

HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS POLICY

(Including Access & Participation Statement 2019-20)

Introduction

EKC Group is committed to providing an environment for students that actively provides equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination and values the diversity of all students and prospective students. EKC Group seeks to broaden the pool of potential applicants by raising awareness and expectations in line with its commitment to widening participation. EKC Group has approximately 15,000 students in total with c. 300 higher education students.

EKC Group aims to place their applicants on appropriate courses with the support necessary for them to succeed. The admissions process will encompass a range of services, from the provision of information about programmes and services, through to the point of enrolment and beyond. Statements regarding Information, Access and Guidance are in accordance with EKC Group's Student Charter commitments.

This policy applies to applicants and potential applicants to EKC Group accredited higher education programmes of study and is complementary to the Admissions Policies of EKC Group's validating bodies and university partner. It is intended that the policy should uphold the principles outlined in the Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions (2004)¹, Office for Students² and the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code Chapter B2.

The Higher Education Quality Improvement Plan (HE QIP) links the strategic aims with policies and the QAA Quality Code, thereby taking deliberate steps to embed enhancement, throughout the student experience.

Widening Participation

EKC Group highly values the diversity and range of experience that prospective students contribute to college life. Applications are welcome from all students irrespective of background. Recruitment and admissions processes aim to match the abilities, aptitude and aspirations of the student to the programme of study. EKC Group's offer of Access programmes for mature students helps to increase confidence in academic study, in preparation for higher education. All higher education students have the opportunity to study GCSE English and Maths alongside their main qualification. EKC Group is committed to recruitment and admissions processes, which are fair, explicit and implemented consistently across its range of provision.

There are barriers for some students considering entering higher education for example, if you are disabled, a mature student without traditional qualifications, come from a Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) background or grew up in care. Other barriers may be the first in the family to enter higher education or finding the cost of study prohibitive. EKC Group is part of the Kent and Medway National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) which will support progression from students in disadvantaged wards. The Higher Education Student Experience Officer liaises with Progression Officers at local schools and internal Level 3 students to offer HE taster workshops, Open Days and information sessions.

¹ *Fair admissions to higher education: recommendations for good practice* – The Schwartz Report, September 2004

² <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>

EKC Group is committed to widening participation and has a dedicated HE NCOP Officer. The Group is working closely with Kent and Medway National Collaborative Outreach Programme and has identified students within its further education courses who have the potential to progress to higher education (based on their GCSE grades) who live in areas where there is generally low progression into HE. A programme has been developed to run as part of the students' core curriculum, delivered by NCOP staff which will target these students with the aim to raise their aspirations and build their confidence to apply to higher education courses with EKC Group or elsewhere.

Close links with local universities enables students to attend university taster day's and liaise with partnership development teams, enabling staff and students to access information and awareness around HE options.

The College measures student satisfaction, progress, participation and performance through student questionnaires following enrolment; programme feedback; involvement in the HE Committee; staff student liaison meetings; through an over-arching HE annual self-assessment programme monitoring report and regular reports to EKC Group Governors and Principal.

Tuition Fees and Student Support

Tuition fees are remaining at £6,000 until 2019, which is significantly lower than local universities. There is a small Hardship Fund to support students with immediate financial needs; amounts awarded being up to £100 – there is no evidence to increase the fund at present. In 2017-2018, 20 Bursaries of £500 were offered to students whose income was below £25,000, and on successful award, they are paid on a monthly basis, over five months. Students on franchised programmes with the University of Kent can apply for support through the University Hardship Fund.

There is a specific HE Induction to support students transition into higher education and this includes study skills, time management, e-resources, health & safety, PREVENT, safeguarding, campus support services and programme of study. A dedicated HE librarian is available at the Canterbury Campus to provide one-one and group support for accessing on-line learning resources and Harvard Referencing (all HE students can access this support, not just those based at Canterbury). The Wellbeing Centres offers access to additional learning support, student counselling and helps support students with a range of issues, including emotional, family, financial or health-related.

Provision of Information for Students

Information and advice about programmes and entry requirements will be provided on EKC Group website, with further information available from tutors on request if required. Every care is taken to ensure that the information contained in the College's publications (both paper and on-line) is accurate at the time of publication. However, in response to changing circumstances, the College reserves the right to cancel, change the entry criteria for, or alter the content of any programme. Where this is necessary, applicants will be advised at the earliest opportunity.

The Student Support and Careers teams provide information, advice and guidance on all aspects of applications, programmes and funding and guiding students to further support when required. The teams actively engage with Level 3 progression, both in schools and internally.

Additional Learning Support Needs:

All students who apply to EKC Group and declare a learning need and/or physical disability are referred to a member of the Additional Learning Support Team, who will contact potential students at that point to identify any support required. In addition, at enrolment students complete a questionnaire to identify what support they require. If not in place when they start the programme, students are supported in completing their Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) application.

