



ADMISSIONS POLICY

| Document Control Box | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Document title (include version number if amended within same year as approved) | Admissions Policy |
| Reference Number | 001/21 |
| Approval category (Please indicate) | |
| Governance/Governor | x |
| MPRIG Executive/Other Committee (insert name) | |
| Senior Staff (insert name) | |
| Date document approved | Unknown |
| Supersedes (insert previous title and/or version date) | Admissions Policy Feb 2019 |
| Date document last reviewed and/or updated | 14/1/21 |
| Date next due for review | July 2021 |
| Related statutes or regulations | |
| Related policies/procedures/guidance/forms | Admissions Protocol/ Terms and Conditions/Acceptance form & Letter |
| Staff member responsible for update | Director of Admissions & Practical Training |

Amendment History

| Version | Revision Summary | Date Approved | Author |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| 001/21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amended to reflect the new MMin and MADT programmes of study Replaced references to Tier 4 Visas with 'Student Route' Paragraphs 23 and 26: replaced 'will seek' with 'may seek' Inserted footnote re UCAS equal consideration date | 14/1/21 | J Bradbury |
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Admissions Policy

Introduction

1. This policy states Spurgeon's College's position on key matters relating to recruitment, selection, admissions and widening participation activity. It is underpinned by our institutional strategic priorities, which are set out in the College's *Mission, Values and Aims and Objectives*¹ and articulated in the College's Access and Participation Plan.²

Purpose

2. To provide policy information to enquirers, applicants, parents and advisors about recruitment, selection and admissions at the College. It is the policy framework for all staff who are involved in recruitment, selection and admissions activity.

Responsibility for the Policy

3. The Admissions Policy is approved by the Board of Governors. Review and monitoring of its implementation is undertaken by the Admissions Committee, which is chaired by the Vice Principal – Director of Ministerial Formation and Training, and reports to the Academic Board.

Admissions Principles

4. The College is a confessional Higher Education Institution whose core activity is training men and women for Christian mission, ministry and leadership in the contemporary world. Based in South London, the College has students enrolled across its validated and non-validated programmes of study³ and are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic and academic backgrounds and representatives from various age-groups, ethnicities and cultures.
5. The College was founded by Charles Haddon Spurgeon in 1856 because he recognised the injustice and frustration faced by those who desired to serve churches as ordained ministers but who had not benefitted from the academic education required to gain entry for professional training. Charles Spurgeon wanted to embrace natural talents and abilities and looked for potential and passion, rather than academic privilege and family connections, when recruiting his students. The College has remained committed to raising aspiration and opportunity and widening access to education since that time.

¹ As stated in the College's *Mission, Values, Aims and Objectives* approved by the Board of Governors, Minutes Apr-18 and available on the College website.

² The College's Access and Participation Plan available on the Spurgeon's College website.

³ Programmes of study are constructed to enable students to progress through the credit levels and, on achievement of the learning outcomes and credit requirements associated with each stage of the programme, to qualify for a University award

6. Today, the College continues to prepare candidates for ordination to Baptist ministry within the Baptist Union of Great Britain. It now also trains pastors from other denominations and those called to Pioneer Ministry and Missional work in its ministerial formation programmes of study. Today's students include those who are pursuing a theological education on its own merits and this further enriches the life and experience of Spurgeon's diverse learning community. The College has also developed post-graduate provision for continuing ministerial development training and has a thriving post-graduate research community. It offers other accessible training packages for the Christian community seeking to serve in lay capacities and in counselling roles.

Scope

7. This policy covers applications for places on our undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research and continuing professional courses leading to the award of a degree, diploma or certificate. It also covers Counselling, Equipped to Minister, Youth Diploma and all internal courses.
8. Courses may be offered in one or more of the following study modes, for both credit and auditing purposes⁴:
 - Full Time
 - Part Time
 - Distance or blended learning

Study Modes available for each individual course are detailed in the programme specification.

