

STUDENT ADMISSIONS POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT:

EKC Group welcomes applications from all individuals from the communities we serve, with the motivation to learn and the potential to succeed. The Group is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and fair access for all individuals seeking a place on a programme of study, and to meeting its duties under equality legislation, including making reasonable adjustments where required.

It is the intention of this policy to:

- Ensure that staff making admission decisions are equipped with the required judgements and competency to undertake such a role and responsibility.
- Ensure accuracy, relevance and accessibility of promotional activities and information to enable applicants to make an informed decision.
- Ensure selection policies and procedures are clear, impartial, and moreover, inclusive to all applicants.
- Ensure impartial advice and guidance is delivered to meet the demands of the individual.

This policy applies to all applicants (including late applicants) seeking admission to an EKC Group College/business unit for any programme of study including Higher Education and existing EKC Group students who wish to progress to an alternative pathway programme. It does not cover admissions to the Junior College, EKC Group Nurseries, or students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Separate policies are in place for these areas and are available on EKC Group's website. Learners who enrol on short, professional development and leisure courses are also out of the scope of this policy.

EKC Group operates an open Admissions Policy that ensures fair, transparent, and equitable treatment of all applicants and is committed to providing a high-quality teaching and learning environment, focused on supporting students to achieve their full potential. The Group believes in a student body that is diverse in terms of background and experience, with all students contributing to a stimulating learning environment.

1. Admissions procedures

1.1 Applicants aged 16-18

- There will be clear written entry criteria for every pathway and programme which are published on the individual College websites which form part of the EKC

Group (Ashford, Broadstairs, Canterbury, Dover Folkestone, Sheppey colleges and EKC Training).

- All full-time applicants must complete an online application via Kent Choices. The College will provide support if needed. The College will provide support to access an applicant's online portal and to allow them to track the progress of their application, book applicant events, make additional applications for other colleges/programmes and accept or decline offers etc.
- We would encourage all learners at application and during applicant events to let us know if they have a support need. A member of our Inclusive Learning Support Team will contact you to discuss your needs and wherever possible make reasonable adjustments to meet your needs.
- Other than exceptional circumstances, opportunities for students to view an EKC Group College and its facilities prior to the commencement of a course will be organised by our pre-published Open Events, Advice and Guidance sessions, post GCSE results Information Events, and Applicant Events to support students making well-informed choices.
- All applicants who meet the published entry criteria for full-time or part-time programmes will attend an Applicant event. During an Applicant event, the applicant will engage in a conversation about their chosen subject and level of study, and an offer is agreed on the most appropriate programme for them. This will also include a taster within the area.
- If an applicant already meets the entry criteria, they will receive an unconditional offer on a programme. If an applicant does not currently meet the direct entry criteria (e.g. they are waiting for the results of their GCSE examinations), they will receive a conditional offer on a programme. The conditional offer will become unconditional upon the applicant fulfilling the criteria set out in their offer. Those who do not meet the criteria of their conditional offer may be offered an alternative programme (e.g. at a different level of study) at enrolment and at the discretion of their chosen EKC Group College.
- Applicants will need to confirm their unconditional or conditional offer to secure a confirmed place on their chosen pathway or programme. These acceptances are date stamped and will be used to determine places on a first-come first-serve basis, with our pathways or programmes having maximum numbers of confirmed offers.
- Once the maximum number of confirmed offers is reached, applicants will be placed on a waiting list, using the date stamp to determine where each applicant is on the waiting list. As many of our programmes fill up very quickly it is highly recommended that applicants accept their preferred offer of a pathway or programme as soon as possible after attending their applicant day.
- Applications received after the 1 June each year will be classified as late applications and will be invited to applicant days throughout the summer holidays.
- Applicants who have not applied to EKC Group before and wish to do so after GCSE results day will be invited to late enroller applicant day at their chosen College. This occurs after the main enrolment period has been completed. Late enrollers may have a limited choice on the range of

programmes available to them, but we will work with applicants to identify opportunities from across all the colleges within the EKC Group and work to provide suitable provision wherever possible. Late enrollers may also be able to join waiting lists for already full pathways or programmes.

