

Contents

Alternative Format	2
Introduction	2
Scope	2
What this policy covers	2
What this policy does not cover	3
Policy	3
Policy Purpose	3
Policy Principles.....	3
Admission Procedure	6
Applying through your school or college	6
Individual applications.....	7
How to apply	7
How we use your personal information	10
How to contact us	10
Definitions	11
Related Policies and Legislation	12
Further Information	13
Welsh language standards	13
Safe Space Reporting.....	14
The Open University Student Charter Values	14
The Open University commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion.....	14
Give Us Your Feedback	14
Charity Statement	15
About this Document	15
Summary of Significant Changes since last version	15
Policies Superseded by this Document	15
Document Information	15

Alternative Format

If you require this [name of policy or procedure] document in an alternative format please [Contact Us](#) (visit www.open.ac.uk/contact), telephone us on +44 (0)300 303 5303, or get in touch with your dedicated Student Support Team via StudentHome if you are a current Open University student.

Welsh-speaking Students and Learners may speak with a student support adviser in Welsh on +44 (0) 29 2047 1170.

Introduction

- 1.1. The Open University (We) wishes to ensure that study with us is right for potential students (You), as your previous educational experience may be very different from our style of supported open learning.
- 1.2. We treat all individuals equally. Although our students are mostly adults, we can permit students under 18 years old to study with us, subject to certain conditions and requirements.
- 1.3. Distance learning at university level, on your own, is challenging, requiring time management and engagement with various media like print materials, software, websites, podcasts, online conferencing, DVDs, and home experiment kits to aid your studies.
- 1.4. The policy may use the words “student” and “learner” interchangeably because those on apprenticeship programmes and microcredentials are referred to as learners.

Scope

What this policy covers

- This document covers the admission criteria for applicants who will be under 18 years old at the start of the module being applied for (including microcredentials).
- It also covers students who will still be under 18 years old at the start of the module who wish to continue studying with us.

- Learners on apprenticeship programmes are covered by paragraph 3.1 in the 'Choosing the right study option for you' section below only.

What this policy does not cover

- Applications for [Short Courses](#) or studying [OpenLearn](#) modules.
- Applicants in prison or in a secure environment are supported by the relevant Students in Secure Environments team. For more information, see our [Supporting Students in Secure Environments website](#).

Policy

Policy Purpose

2.1 This policy outlines our expectations for potential students under 18 years old. As a student you will need to manage your time well, have good study habits and meet deadlines.

2.2 You should be aware that:

- You will receive the same level of academic support as students over 18 years old.
- You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding of modules through discussions with others (mostly adults) and by completing assignments.
- You are expected to communicate with your tutor and other staff on your own, not through your parent/guardian/carer.

Policy Principles

Choosing the right study option for you

3.1 Most students at The Open University are adults. Some of our modules may be unsuitable for those under 18 years old to study. This could be because:

- the module includes adult-specific content.
- leads to a qualification only open to an adult (for example, social work)

- involves access to vulnerable adults (for example, counselling)
- 3.2 All modules undergo a review process for age-appropriateness to ensure only those that are suitable are offered to those under 18 years old.
- 3.3 If you wish to register for a qualification that contains a compulsory module unsuitable for students under 18 years old, it may not be possible. You will be offered advice and guidance to help you understand your options.
- 3.4 You should be aware that certain modules may prompt adult discussions in tutorials or online forums.
- 3.5 For modules with [Residential schools](#), we will assess if attending is appropriate and beneficial for you and if any special arrangements, like a chaperone, are needed. We will also suggest equivalent [Online schools](#) if available.

Alternative study options

- 3.6 There may be other methods of Open University study that you would like to explore. For example:
- [OpenLearn](#) modules to sample OU study
 - [FutureLearn](#) for free online courses

Support available to you

- 3.7 If you share information about a health condition, disability, or other support need, we will explain the support available to you. This aligns with our legal responsibilities under the [Equality Act 2010](#) in England, Scotland, and Wales, the [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#) for Northern Ireland, or any other relevant legal obligations.
- 3.8 Should you require any reasonable adjustments during the application process or throughout your studies, we encourage you to communicate your needs. We are dedicated to facilitating an inclusive and supportive environment for all students.
- 3.9 Details of how we hold and use this information can be found in [Section 5 how we use your personal information](#) below.