Equality and Diversity

9. The College believes 'in the inherent moral equality, dignity and worth of every individual.'⁵ It is, therefore, 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 the College, are treated equally and with dignity. The College aims to create a culture of diversity within its community, providing a dynamic working and learning environment, where all members are valued for their contribution and individuality.
10. It is the policy of the College that all people, irrespective of their religion, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, marital status or sexual orientation will be treated equally. The College's Equality and Diversity policy is applicable to all applicants, students and staff, the full policy can be found on the website and in the staff repository drive.

Responsibility for Recruitment and Admissions

11. The College is committed to providing a professional recruitment and admissions service to all our applicants. Recruitment and publicity materials are overseen by the MPRIG (Marketing, PR and Income Generation) Group, a committee of the Board of Governors. The Admissions Department carries out all activities from a student's application through to the commencement of their course.

⁴ Auditing is the term used for engagement with course material without submission of associated assignments.

⁵ Taken from the College's *Mission, Values, Aims and Objectives*.

12. All staff with designated recruitment, selection and admissions responsibilities are required to be familiar with this policy, and the associated procedures relevant to their areas of responsibility. The College will provide appropriate guidance, training and support for all staff engaged in recruitment, selection and admissions activities.

The Admissions Committee

13. The Committee reports to the Academic Board and is responsible for:
 - a. Recommending selection criteria and establishing transparent assessment processes;
 - b. Ensuring that admissions procedures are fair, consistently applied and compliant with the College's Admissions Policy;
 - c. Overseeing College recruitment and admissions processes;
 - d. Providing training on key topics and sharing best practice to ensure front-line staff can fulfil their role competently and in a manner consistent with this policy;
 - e. Disseminating information about national and institutional developments that impact recruitment and admissions practices.
 - f. The assessment of the impact of the Admissions Policy and monitoring the implementation of this policy, ensuring that it is reviewed regularly and best serves our applicants and the College's aims in the light of changing circumstances.

The Director of Practical Training and Admissions

14. The Director of Practical Training and Admissions is responsible for:
 - a. Implementing the Admissions Policy and associated study programme protocols and making offers to individual applicants, recording the justifications for decisions and providing feedback as appropriate.
 - b. Managing the relationship with UCAS.
 - c. Inducting new staff into recruitment and admissions roles, providing appropriate instruction and support.

Admissions Department

15. The Admissions Department is responsible for:
 - a. Providing accurate and relevant information to prospective students.
 - b. Communicating with applicants during the admissions process, providing information about the format of interviews, if applicable, and post-application follow up.
 - c. Supporting prospective students from initial enquiry to registration.
 - d. Advising applicants on UCAS procedures.
 - e. Coordinating the enquiry management process for applicants, to meet the information needs of prospective students and other key stakeholders⁶.

⁶ All information relating to students will be handled in accordance with the College's *Data Protection Policy*.

- f. Providing information on international qualification equivalencies ensuring fairness, consistency of interpretation and application.
- g. Providing information, advice and guidance to prospective students from all backgrounds.
- h. Providing information on student route visas.

Student Recruitment – Information for Enquirers and Applicants

- 16. The College is committed to the provision of timely, comprehensive, accurate and appropriate pre-entry information and support to prospective students, enabling them to make informed decisions. The College recommends that applicants check the entry requirements for specific programmes of study⁷ before submitting an application.
- 17. The provision of information by the College is guided by the following principles:
 - a. *Accuracy*: The College is committed to providing accurate and detailed information on the nature of its courses, content, duration, modes of assessment, and associated fees or additional costs.
 - b. *Transparency*: Information about courses and the student experience more broadly is communicated through multiple channels including: the College website, undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, course brochures, digital communications, open days, open evenings, post-application visit days and through correspondence with front-line recruitment and admission staff. To ensure transparency and consistency, the College maintains individual course information profiles accessible in multiple locations on the College website. The information includes: entry requirements, course specific selection and assessment criteria and processes, course structure, teaching and learning, coursework and assessment, fees, funding, attendance requirements, professional accreditation and employability outcomes.
 - c. *Timelines*: The College will provide appropriate information at each stage of a prospective student's admission process.