- It is critically important that applicants with accepted offers attend their scheduled enrolment slot, as only by enrolling on the programme or pathway can their place be fully secured. Failure by an applicant to attend enrolment sessions (or inform the Group that they are unable to attend and book an alternative date) could result in their place being offered to another applicant. This is particularly important for pathways or programmes with high demand.
- Students must provide information to allow Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to be made prior to entry on courses for all work experience providers and employers in areas such as Teaching Assistants, Early Years and Health and Education programmes. This is to ensure that students have every chance to gain work experience opportunities and employment in their chosen career at the end of the programme.

1.2 Where students are progressing to the next level of study in the same pathway, they will need to meet the entry criteria for that pathway programme. They do not need to go through the online application process, or an interview as curriculum staff will complete a progression form with the student. Applicants who have not previously sat public examinations.

- In cases where an applicant has not had the opportunity to sit public examinations, EKC Group wants to ensure they are applying for pathways at a fair, appropriate, and inclusive level to their prior knowledge. This may refer to learners who were previously registered as electively home educated with the local authority for example but are not to be confused by learners who sat public examinations but did not achieve a grade.
- These learners need to make this known in their application so they can be invited to an initial assessment event prior to the start of the programme
- Learners will undertake initial assessments to ascertain the most appropriate level of study. Once marked and quality assured, a learner will receive an unconditional offer onto the level identified from the initial assessment.
- Applicants should confirm their offer as soon as possible to ensure that they are able to secure a confirmed place on their chosen programme or pathway. Applicants should also attend their published enrolment slot to fully secure their place on their chosen programme.

1.3 **Full and part time adult applicants.**

- There will be clear written entry criteria for every pathway programme which are published on the College pages of the EKC website.
- All applicants must complete an online application via Kent Choices. The College will

provide support if needed.

- All applicants who meet the published entry criteria for any adult programmes will be invited to attend an Applicant event. During an Applicant event, the applicant discusses their chosen subject and programme, their eligibility for the course and funding (as required), and begin/complete the enrolment process. Opportunities for students to view an EKC Group College and its facilities prior to the commencement of a course will be provided.
- On courses where work experience providers and employers require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks to be made before placement, such as Teaching, Early Years, and Health and Education programmes, students must provide the required information before the course commences. This is to ensure students have every chance to gain work experience opportunities and employment in their chosen career at the end of the programme.

Applicants will need to pay any mandatory fees in full in advance of the start of the course, unless they are on an agreed instalment plan or have confirmation of an approved Advanced Learning Loan, where applicable. For fees of £750 and over, an individual may set up an instalment plan at or prior to enrolment, in line with the EKC Group Fees Policy.

- 1.4 Where students are progressing to the next level on a pathway, they will need to meet the entry criteria for that pathway programme. They do not need to go through the online application process as curriculum staff will complete a progression form.

1.5 **EKC Training specific Adult Courses**

- All candidates are required to complete an online application to determine the suitability of the provision and evaluate any other individual specialised requirements. Candidates will then be invited to an applicant day at the appropriate centre to further their application and enrolment.
- Applicants seeking to be fully funded through the adult skills fund will need to provide proof of ID (Bank card, Photo ID, Birth Certificate) and proof of annual income being below £26,800 unless the programme being delivered is a legal entitlement.
- Where students are progressing to the next level on a pathway, they will need to meet the entry criteria for that pathway programme. They do not need to go through the application process, and curriculum staff will complete a progression form.

1.6 **Apprenticeships.**

- All Apprenticeship vacancies are advertised via the National Apprenticeship Service website (GOV.UK).
- All applicants must complete an online application in order to be considered. These applications are screened and those meeting the specifications of the employer are invited for an interview to assess suitability. Shortlisted candidates are sent to the employer for a final interview and employment decision. An Apprenticeship enrolment is accordingly scheduled.