Once a DSA application is processed, an assessment completed and an award made, the applicant will receive a report listing equipment and other support they can get for their course.

If students are awarded DSA, they can get help with the costs of:

- Specialist equipment, for example a computer if needed because of disability
- Non-medical helpers
- Extra travel because of disability
- Other disability-related costs of studying
- You will need to pay the first £200 of any computer purchased to help with your study.

More information regarding the DSA can be found here:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/EducationAndTraining/HigherEducation/DG_10034898

Student Success – equality, ethnicity, retention and progression

EKC Group is committed to equality and diversity throughout all aspects of college life, and respects differences in race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender re-assignment. EKC Group also actively supports students that face barriers because of social and financial hardship. The Equality Action Plan provides a framework for continuing action in creating an environment where all individuals will be able to achieve their full potential.

EKC Group is committed to supporting students with a range of needs and abilities. Students with a variety of disabilities pursue courses at all levels within the college and are shown to have broadly parallel progression rates to students without disabilities. EKC Group has to make courses and facilities accessible to all students and provide a variety of services, including advocacy for students.

Feedback from our students is central to support our diverse group of students, some who have lower entry qualifications compared to universities. Feedback from the HE Induction Week/the enrolment survey, unit/module evaluations, staff student liaison meetings and the student council is used to improve the student experience.

Data will be used to profile students at application and enrolment and to measure student success for different groups of students including gender, age and disability. Retention is carefully monitored throughout the year to identify and further support students where required. Small class sizes provide strong pastoral support for students and there are regular tutorials (group/individual). Destination data is obtained from the Destination of Higher Education Leaver survey and through internal questionnaires.

Profile

	2015-16	2016-17
Total numbers	270	195
Female	37%	41%
Black Minority Ethnic Group	9%	13%
Mixed Ethnicity	4%	3%
White	87%	85%
Mature (over 30)	14%	14%
Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	28%	28%

Policy Owner: Jonathan Smith, Director EKC Group WorkHigher

Approving Body: Policy Committee

Stage of approval: Approved

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As can be seen from the table above in areas of gender and ethnicity the percentage of students have increased from the previous year. Those who are mature or with learning difficulties and disabilities have remained the same. 95.7% of the Kent population is white, therefore EKC Group perform favourably in comparison for the percentage of students from Black Minority Ethnic groups. 50.9% of the Kent population are female. Nationally the percentage of students studying a full-time first degree, in receipt of Disabled Student's allowance is 6.6%

With this in mind EKC Group are committed collecting the data and to increasing the number of students from the following categories:

- Those living in areas of low higher education participation/household income/socioeconomic status
- Students of particular ethnicities
- Mature students
- Disabled students
- Care leavers
- Carers
- People with specific learning difficulties

Due to the small cohort of HE students across the Group and the profile of the Kent population it is our ambition to increase participation in each category by at least 2% year on year.

Attainment Gaps

	2015-16
Overall attainment	64.5%
Female	71.4%
Male	60.6%
Black Minority Ethnic Group	31.1%
Mixed Ethnicity	85.7%
White	67.4%
Mature (over 30)	52.9%
Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	71.4%

In terms of achievement gaps it is clear that females achieve more than males, students of mixed ethnicity and those with learning disabilities and difficulties have a positive achievement gap, 20.2% and 6.9% respectively. Students over the age of 30 do not achieve as well as those overall, 11.6% below and the biggest achievement gap is the black minority ethnic group who achieve 33.4% below those overall. Despite this being a small cohort of students (9%) in 2015-16, EKC Group will focus its strategies on reducing the gap as well as the other negative gaps of the cohorts above. In addition, it will also endeavour to collect data on the achievement rates of carers, care leavers and those living in areas of low higher education participation/household income/socioeconomic status.

It is the policy of EKC Group that:

1. The admissions process will provide a responsive and student-focused service, ensuring all applicants receive the appropriate advice, guidance and information that they need to apply for and enrol on the right programme.

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2. All prospective applicants will have access to impartial pre-entry advice, guidance and information about programmes, fees and funding so that informed decisions can be made. Applicants should ensure that they have sufficient information on which to base decisions about programme acceptance and necessary support.
3. The admissions process for entry onto programmes will be clear and concise to prospective students.
4. All applicants will be considered on an equal basis, taking into account their academic record, potential, references, personal statement and experience.
5. The admissions process recognises that not all applicants have had equality of educational opportunity and EKC Group will consider applicants in the light of the opportunities available to them.
6. Programmes and services will be promoted actively in the community to widen access and increase participation in line with the Single Equality Scheme principles.
7. The admissions process will have procedures which will enable the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision.
8. The Admissions Policy will promote equality and diversity and will be consistent and complementary to all other Group policies.
9. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide full and accurate information as part of the admissions process and to notify EKC Group of any changes or corrections to their original application.