Assessment of Applications

- 18. Assessment and selection of applications is carried out in line with all relevant regulatory and legislative requirements, including: equalities, data protection and consumer protection legislation. The College is committed to:
 - a. delivering a fair admissions system that admits students of potential, irrespective of their background. Traditionally, applicants to the College come from diverse educational and professional backgrounds. The College recognises that occasionally a course's standard procedure for assessing applications may not provide the admissions staff with an accurate understanding of an applicant's suitability. In such cases, applicants may be invited to provide suitable alternative evidence to support their application or adjust our standard admissions requirements. The Admissions Department will contact applicants directly if additional information is required.

⁷ Details are available on the College's website.

- b. ensuring that selection criteria and decisions on applications are applied consistently. Equal consideration is given to all applications received by published deadlines. As demand for some programmes may exceed the number of places available, the College does not guarantee to make an offer to all applicants who have met, or are predicted to meet, the entry requirements to a programme of study. Staff in the Admissions Department receive training in the principles of fair admissions.

Entry Requirements

19. Subject to paragraph 21, all applicants must meet academic and English language entry requirements in order to be admitted to a programme of study. Some programmes of study have specific non-academic entry requirements. The entry qualifications for the validated and non-validated courses offered at the College can be found by referring to the admissions protocols for each course.⁸
20. The Academic Board approves the entry requirements for all Spurgeon's courses.
21. In exceptional cases, subject to the recommendation of the Director of Undergraduate Studies or the Director of Postgraduate Studies, the Admissions Committee may approve the admission of an undergraduate or taught postgraduate applicant who has not met the general and/or programme of study entry requirements.

Acceptability and Verification of non-UK Qualifications

22. The College accepts a wide range of academic and English language qualifications from UK and international applicants. The Admissions Department assesses the equivalence of international (including European) qualifications to standard UK qualifications at the relevant level in accordance with independent national guidance provided by UCAS,⁹ UK NARIC¹⁰ and other recognised sources. The Admissions Department is responsible for determining international equivalencies.
23. The College may seek to verify the result of any relevant qualification declared or submitted by an applicant before permitting them to enrol at the College. Where original documents are not in English, the College normally requires a certified translation in addition to the original language document.

English Language Requirements

24. Our teaching, assessment and student support are delivered in English. Applicants must therefore demonstrate proficiency in the written and spoken use of the English Language to the general standard required by the College and in the specific entry requirements of the course for which they are applying. International applicants, who require a Student Route visa to study, are required to meet UK Visa and Immigration's English Language requirements.¹¹

⁸ Course details and programme study protocols are available on the College website.

⁹ See <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/2015-international-qualifications.pdf> for details.

¹⁰ See

<https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/organisations/documents/International%20Grade%20Comparisons%20Demonstration%20Guide.pdf> for details.

¹¹ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-applying-for-uk-visa-approved-english-language-tests>

25. The minimum acceptable level of proficiency for most courses is GCSE English Language (grade C) or an International English Language Testing (IELTS)¹² average score of 6.5 for Undergraduates and 7 for Postgraduates.
26. The Admissions Department may seek to verify, if appropriate, that applicants have the correct English Language qualifications necessary for a programme of study.

Duty to Disclose Criminal Convictions

27. The College has a duty to ensure the safety of its student and staff community, and that of other people with whom students interact as part of their course of study. If it is discovered that any aspect of a student's application, or any information they provide to the College for the purpose of gaining admission to a programme of study at the College, contains incorrect or fraudulent information, or significant information¹³ has been omitted from their application form, the College may withdraw or amend their offer, according to the circumstances.
28. Applicants for counselling and ministerial courses where placements¹⁴ involve regulated activity with children and/or vulnerable adults must declare all criminal convictions, including spent convictions and cautions and bind-over orders. Applicants for the ministerial courses will also be required to complete a criminal records check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and/or a similar police check in their home country; the College will check that this process has been completed. Applicants for counselling placements are required to be DBS checked by their placement. The Baptist Union provides information on DBS checks on its website.¹⁵ The Government also provides information on DBS checks on its website.¹⁶

