.5 or TOEFL PBT 475 (CBT152/ iBT50)
- For students progressing onto a Writtle College postgraduate course. 5.5 IELTS or TOEFL PBT 527 (CBT 197/ iBT 71)

Pre-sessional English Language (PSEL) course 1 (12 weeks)

- For students progressing to a Writtle College FE or undergraduate course. IELTS 5.0 or TOEFL PBT 500 (CBT170/ iBT 59)
- For students progressing to a Writtle College postgraduate course. 6.0 IELTS or TOEFL PBT 550 (CBT 213/ 79 iBT)

Pre-sessional English Language (PSEL) course 2 (6 weeks)

- For students progressing to a Writtle College FE or undergraduate course. IELTS 5.0-5.5 or TOEFL PBT 500-527 (CBT170-197/ iBT 59-71)
- For students progressing to a Writtle College postgraduate course. IELTS 6.0-6.5 or TOEFL PBT 550-577 (CBT 213-233/ 79-90 iBT)

Please note that scores must not be more than two years old. All applicants without an IELTS or TOEFL score are subject to the rules in the main body of this document unless they are not progressing onto a Writtle College FE or HE course, in which case they may be accepted onto Pre-sessional Extra only subject to the approval of the PSEL Course Manager.

Appendix C

Other acceptable English language tests

Writtle College accepts the following tests of English as alternatives to IELTS or TOEFL. Other examinations not listed below may be accepted following consultation with the English Language Coordinator.

FE and undergraduate courses

A pass at:

- Cambridge ESOL Business English Certificate Vantage
- Cambridge ESOL First Certificate in English
- Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life Level 1

Postgraduate courses

A pass at:

- Cambridge ESOL Business English Certificate Higher
- Cambridge ESOL Certificate in Advanced English
- Cambridge ESOL Certificate of Proficiency in English
- Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life Level 2