- All applicants invited to interview will be required to complete initial assessments for English and Math's or provide evidence of prior attainment at the level required for entry to the Apprenticeship Standard programme
- In an instance where the employer has identified their own potential apprentice, the candidate will still be invited for an interview to assess their suitability for the apprenticeship standard in question. Should they meet the eligibility requirements an Apprenticeship enrolment will be scheduled.
- Where an applicant is unsuccessful for their chosen Apprenticeship programme feedback, support and guidance will be provided to enable them to access a more suitable learning opportunity or alternative option.
- Inclusive Learning requirements are determined during the screening interview and forwarded to the Inclusive Learning Team with responsibility for overseeing Inclusive Learning requirements and the associated access arrangements.
- Apprentices progressing to the next level of Apprenticeship learning will need to meet the eligibility requirements of the programme and have satisfactorily completed all elements of the previous standard.

1.7 Higher Education Admissions

- To apply for a Higher Education Programme at EKC Group, students must apply online through UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). There are two types of HE applicants as follows:
 - Students at a school or College registered with UCAS.
All UK schools and colleges (and a small number of establishments overseas) are registered with UCAS to manage their students' applications. Advice is available from teaching staff or a careers adviser at the school or college. Students fill in an online application and submit it to a member of staff. After checking their details, and adding their academic reference, the school or college submits the completed application online to UCAS. The student must pay online using a credit card or debit card before sending it to a referee. Payment can sometimes be made through school or college.
 - Independent applicants in the UK
Other UK applicants, who are not at school or college, apply online independently. It is likely that they will be mature applicants, who, unlike school and college students, cannot readily seek advice from a teacher, but can instead consult with various careers organisations. Students are responsible for paying the correct application fee, for obtaining and attaching an academic reference and for submitting the completed application online to UCAS.

All HE applicants may receive an interview so that they are fully informed about the course,

fees etc. prior to accepting a place.

For Higher Education programmes, the Group will provide applicants with clear and timely information needed to make an informed decision (including course content, delivery arrangements, costs, key policies/terms and available support). Where an offer is accepted, the Group will ensure any applicable terms and conditions and relevant complaints/appeals routes are communicated in a fair and transparent way.

1.8 International Admissions

- We want to make the international admissions process as smooth as possible for students applying to Level 3+ programmes at EKC Group from outside the UK
- For applicants to be successful, they will need to satisfy our general entry requirements and also the requirements of their chosen course
- To apply for an International Programme at EKC Group, students will need to apply for a Student Route visa from the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to study in the UK (replaces the Tier 4 Route)

If their study with us is less than six months, they should apply for a [standard visit visa](#) or a [short-term study visa](#) instead.

In order for us to enrol a candidate on an International Programme they must receive a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies) from the designated college in which they intend to study.

A CAS is a digital document assigned by the college to international students applying to study at EKC Group via a student visa. The CAS is a 14-digit number generated by UKVI and assigned to a student for use in their visa application.

- All applicants must complete a college online application in order to be considered. The College will provide support to access the online application and to allow students to track the progress of their application.
- Applicants will then have a MS Teams/telephone conversation with a member of the international team and complete any academic assessments – as students will be studying via a Student Visa, they will be required to take an English Language test – UKVI IELTS and achieve an overall grade of 5.5 to study on an AS level or Vocational Programme
- All applicants who meet the entry criteria for full-time courses or part-time programmes will be interviewed. At the interview, the applicant's programme pathway will be discussed, and an offer agreed on the most appropriate pathway. If a student already meets the entry criteria, they will receive an unconditional offer on a pathway programme. If an applicant does not meet the direct entry criteria (e.g. they are awaiting the results of their examinations), they will receive a conditional offer to a pathway.
- After the student receives an unconditional or conditional offer to study with the college, they then need to complete a Host Family, Medical and Parental Consent Form, after which the process to receive the CAS will begin. Receiving an offer will require the student to meet all

conditions stated on their decision letter, including paying a study deposit.