Applicants seeking to enter with Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

29. Applicants may be considered for entry through the accreditation of prior learning, which may be certificated or experiential. The Admissions Department is responsible for determining the grounds on which APL may be used to meet entry requirements. Credit is allocated for evidence of achieving appropriate and assessed learning outcomes, rather than for experience itself. APL credit will normally be accepted within a maximum of five years from the date it was awarded. APEL experience¹⁷ will normally be accepted within a maximum of five years from the date of the most recent activity. Applicants are strongly advised to discuss their circumstances with the admissions staff before submitting an application.

Applicants with Additional Support Needs

30. The College welcomes applications from people with additional support needs. It operates procedures to ensure that these applications will be considered appropriately and that applicants with additional support needs will be provided

¹² See <https://www.ielts.org/> for more details.

¹³ That is, information which, had it been provided, might have led to the student not being offered a place.

¹⁴ Details of what a placement involves are contained in the course information booklet, available on the College website.

¹⁵ https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/267225/DBS_Checks.aspx

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/request-copy-criminal-record>

¹⁷ Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning or APEL is the process where credit is sought for learning which has not previously been assessed and awarded credit by an academic institution or professional organisation.

with appropriate support for the application process and their subsequent study. Further information is available from the Learning Support Co-Ordinator and the Disability Officers.

Applicants with Special Circumstances

31. Applicants with special circumstances that have affected previous study or are likely to affect academic performance in current studies should provide this information at the point of application. If these circumstances are encountered after the submission of an application, applicants should inform the admissions staff as soon possible.

Applicants Seeking Deferred Entry

32. Applications for deferred entry are assessed against the same entry requirements and considered equally to other applications up to the point of confirmation. Where deferred entry is agreed by the College, this is normally granted for one year only or two years at the maximum, at the discretion of the Director of Admissions. Applicants whose first language is not English and who are required to present English Language qualifications should ensure that the test results will be valid on the date of registration.

Applicants Wishing to Reapply

33. Applicants who are unsuccessful for a programme of study may apply again for the same programme in a subsequent year. Re-applications will be considered against the standard course entry criteria for that year of entry. The new application should demonstrate an improvement from the previous application. The College may draw upon all information from previous applications, or any previous registrations at the College as a student, when assessing suitability for a course.
34. Students who are unsuccessful may apply for a different programme of study in the same year.

Closing Dates

35. Prospective applicants should be aware of the following:
 - a. *Undergraduate level (full-time)*: All applications should be received by UCAS by the date specified by UCAS¹⁸. Applications will be considered equally against a programme of study's entry requirements and in the context of available places. The College will consider late applications for courses where places are still available.
 - b. *Undergraduate level (non UCAS)*: All applications should be received by the College by the appropriate date. Applications will be considered equally against a programme of study's entry requirements and in the context of available places. The College will consider late applications for courses where places are still available.

¹⁸ This is the Equal Consideration Date, where your application to be considered on an **equal** basis with all other applicants. After the equal consideration date, applications for spaces will be considered on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- c. *International applicants*: Applications from international applicants may be made at any time until 30th June, although applicants are advised to apply as early as possible.
- d. *Postgraduate applications*: Postgraduate applications should be sent direct to the College. The normal deadline for a September intake for postgraduate applications is 31st August; however, applicants are advised to apply as early as possible.
- e. *Master of Ministry applications, (validated by Liverpool Hope University)*. Master of Ministry applications should be sent direct to the College. There are two intakes in this programme, February and September. Applicants are advised to apply as early as possible.

| Name of Course | Closing Dates |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Master of Ministry – February intake | First Monday in February |
| Master of Ministry – September intake | 31 August |

- f. *Master of Arts in Digital Theology including PG Certificate and PG Diploma (validated by Liverpool Hope University)*. Master of Arts applications, *including PG Certificate and PG Diploma* should be sent direct to the College. There are two intakes in this programme, January and September. Applicants are advised to apply as early as possible.

