

Policy for the admission of applicants under the age of 18

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Version number: 3.1	Approved by: Safeguarding Steering Group
Effective from: March 2021	Date for review: March 2024

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In an emergency

If you are concerned that a child, young person, or vulnerable adult is in possible IMMEDIATE danger - including risk of suicide, please contact the Emergency Services by telephoning 999 or 112 from outside the UK.

If the individual is under 18 you must then email details about the incident to Safeguarding-Referrals@open.ac.uk. If you cannot send an email, call Tel +44(0) 1908 858284, and leave a message and the Safeguarding Referrals Team will contact you during standard business hours.

Summary of policy

An Open University Student must normally be aged 16 or over by the start date of the module for which they wish to enrol or register. This Policy sets out the exceptional admission criteria for Students under 16.

This Policy also sets out a number of entry conditions for all Students who are under 18 years old which are needed in order to comply with safeguarding requirements and to take into account limitations on the Student's contractual capacity (see Section 6 [Contractual matters](#)).

Summary of significant changes since last version

- a) The requirement for Students aged 16 or 17 (other than those in Scotland applying as part of the Young Applicants in Schools Scheme (YASS)) to submit their application at least 4 weeks ahead of the published final enrolment date.
- b) Learners on apprenticeship programmes have been brought into scope of sections 2.1 and 2.3 only.

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces the previous version of the Policy for the admission of applicants under the age of 18, dated November 2019.

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Scope

Who and which circumstances this policy covers

- This document covers the exceptional admission criteria for accredited study including microcredentials for applicants who will be:
 - under 16 years old,
 - aged 16 and 17,at the start of the module being applied for.
- It also covers Students who will still be under 18 years old at the start of the module who wish to continue Open University study.
- Learners on apprenticeship programmes are covered by Sections 2.1 – Suitability of Modules and 2.3 only.

Who and which circumstances this policy does not cover

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

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Related Documentation

Other documentation relevant to the admission of applicants under the age of 18 at The Open University includes:

- Policy on [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](#)
- [Fitness to Study Policy](#)
- [Social Media Policy](#)
- [Terms and Conditions: Microcredentials](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#)
- [Welsh Language Scheme](#)
- [Assessment through the medium of Welsh / Aseiad drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg](#)

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The Open University Student Charter Values

This policy aligns with the following [Open University Student Charter Values](#):

1. We treat each other with courtesy and respect, respecting the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs and view and to express them appropriately.
4. We communicate with each other in ways which are clear, relevant, accurate and timely.
7. We act ethically and transparently, providing and making use of fair and open means to deal with our concerns and grievances, learning from them.
8. We challenge bullying and harassment and are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all members of our University community.
11. We work to maintain and enhance the standards and reputation of our University recognising the contributions that all members make to its success.

Introduction

The Open University wishes to ensure that study at The Open University is right for you, as your previous educational experience may be very different from The Open University's style of [supported open learning](#). We want to ensure that studying with The Open University is a positive experience and that as a young Student you will be equipped to gain the intended educational benefit from our provision.

Studying at university level at a distance, on your own, managing your study time, is demanding, and will involve activities such as working through a variety of media, (e.g. printed material, software, websites and podcasts, online conferencing, DVDs and home experiment kits) to facilitate your learning.

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Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out what you can expect from The Open University as an applicant who is under the age of 18. As an Open University Student, you will need to be able to manage your time effectively and develop strong study and organisational skills, follow strict timetables, plan ahead and meet deadlines.

All applicants under the age of 18 should be aware that:

- no special academic support is offered on grounds of age;
- studying with The Open University involves not just understanding what is being read, but also the ability to communicate that understanding through university-level assignments and through discussion with others, who will mainly be adults;
- you, rather than your [parent/guardian/carer](#), will be expected to interact with your tutors or with other Open University staff see [Section 6 Contractual matters](#).

2. Policy principles

2.1 Suitability of modules

2.1.1 The majority of Students at The Open University are adults. Some Open University modules may contain material which is inappropriate for Students under the age of 18 on safeguarding grounds. Such modules may contain material which has been externally rated as suitable for adults only (for example, including a discussion of an “18” film) or where the learning leads to a qualification only open to an adult (for example, social work) or involves access to vulnerable adults (for example, counselling). All modules are scrutinised for their suitability for Students under 18 as part of the module approval process under the above criteria and will be identified accordingly.