- Students cannot make a successful visa application without a CAS number assigned by a sponsor. If they submit an application without using their CAS number, it will be refused.
- As part of EKC Group's compliance process, applicants who need to submit their financial documents to the UKVI with their application must also submit their documentation to the college for review.
- Students must show UKVI that they have adequate funding to cover any remaining tuition fees as well as the requisite maintenance funds as defined by UKVI.
- If their application is successful, they will receive a 60-day vignette in their passport that will allow them to travel to the UK to undertake study as a student.

3.0 General admissions standards

- Students must then attend enrolment with the international team to show their passport and original academic documents used to obtain their offer (qualification certificate, transcripts etc.).

All offers of places and enrolments at any EKC Group College/business unit are made based on:

- There being sufficient demand for the course offered.
- There being sufficient space available on the course concerned (first come first served basis from receipt of application)
- Meeting the published entry requirements
- Suitable references and checks if required.
- The applicant being able to attend 100% of the programme.
- Applicants with any outstanding debts to EKC Group (either financial or material) will be required to clear these debts before their application is progressed. (Refer to the Fees Policy)

There may be exceptional circumstances where an applicant has applied to an oversubscribed programme at an EKC Group College. In such cases, endeavors will be made to place the applicant on a suitable pathway at another EKC Group College.

Applicants who declare that they are not a UK national may be required to provide evidence of their immigration status and permission to reside and/or study in the UK, as applicable to the programme. Where programmes are delivered under any UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) sponsorship arrangements, applicants and students will also be required to meet any relevant UKVI requirements and provide appropriate evidence to support compliance and enrolment.

Information collected during the admission and enrolment processes will be handled in accordance with data protection law (UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018), the Group's Data Protection Policy and privacy information provided to applicants. Personal data will be processed for specified purposes, kept

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secure, shared only where there is a lawful basis (including where safeguarding duties apply), and retained and disposed of in line with the Group's retention schedule.

Admissions and enrolment activity will support the Group's safeguarding duties. Where safeguarding concerns are identified, relevant information may be shared with appropriate internal leads and/or external agencies in accordance with the Group's safeguarding procedures and the applicable statutory guidance for education providers in England.

All applicants are considered for admission based on their willingness to learn, attitude, educational performance, prior qualifications and professional experience; these factors determine the extent to which an applicant has the ability to meet the demands of their chosen pathway programme.

All applicants will have access to impartial advice and guidance and information about courses, progression, and funding upon which appropriate and informed decisions are made.

Following enrolment, students on new full-time programmes will participate in the Right Choice process. Details of the Right Choice period and associated support arrangements are provided in Appendix 1.

A student who has been excluded from an EKC Group College or business unit may not apply to any College within EKC Group for the duration of the exclusion period.

4.0 Applicants and Students with Criminal Records

EKC Group does not wish to debar individuals with criminal records from taking advantage of the opportunities provided by further education. In general, a criminal record is not to be regarded as an obstacle to studying at EKC Group. In any event, the Group will not consider, when dealing with existing students and selecting applicants for admission, criminal convictions which are deemed "spent" under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, unless disclosure is required for a particular programme under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended) and/or where relevant DBS checks apply. DBS certificates are subject to statutory disclosure and filtering rules which have been updated (including changes applying to certificates issued on or after 28 October 2023).

If a criminal conviction is deemed as 'unspent' then the procedure for handling applicants and students with criminal records must be followed.

If a criminal conviction is deemed 'spent' then the standard admissions procedure as outlined below will be followed.

If at any stage an applicant/student fails to disclose accurate information on their past criminal record, then this will be regarded as an extremely serious matter and may lead to any offer being withdrawn; if the applicant has commenced their programme of study, the student may be required to cease their studies.