The policy will be implemented in the following way:

1. The admissions process is clearly outlined on the College website and due care and attention will be taken to ensure that all communications to potential students are clear and unambiguous.
2. Accurate information and advice about programmes and entry requirements will be provided on the Group website.
3. All prospective students who declare a learning difficulty or disability will be advised of the support available to them, including the process for applying for Disabled Students' Allowance.
4. Guidance is available in the Student Support/Information Centre to assist in the choice of the most appropriate programme of study and to get information and advice about fees and student loans.
5. The Admissions process is monitored through feedback and, where necessary, appropriate action is taken to address areas for development identified.
6. Academic departments and awarding bodies are responsible for setting the entry criteria for their programmes. Decisions on applications are made by tutors on behalf of their Head. This process will take into account:
 - The applicant's potential to succeed on their chosen programme of study
 - The applicant's actual or expected academic or professional qualifications and grades
 - Relevant work or other experience

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- The applicant's own statements of interest in the programme/subject
 - References
 - Where appropriate, an interview, portfolio or audition
 - Qualifications in the use of English language
7. For some programmes, there will be more applicants than places and competition for offers is unavoidable. In cases where EKC Group is unable to make an offer for the applicant's original choice of programme, an alternative will be provided, though this may not necessarily be for a higher education programme.
 8. EKC Group reserve the right to cancel courses before commencement should it not be in a position to run the course. In this instance, applicants will be notified in writing at the earliest opportunity
 9. EKC Group, in conjunction with admissions tutors, have the right to amend entry requirements during confirmation and clearing. Each application will be considered on an individual basis.
 10. All applications for full time programmes should be made through UCAS. No preference will be given to applications which are received in advance of the main UCAS deadline date. Applications which are received after this date will be considered if places are still available.
 11. All applicants will be interviewed and must be successful at interview to be offered a place. This will usually be scheduled to coincide with Open Days or taster sessions, but can be arranged at other times at the discretion of the relevant tutor(s). Where an interview in person is not practical, a Skype or telephone interview should be used.
 12. Applications from students who have non-standard qualifications or wish work experience to be taken into account as part of their application will be considered on an individual basis.
 13. Applicants may be made one of three types of offer:
 - Unconditional offer: Where an applicant has *already* met the entry criteria [for example, if the applicant obtained the grades then had a gap year] for a programme and there are sufficient places remaining on the programme, an unconditional offer may be made. This is subject to the timely completion of the enrolment process.
 - Conditional offer: Where an applicant is able to demonstrate that they are likely to meet the entry criteria for a programme by the enrolment period and there are sufficient places remaining on a programme, a conditional offer may be made. A conditional offer is subject to the achievement of the entry criteria and to the timely completion of the enrolment process. Applicants will be informed of the conditions that they will have to meet before they will be enrolled onto the programme.
 - Offer subject to availability: Where an applicant is likely to meet the entry criteria for a programme but the number of offers made at that point exceeds the number of available places, an applicant may be made an offer subject to availability. This means that EKC Group is currently unable to guarantee a place on the programme but the applicants will be prioritised by qualifications and date of application if places become available. The majority of applicants with offers subject to availability will be able to enrol due to other applicants withdrawing or failing to satisfy the entry criteria.

14. In order for EKC Group to effectively and fairly manage the application process, applicants may be required to respond to communication requesting confirmation that they still intend to take up the offer of a place. If an applicant does not positively respond to such a request, the offer may be changed to Subject to Availability at the discretion of the Group.
15. In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Department or their nominated deputy can authorise entry onto a programme of study if an applicant has not fulfilled all the entry criteria for the programme. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have a commitment to succeed and they will be required to participate fully in any learning support which is considered necessary to achieve the qualification.
16. Where an application has been rejected, the applicant may appeal in writing to the Head of Higher Education if they believe that the policy has not been applied correctly in the processing of their application. Appeals will only be upheld where the Admissions Policy was not applied and the incorrect application of the policy led to the rejection of the applicant.
17. The admission of students with a declared criminal conviction is subject to assessment by the Executive Director Student Experience with regard to the duty of care to the wider College community. All information disclosed is confidential and will be held in accordance with the requirements of the data protection legislation.
18. At enrolment, all students will be provided with a copy of their Learning Agreement, which they have signed, outlining the responsibilities of EKC Group, the local campus and the student.
19. Should any applicant be unsuccessful in their application, they have the right to appeal to the Head of Higher Education and Professional Learning within two weeks of their application being rejected.
20. Students wishing to use prior attainment or experience as evidence of prior learning are asked to refer to the Higher Education Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for further details.
21. EKC Group does not hold a Tier 4 license to sponsor international students.