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- 2.1.2 Some modules may be considered ‘unsuitable’ because the materials, which are suitable in their own right, may lead to a discussion of an adult nature – either in a tutorial or an online forum. Therefore, you and your parent/guardian/carer will need to be aware that you may encounter such content.
- 2.1.3 Some modules may require a level of ‘life experience’ in order to optimise the learning experience. If you apply for such programmes of study and are under the age of 18 you will be given advice and guidance by The University about the appropriateness of your module choice.
- 2.2 There may be other methods of study that you would like to explore in addition to finding out more about The Open University. For example, studying by distance learning through the [National Extension College](#) (NEC) or taking up one of the wide range of activities for gifted and talented children in England, including taster modules or residential schools offered by other universities. In Scotland you may be referred to the Skills Development Scotland [My World of Work](#) website. You may also wish to consider our [OpenLearn](#) modules as a taster of Open University study generally. This admission policy does not apply to the study of short courses or [OpenLearn](#) modules, but you should still satisfy yourself that the content is suitable. In addition, you may wish to explore [FutureLearn](#) free online courses from top universities and specialist organisations.
- 2.3 If the module has an embedded [residential school](#), specific consideration will be given to whether it is appropriate and in your best interests to attend and, if so, whether any specific arrangements should be made. This might include the attendance of a chaperone. This consideration will also include the exploration of [online schools](#) (where these exist) which provide the same core learning outcomes as the residential school.

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Admission process

3. Admission process for applicants under the age of 16

Part A How to apply

- 3A.1 The Open University will exceptionally consider applications to register to study from young people who are under the age of 16. Each application will be considered on its own merits.
- 3A.2 An application must be made in writing and emailed to the Educational Adviser with responsibility for young applicants in the relevant [Student Support Team](#) or nation support team at least six weeks before the final enrolment date of the chosen module. As part of the registration process, you will receive contact details via the appropriate nation registration team. This will ensure that you are able to meet all the requirements of the application process. During the Christmas period, please allow up to eight weeks.
- 3A.3 The application must include:
- A statement in your own words giving your reasons for wishing to study with The Open University, explaining your interest (and the reasons for your interest) in your chosen field of study
 - A record of any previous academic achievement
 - A statement from your headteacher or head of year supporting your application if you are in full-time education. This should confirm your readiness for undergraduate-level study and your capacity as an independent learner. If you are home-schooled, a supporting statement from a tutor or [educationalist](#) may be considered.
- 3A.4 You will be required to provide a short piece of writing in answer to a question appropriate to your academic interest, for which you may be referred to a section of The Open University's [OpenLearn](#) website.

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- 3A.5 Once this information has been received, you will be invited with your parent/guardian/carer to meet and discuss your application with a Head of Student Support (Assistant Director in Wales or Ireland, or the Depute Director in Scotland), or an Educational Adviser and a Staff Tutor/academic member of staff relevant to your chosen module(s).
- 3A.6 Meetings may be held via an online video conference, phone or face-to-face at one of our UK offices or Dublin in the Republic of Ireland.
- 3A.7 If you disclose a disability, you will be advised about the support available, in line with our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Scotland and Wales, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 for Northern Ireland or any other statutory duty or obligation. In advance of the meeting, we will ask what [reasonable adjustments](#) are needed to ensure that you are given the opportunity to demonstrate your readiness for university-level study. The meeting will provide a further opportunity to discuss with you whether any specific arrangements should be made if you were to study at The Open University (for example, in relation to a disability or attendance at tutorials, residential schools or day schools) (where appropriate).
- 3A.8 The aim of this meeting is to assist staff in considering your application more fully and for them to be assured that the proposed study is right for you. It will also provide you with an important opportunity to explore what study at The Open University will entail; the appropriateness of your chosen programme of study; what alternative opportunities might be available; and whether, in the light of this exploration, you wish to proceed with your application.
- 3A.9 Parents, guardians or carers will often be involved in and support your application. However, you will be required to confirm yourself that it is your own firm wish to undertake Open University study.
- 3A.10 Written notes of the meeting will be taken and, where appropriate, these will include details of any reasonable adjustments that have been made to take account of a disability. Details of how we hold and use this information can be found in the [Privacy Notice](#) in the Appendix to this Policy.