5.0 Appeals Process

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Students who wish to appeal against any decision during the admissions process should contact the Principal of the setting they are applying to. All appeals should be made in writing within 10 working days to the respective Principal. Assistance with this will be provided on request if required.

The Principal of the relevant setting, or a nominated representative will collect all relevant evidence for review. This evidence should include:

- Appeal letter
- Application form
- Interview Records
- Any other relevant information such as references etc.

The Principal or a nominated representative will assess the evidence, and the applicant will be notified in writing of the panel's decision within 10 working days.

The decision of the Principal is final. A record of the panel discussion and decision with specific reasons will be retained.

6.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by, and will be applied in accordance with, relevant UK legislation and statutory guidance as amended from time to time. The list below highlights the principal requirements most relevant to admissions and enrolment; it is not exhaustive.

This policy applies to EKC Group admissions arrangements in England. Where the Group delivers Higher Education, apprenticeships, or international provision (including Student Route sponsorship), additional regulatory requirements apply and are addressed within this policy on a *where applicable* basis.

- **Equality and inclusion:** Equality Act 2010 (including duties on further and higher education providers) and the Public Sector Equality Duty, where applicable. Admissions processes must be fair, transparent and must not unlawfully discriminate; reasonable adjustments must be considered for disabled applicants.
- **Data protection:** UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data (including special category data and criminal offence data) must be processed lawfully, fairly and transparently, kept secure, shared appropriately and retained in line with the Group's retention schedule.
- **Safeguarding:** Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) (current version) and associated safeguarding legislation and guidance applicable to colleges. Admissions and enrolment processes must support effective safeguarding and information-sharing where there are safeguarding concerns.
- **Criminal records and DBS:** Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended), plus Disclosure and Barring Service

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(DBS) guidance on disclosure and filtering (including updates applying to certificates issued on/after 28 October 2023).

- **Immigration and right to study/work:** Where relevant, Home Office UK Visas and Immigration requirements for Student sponsors (including CAS, monitoring and record-keeping duties) and right to study/work checks for non-UK nationals.
- **Funding, eligibility and evidence:** Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules and evidence requirements (e.g., apprenticeship funding rules where applicable) and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) requirements, as relevant to programme type.
- **Higher education admissions and consumer protection:** For HE programmes, Office for Students (OfS) regulatory requirements and consumer protection law expectations (including provision of clear, accurate and timely information and fair terms and conditions).

The Group will keep admissions arrangements under review to ensure they remain compliant with updated statutory guidance and funding rules and will update this policy where required. The policy will normally be reviewed at least annually (and sooner where there are legal material, regulatory or funding-rule changes) and relevant staff will receive updates and training appropriate to their role.

Associated policies and procedures

- Fees Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Managing Applicants and Students with Criminal Convictions Procedure
- HE Admissions Policy

Appendix 1: Right Choice period

This policy should be read alongside the document **Right Choice - Start of the year 2026**, which outlines the approach used at the start of the academic year to support students who have enrolled onto a new full-time programme to confirm that they have made the right choice of programme and understand the expectations of their college journey.

The Right Choice period begins on day 1 of week 1 and continues until week 6 of the learner's programme. During this period, students receive key information about their timetable, programme outline, assessment expectations, attendance, engagement, independent learning, support services, Student Charter expectations and available progression advice.

Where indicators suggest that a student may not have made the right choice, including low attendance, poor engagement or limited completion of work, curriculum and senior leaders will review the student's position through weekly Right Choice Transition Boards. Appropriate support, advice and guidance will be provided, including consideration of alternative programmes, another EKC Group College, an external education setting or employment where this is in the student's best interests.

The Right Choice process supports this Admissions Policy by ensuring that enrolment decisions are followed by a structured early review period, enabling students to access timely support, make informed choices and transition appropriately where their original programme is not suitable.