3.10 If you have any questions about your support needs you can refer to our [Disability Support webpage](#) or [contact us](#).

Financial support

3.11 If you are over 16 years old and live in England, you might be eligible for a part-time fee loan for a [Student Loan Company registered qualification](#). Be aware that a student loan could impact future loan eligibility; for further information contact the [Student Loans Company](#). Note: microcredentials do not qualify for a loan.

3.12 If you live in Northern Ireland, you may be eligible for a tuition fee loan or grant. Please contact northern-ireland@open.ac.uk for more information.

3.13 If you live in Wales, you may be eligible for a tuition fee loan or grant. Please contact wales-support@open.ac.uk for more information.

3.14 If you live in Scotland, you may be eligible for a part-time fee grant. Please contact scotland@open.ac.uk for more information.

3.15 Although the contract for the services we provide is directly with you, if you are under 18 years old, payment can only be accepted from your parents, guardians or carers on your behalf. For further information see our [Fees Rules](#).

Your contract with us

3.16 Our contract is directly with you, and you do not need the consent of your parents, guardians or carers.

3.17 We do need your parents, guardians or carers' signature on The Registration Agreement, but this is to confirm they understand our [Safeguarding Policy](#).

3.18 You are responsible for your academic progress and following our policies and regulations.

3.19 If you need someone to talk to us on your behalf, for example because you have a disability, please see our [Advocacy Policy](#).

Right of appeal

3.20 You can appeal against decisions to turn down an application or to apply conditions to your study by using our [Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).

Non-compliance

3.21 You may be subject to disciplinary actions if do not follow any of the documents below (as appropriate to your study):

- This policy
- [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#)
- [Conditions of Registration](#)
- [Conditions of Registrations for Apprentices](#)
- [Terms and Conditions: Microcredentials](#)

Admission Procedure

4.1 This section tells you how to apply through your school, college or as an individual and provides information about the process. It also explains what to do if you have completed an Open University module and want to continue your studies with us.

Applying through your school or college

4.2 If you are over 16 years old and are in full-time education you may be eligible to register with us for a standalone module through your school or college and in-school support.

4.3 If you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, your school or college would need to be willing to make a group booking and should do so through our Young Applicants Team, see [How to contact us below](#). The application must be received at least four weeks before the published final enrolment date for the module(s) to be studied.

4.4 If you are an S6 student attending a local authority school in Scotland, you have the opportunity to register with the [Young Applicants in Schools Scheme \(YASS\)](#) through your school. For submission deadlines, please consult [YASS](#) directly.

Individual applications

4.5 If you are under 18 years old, you may register as an individual through the Young Applicants Team, see [How to contact us](#) below. You will have access to advice and guidance to ensure that you are making the right decision and choosing an appropriate course of study.

4.6 If you are in full-time education, you must get permission from your school or college before registering with us. This permission must be in writing and submitted with your application.

4.7 Your application should be submitted before the final enrolment date of the chosen module as detailed in the application processes below. Please allow more time over closure periods, such as the Christmas Holidays.

How to apply

Applicants aged under 16

4.8 You will need to contact the [Young Applicant Team](#) six weeks before the Final Enrolment Date of your chosen module. You will then be assigned to an Educational Adviser with responsibility for young applicants and will be required to provide:

- A personal statement to tell us why you want to study with us in your chosen subject area.
- A record of any previous qualifications including dates, name of qualification or course, grades, place of study and awarding body.
- A statement from your headteacher or head of year supporting your application. If you are home-schooled, a supporting statement from a tutor or [educationalist](#) may be considered.

- A short piece of writing in answer to a question appropriate to your academic interest. You may be referred to a section of our [OpenLearn](#) website to assist you.