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Part B Consideration of applications

3B1 Following the meeting, the application will be considered by a National Director or nominee (for national centres in Scotland, Ireland and Wales) and Head of Student Support of the relevant Student Support Team, to whom a recommendation will be made as to whether or not you should be permitted to register as a Student with The Open University for a particular module or qualification. If permission to register is given (see Section 3B.4), any specific arrangements in connection with the proposed study at The Open University (for example, in relation to a disability or attendance at tutorials, day schools or residential schools) will be taken into account.

3B.2 To be permitted to register, you will have demonstrated:

- an interest in your chosen subject area
- the ability to work unsupervised at university level, e.g. 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, e.g. 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.

3B.3 If you are permitted to register for a standalone module you will normally be required to start your Open University studies with a first-level module which is the equivalent to the first year of study at a conventional university.

3B.4 You will be notified in writing of the decision of the National Director/Head of Student Support or their nominee. The notification will include details of any conditions that may be applied to your study. If the decision is that you are not to be permitted to register as a Student, you will be provided with an explanation of that decision.

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4. Applicants aged 16 and 17

- 4.1 Applications from any potential Student who is 16 or 17 years of age, other than those in Scotland applying through their school via the [Young Applicants in Schools Scheme \(YASS\)](#), must be received at least 4 weeks before the published final enrolment date for the module(s) to be studied. YASS applicants must adhere to the deadlines given by that scheme.

Part A Applying through your school or college

- 4A.1 If you have reached the age of 16, are in full-time education and reside in England, you may be able to register for a standalone module through your school or college and receive in-school support. Your school or college would need to be willing to make a group booking and should do so through The Open University's Young Applicants Team (see [Further Clarification](#) section for contact details).
- 4A.2 If you reside in Scotland and are in [S6](#) at a local authority school you may be able to register through YASS. Registrations are made through the school you attend.

Part B Individual applications

- 4B.1 If you are 16 or 17, whether or not you are in full-time education, you may register as an individual through the Young Applicants Team in your nation. You will have access to advice and guidance to ensure that you are making the right decision and choosing an appropriate course of study.
- 4B.2 If you are in full-time education, you must seek permission from your school or college before registering with The Open University. This permission must be in writing and submitted with your application.

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5. Students under 18 – continuing study

- 5.1 If you have been accepted for a qualification and are still under the age of 18, you will be covered by The Open University's [academic regulations](#) and, subject to those regulations, will be allowed to progress through the qualification without requiring further permission.
- 5.2 Your application to continue studying must be received at least 4 weeks before the final enrolment date for the module you are wishing to study.
- 5.3 If you have studied a standalone module and been successful in that module, you will be permitted to register for a further standalone module if you wish, even if you are still under the age of 16, without repeating the full admission process. Advice and guidance will be provided by your Student Support Team. Your application to continue studying must be received at least 4 weeks before the final enrolment date for the module you are wishing to study.
- 5.4 If you wish to register for a further standalone module, and did not your pass your first, you will be required to repeat the full admission process (see [Section 3](#) or [Section 4](#) above as relevant).
- 5.5 The Open University offers some online, non-accredited [short modules](#). You will not be required to go through the above admission process for these modules. If, however, you subsequently wish to continue your Open University studies by enrolling on a credit-bearing module including microcredentials, the admission process described above will apply.
- 5.6 If you enrol on a microcredential the admission process will apply.

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6. Contractual matters

- 6.1 If you are under the age of 18 you may enter into a contract for education without the consent of your parent/guardian/carer. In this case, The Open University's contract for the services we provide will rest directly with you (see also [Section 7 Financial support for Students under the age of 18](#)).
- 6.2 The Registration Agreement for Students under the age of 18 will, however, ask for a signature from a parent/guardian/carer to confirm that they have read and understood The Open University's [safeguarding policy](#) for Students of this age.
- 6.3 Support from parents, guardians or carers during study is valuable, but it should be recognised that the teaching relationship is between you and The Open University, and you must be responsible for your own academic progress and for complying with The Open University's rules and regulations.
- 6.4 The Open University's guidelines and procedure on [Advocacy](#), having someone to speak on your behalf if you wish, apply to Students under 18.