| Name of Course | Closing Dates |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Master of Arts in Digital Theology – February intake | Second Monday in January |
| Master of Arts in Digital Theology – September intake | 31 August |

- g. *Counselling Courses*:

| Name of course | Closing dates |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Introduction to Counselling | 31 August |
| Certificate in Counselling Skills (Level 2) | 31 August |
| Certificate in Counselling Studies (Level 3) | 31 December |
| Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling | 31 August |
| Professional Certificate in Pastoral Supervision | 30 September |

- h. *Spurgeon's Award in Youth Ministry*: All applications should be received by 31 July. The College will consider late applications for this course where places are still available.
- i. *Spurgeon's College Award in Theology*: All applications should be received by 31 July. The College will consider late applications for this course where places are still available.

- j. *Equipped to Minister*. There are no closing dates for this course as there are multiple modules that are run throughout the academic year.
36. Application forms for non-UCAS courses can be found on the College website. Full-time application forms via UCAS, for undergraduate programmes of study, are available from the UCAS website.¹⁹

Admissions Process

37. Applications are assessed and the places are offered on the professional judgement of suitably qualified staff in accordance with appropriate admissions protocols. Applicants will normally receive a response within five to ten working days of the receipt of a completed application. The response, where appropriate, will be information regarding the next stage in the admissions process.
38. All applicants who are offered a place to study at the College will receive an Offer Letter,²⁰ the College's *Terms and Conditions*²¹, an Acceptance Form²² and information on the College's Rules and Regulations²³. The Offer Letter will include details of any individual requirements that need to be fulfilled before an applicant can be enrolled on a programme of study at the College.
39. Where an offer is conditional upon attaining a specified level of academic achievement this offer will reflect the qualifications that the applicant is undertaking. The College does not make offers using UCAS tariff points.
40. Applicants in receipt of a conditional offer are responsible for providing evidence that they have met the conditions of their offer. This evidence could include, for example, certificates and degree transcripts.
41. Applicants who have not achieved the conditions of their offer may be considered for alternative courses where the entry requirements are lower, for example the Spurgeon's Award. Applicants are under no obligation to accept the alternative course.

The Student Route

42. The UK government operates a points-based immigration system for all international students which was updated on 5 October 2020. Applicants who are not British citizens, or who do not hold European Union Settlement Status should refer to the UKVI guidelines.²⁴
43. The College is licensed with the Home Office as a Sponsor. The College aims to provide a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) in good time for the visa application. The applicant is responsible for:

¹⁹ For more information see, <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/filling-your-ucas-undergraduate-application>

²⁰ The letter offering a place at Spurgeon's College on a programme of study or research, setting out any conditions associated with the offer.

²¹ The Terms and Conditions apply to programmes of study delivered by Spurgeon's College, including Spurgeon's College's Online programmes of study. The terms and conditions which will apply to students commencing courses in subsequent years may differ from those included in this agreement.

²² The form provided to a student with their Offer Letter to be completed if the offer of a programme of study or research is being accepted.

²³ The College's Rules and Regulations can be found on the College's website.

²⁴ Further details can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>

- Making an early application for admission including details of all previous study and periods of study in the UK;
 - Responding fully and in good time to the Offer Letter and completing the Acceptance Form;
 - Responding fully to requests for any further information, for example, passport details and financial records;
 - Providing a current email address to which the CAS will be issued.
44. In order to comply with the relevant UK legislation and immigration regulations, the College will notify the immigration authorities, where relevant, of any non-arrival, or late arrival, of an applicant and of any subsequent changes to a student's registration status. The College reserves the right to refuse admission should an applicant be found not to be in a position to meet all UK visa requirements for the anticipated full duration of his/her programme of study.
45. All applicants requiring a visa to study in the UK must not currently be, nor have ever previously been, in the UK for any purpose without valid immigration permissions. If, either during the process of admitting a student or subsequent to that student enrolling upon their programme of study, the College is informed that the applicant/student is (or has previously been) in the UK without such valid permissions, it may be required to inform immigration authorities and/or withdraw the offer of a place and/or withdraw its sponsorship of the individual's visa.
46. The College may need to review this policy in light of change to Home Office Immigration Rules²⁵ regarding the Student Route in order to remain compliant with Sponsor duties. This may result in changes to matters such as the evidence required for English Language proficiency at short notice. Where changes are necessary due to Home Office changes the College will endeavour to contact all applicants holding an offer and on whom the change will impact, within six weeks.