4.9 We will contact you once we receive your application and inform you of the next steps.

Application Meeting

4.10 When we receive the required information, you will be invited with your parents, guardians or carers to meet and discuss your application.

4.11 The meeting may be held online, by phone or in person at one of our UK offices. If you require reasonable adjustments or have told us about a disability, please refer to [the support section](#) above.

4.12 The meeting aims to help us consider your application and determine if study with us is right for you. It also lets you understand what studying with us involves, helps you assess the suitability of your chosen programme, explore other study options, and decide whether to continue with your application.

Applicants aged 16 and 17

4.13 You will need to contact the [Young Applicant Team](#) four weeks before the Final Enrolment Date of your chosen module (six weeks over Christmas period) You will then be assigned to an Educational Adviser with responsibility for young applicants who will contact you to arrange a guidance conversation. This will be held online or by telephone.

Consideration of application

4.14 Following the meeting (applicants under 16) or guidance conversation (applicants aged 16-17), your application will be considered by the relevant member of staff to decide if you can register for your chosen module/qualification.

4.15 To be able to register, we need to be satisfied that you have:

- an interest in your chosen subject area

- the ability to work unsupervised at university level, for example, by the completion of a set task or other external academic achievement
- effective communication skills, both oral and in writing, to enable you to make progress in your chosen programme of study, for example, through a discussion of the set task
- the ability to manage your time and to meet deadlines
- the ability to learn independently, seeking help appropriately when it is needed.

4.16 If you are permitted to register for a standalone module you will normally be required to start your studies with a Level 1 module which is the equivalent to the first year of study at a conventional university.

4.17 You will be notified of our decision in writing. Our decision will include details of any conditions that may be applied to your study. If we decide not to register you, you will be provided with an explanation.

Continuing study

4.18 If you have been accepted for a qualification and are still under 18 years old, you will be covered by our [Academic Regulations](#) and, subject to those regulations, will be allowed to progress through the qualification without requiring further permission.

4.19 You will still need to contact your Student Support Team to inform them at least four weeks before the final enrolment date for the module you are wishing to study.

4.20 If you have successfully completed a standalone module, you can register for another, regardless of being under 18 years old, without redoing the admission process. You can seek advice from Young Applicants Team.

4.21 If you did not pass your first module, and wish to register for a further standalone module, you will be required to repeat the full admission process (see [How to apply](#)).

4.22 We offer some online, non-accredited [short courses](#). You will not be required to go through the above admission process for these modules. If, however, you subsequently wish to continue your studies by enrolling on a credit-bearing module including microcredentials, the admission process described above will apply.

How we use your personal information

- 5.1 Our [Student privacy notice](#) lets you know how we collect your personal data and what we do with it.
- 5.2 If you are under the age of 18, we may share your data (for example, during the registration process) with a named contact in your school as part of our public task to deliver higher education qualifications. There may be other situations where we will share your information and/or your date of birth with other statutory bodies as required according to our Safeguarding Policy.
- 5.3 Names and contact details for schools connected to your application for study will be deleted after you reach the age of 18.
- 5.4 The additional actions with the personal data of Students on the YASS scheme are detailed in our [Student Privacy Notice](#).

How to contact us

- 6.1 If you have questions about this policy or for more information about how to apply for study under the age of 18, please contact:
- England/Outside UK/General: srs-young-applicants@open.ac.uk
 - Northern Ireland: northern-ireland@open.ac.uk
 - Republic of Ireland: ireland@open.ac.uk
 - Scotland: Scotland@open.ac.uk
 - Wales: wales-support@open.ac.uk
- 6.2 If you have a safeguarding concern: safeguarding-referrals@open.ac.uk

Definitions

Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any human being under the age of 18 unless the age of majority is attained earlier under the relevant national legislation. The UK has ratified this convention and although there are a number of different laws across the four nations which specify different age limits whereby young people may be permitted to do different things, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland all agree that anyone who is under 18 should be protected via child protection guidance.

Compulsory module

A compulsory module is a specific teaching and learning element that is defined as mandatory in the curriculum of a degree programme. It must be completed by every student in order to meet the requirements of the programme and to be eligible for the awarding of a qualification.