7. Financial support for Students under the age of 18

- 7.1 If you reside in England and are aged 16 or over, you may be eligible to apply for a part-time fee loan if you register for a qualification. You should be aware that taking a Student loan is likely to affect your ability to take out a further Student loan in the future, and you should check the position with the Student Loans Company. See also [Fee Rules](#). NB: microcredentials are not eligible for any financial support.
- 7.2 If you reside in Northern Ireland, you may be able to apply for a non-repayable Part-time Fee Grant and/or a repayable Part-time Fee Loan to cover the cost of your fees. Which you get and the amount is dependent on the level of intensity of your study and household income. A course grant is also available to Students eligible for a Tuition Fee Grant to help with other costs of study. Please contact The Open University in Northern Ireland for specific information (northern-reland@open.ac.uk)

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- 7.3 In Scotland financial support for fees in the form of a Part-time Fee Grant is only available if you are over the statutory school leaving age. If you are in full-time education or in some forms of training (even if you are over 18), you will not be eligible for help with your fees. Funding is accepted from employers for Students under 18. Please contact The Open University in Scotland for specific information (scotland@open.ac.uk).
- 7.4 If you live in Wales, you may be eligible to apply for a tuition fee loan or grant. Please contact wales-support@open.ac.uk for more information.
- 7.5 Although the contract for the services The Open University provides is directly with you, if you are under the age of 18, payment can only be accepted from your parent/guardian/carer on your behalf. It is not possible to accept payment by instalments by a third party through The Open University Student Budget Account.

8. Right of appeal

- 8.1 Any decision made in respect of a refusal of admission or any conditions applied to an admission may be appealed in accordance with The Open University's [Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).

9. Implementation and enforcement of procedure

- 9.1 Failure to comply with the admission policy and procedures will be investigated and may result in dismissal or exclusion from The Open University.

10. Non-compliance

- 10.1 Breaches of codes of conduct may lead to disciplinary action under the [Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#) for Students and disciplinary procedures for staff (available via the People Services website). See [Conditions of Registration](#), [Conditions of Registrations for Apprentices](#) and [Terms and Conditions: Microcredentials](#) (as appropriate for the proposed study) for more information.

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Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at The Open University

Policies are inclusive of all Open University Students, Learners, Enquirers and Alumni, regardless of age, civil status, dependency or caring status, care experience, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnerships, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, socio-economic background, sex, sexual orientation or trades union membership status.

Safe Space Reporting

The 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 our University will not be tolerated. Safe Space Reporting is available through [the Report + Support 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.

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Glossary of terms

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.

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.

Educationalist

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

Parent/guardian/carer

An adult who has legal responsibility for a child.

Reasonable adjustments

Changes made as part of positive steps to remove barriers faced by someone because of a disability to ensure they receive the same services, as far as this is possible, as someone who's not disabled.

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.

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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 The Open University's online prospectus.

Student Support Team

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

Supported open learning

A blend of learning materials such as 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.

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Further clarification

If you have any queries around the content provided within this document and how to interpret it, and 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: northernireland@open.ac.uk
- Republic of Ireland: ireland@open.ac.uk
- Scotland: Scotland-YASS@open.ac.uk
- Wales: wales-support@open.ac.uk

If you have a safeguarding concern: safeguarding-referrals@open.ac.uk

Alternative format

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact the Student Support Team via <http://www.open.ac.uk/contact/> (phone +44 (0)300 303 5303).

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Appendix A

Privacy Notice

1. Scope

- 1.1 This section sets out additional actions The Open University carries out with personal data specifically relating to Students under the age of 18 from the point of enquiry.
- 1.2 This section applies to you if are involved with the application to register for Open University study for an individual under the age of 18.

2. Who we are

- 2.1 The Open University is the data controller in relation to the processing activities described below. This means that the Open University decides why and how your personal information is processed.
- 2.2 Where this policy refers to “we”, “our” or “us” below, unless it mentions otherwise, it is referring to The Open University.

3. How do we use your personal information

- 3.1 The Open University [Student privacy notices](#) provides general information regarding the personal data we collect on our Students, and what we do with it.
- 3.2 For a Student 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 information and/or date of birth with other statutory bodies as required according to The Open University’s Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.3 Names and contact details pertaining to schools connected to your application for study will be deleted after you reach the age of 18.
- 3.4 The additional actions with the personal data of Students on the YASS scheme are detailed in the [YASS Privacy Notice](#).

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