Interaction between the College and Applicants

47. The College will communicate regularly with offer holders providing relevant information such as accommodation, immigration requirements, start of year enrolment process and welcome week events.

Applicant Behaviour

48. Spurgeon's has a diverse population and expects all interaction between applicants, representatives of applicants, students and staff to be conducted with courtesy and respect. We do not tolerate inappropriate behaviour towards members of our community. Examples of inappropriate behaviour include hostile or aggressive behaviour or the act of offering a bribe or financial inducement. Inappropriate behaviour will be viewed seriously and may prejudice the further consideration of an application, appeal or complaint. Applicants will usually be warned by the College when their conduct is such that action is being considered. In exceptional cases, e.g. a threat to a member of staff, then no warning needs to be given before action is taken.

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-3-students>

Fraud, Omission and Plagiarism

49. Applicants must not omit any requested or relevant information, make any misrepresentation (for example, through plagiarism) or give false information at any point of the application process including after an offer is made. Should this occur the College reserves the right to dismiss the application, withdraw an offer of a place and/or revoke an applicant's registration. The College may also, in accordance with its obligations, notify external organisations about any suspected misrepresentation.
50. Scanned copies of documents are generally accepted during the admission process but original documents may be requested.

Clearing Applications for Undergraduate Full-time Course

51. The College will advertise any vacancies that are available after the close of the main UCAS admission cycle on UCAS and College Websites. Please telephone the Admissions Department for further information. Suitably qualified applicants will be considered against the published entry requirements.

Interviews for Postgraduate Research Courses

52. Before an offer of a place is made, an applicant will be invited to participate in an interview. As a face to face interview is often impractical, the interview may take different forms such as via telephone, Skype or other software package. The panel will include as a minimum two academic members of staff, one of whom is usually the potential supervisor and another one who is independent of the research project.

Data Protection

53. The College holds information about all applicants to the College and all students at the College.
54. Students should refer to the College's data protection and privacy policies for more information, which are available on the College's website.

Transition from Applicant to Student

55. While applicants are able to apply to a number of courses at the College, they are only able to register on one full-time course in any one year. Applicants aiming to register on two part-time course or programmes should discuss this as soon as possible with the admissions staff.

Tuition Fees

56. The College's *Tuition Fees Policy* is available on its website.

Feedback, Appeals and Complaints

57. The College considers all applicants fairly and effectively against the published entry requirements and in line with its procedures. It will provide feedback on request to applicants whose application has been unsuccessful to enable them to reflect on their progress through the application process. Feedback is usually given in writing, at the discretion of the Director of Admissions. To request feedback, applicants should contact the admissions staff.

58. If applicants or prospective students are dissatisfied with the outcome or treatment of their application, the following procedure applies:
 - a. The appeal must be sent to the College in writing within four weeks of the outcome.
 - b. The appeal must clearly outline the reasons why the applicant believes the decision is incorrect.
59. On receiving the appeal, the College will undertake the following review of the original decision:
 - a. The Admissions Committee will discuss the appeal and make a response to the applicant within four weeks of the appeal request being received.
 - b. If the applicant wishes to appeal further against the decision of the Admissions Committee, this must be lodged with the College within a further two weeks of receiving the outcome of the Admissions Committee decision.
 - c. At this stage the appeal will be passed to the Principal, whose decision is final.

Monitoring and Review

60. This policy and related recruitment and admissions procedures and practices across the College are overseen by the Admissions Committee. Activities or developments that have implications for the policy are considered at each meeting.