Educationalist

A professional educator who has a special knowledge of principles, theories, and methods of teaching.

Online schools

Online schools deliver the same core learning outcomes as a residential school; they take a variety of forms including written assignments, online projects and/or conferencing.

Parent/guardian/carer

An adult who has legal responsibility for a child.

Reasonable adjustments

Changes we can make to the way that you are taught to ensure that if you have disabilities, you are not disadvantaged.

Residential school

A study session for Open University Students which usually requires face-to-face participation and at least one over-night stay in an approved location.

S6

The final year of school in Scotland during which Students typically study Advanced Higher and/or Higher courses.

Short Courses

A 'Short Course' is any non-credit bearing module that does not count towards any qualification, as set out in the short courses sections of our online prospectus.

Student Support Team

Our staff who provide information, advice and guidance to Students or applicants. Each Student Support Team has detailed knowledge about the modules and qualifications in a particular academic subject area.

Supported open learning

A blend of learning materials such as online study materials, books, videos, and online forums, underpinned by tutor support from a distance (for example, online or over the phone at specified times).

YASS

The Young Applicants in Schools Scheme gives S6 students in Scotland the opportunity to study a range of university-level modules in school alongside their other studies.

Related Policies and Legislation

Other policies relevant to the admission of applicants under the age of 18 at The Open University include:

- [Safeguarding – Ensuring the Safety of Children and Vulnerable / Protected Adults](#)

- [Academic Regulations](#)
- [Advocacy](#): guidelines and procedure
- [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#)
- [Conditions of Registration](#)
- [Conditions of Registration for Apprentices](#)
- [Fee Rules](#)
- [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Student Social Media Policy](#)
- [Terms and Conditions: Microcredentials \(FutureLearn\)](#)
- [Conditions of Registration \(Microcredentials hosted on the Virtual Learning Environment VLE\)](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#)
- [Welsh Language Standards](#)
- [Assessment through the medium of Welsh / Aseiad drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg](#)

Further Information

Welsh language standards

[Yr iaith Gymraeg \(Welsh Language Standards\)](#)

The Open University is one of several universities named in the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. This means that any students in Wales can expect to receive certain services from the OU in Welsh. These are outlined in what's called the [OU's Welsh language standards](#).

This means that you can speak to our student recruitment and support team in Welsh or contact the university in Welsh. You can find out more about your rights as a Welsh language user on the [OU in Wales website](#).

Safe Space Reporting

The Open University is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone feels safe and is treated with dignity and respect. Unlawful discrimination of any kind across The Open University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [the Safe Space online tool](#) through which staff, students, learners and visitors are encouraged to report incidents of assault, bullying, harassment, hate crime, or sexual harassment. It also provides information about what you can do if these incidents happen to you, or to someone you know, and where you can find support.

The Open University Student Charter Values

[The Student Charter](#) was developed jointly by The Open University and the OU Students Association. It is a declaration of our shared values and the commitments we make to each other. This document has been developed with the Student Charter values as its foundation.

The Open University commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Our commitment to equality and inclusion is embedded in all that we do and reflects our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. We celebrate diversity and the strengths that it brings, whilst challenging under-representation and differences in outcomes within our institution. We promote and manage equality and diversity to meet both our strategic goals and our statutory equality duties. We achieve this in many ways, including the development of inclusive policy.

Give Us Your Feedback

If you have any comments about this policy document and how it might be improved, please share this with us, by emailing SPR-Policy-Team@open.ac.uk.

Charity Statement

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England and Wales and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority in relation to its secondary activity of credit broking.

About this Document

Summary of Significant Changes since last version

The following changes have been made

- A plain English review was carried out in 2024 leading to significant development of the wording in this policy. The paragraphs may be numbered differently to the previous version but no substantive policy changes have been made.

Policies Superseded by this Document

This policy supersedes the Policy for the admission of applicants under the age of 18 with effective date from March 2021.

Document Information

Version number 1.0

Approved by Safeguarding Steering Group

Effective from September 2024

Date for review September 2027