

Full-time Further Education Admissions Policy

Policy Details			
Policy Owner	Head of Admission, Registration and Exam Services		
CE Sponsor	Vice-Principal Curriculum Innovation and Business Transformation		
Date created:	10 th October 2025		
Version:	Approved by:	Date approved:	To be reviewed:
1	CQC	29 th January 2026	January 2027
2	College Executive	25 th June 2026	January 2027

Version Control	
Version Number	Changes from previous 12 months policy
1	Date updated to reflect current application period
1	Publicity and information – clarity provided
1	Interview process – addition of face to face interview wording
1	Further clarity provided on: Internal Progression Process End of Year Progress Boards Panel Meetings
	Changes to policy in year
2	Progress Board and Appeal process updated

Equality Impact Assessment Tool

		Yes/No	Comments
1	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	Race or ethnicity	No	
	Disability	No	
	Gender	No	
	Religion or belief	No	
	Sexual orientation	No	
	Age	No	
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
	Maternity and Pregnancy	No	
	Gender Reassignment	No	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	N/A	
4	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	
5	If so, can the impact be avoided?	N/A	
6	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	N/A	
7	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	N/A	

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Admissions Policy for Further Education for Applications to the 2026/27 Academic Year

1. Overview and Scope

The aim of this policy is to provide a comprehensive, transparent and customer-focused approach for applications to Colchester Institute, from initial application to admission as a student.

Colchester Institute is a college of further and higher education which welcomes applications for its full and part-time courses from all sections of the community. Further Education relates to courses that are below the level of a university degree for people who are older than compulsory school age.

This policy covers full-time prospective Further Education (FE) students from the UK and European Economic Area (EEA). Separate arrangements apply for applications to some entry level courses, apprenticeships, part time and full cost programmes, and to Higher Education.

The College is committed to ensuring that every student is on the most appropriate course relevant to their academic ability and aspirations for their future. All offers of places are made subject to the specific entry requirements, suitability of applicants, adherence to College policies and there being sufficient demand for the course offered. The College may withdraw an offer if an applicant submits false or misleading information that is instrumental in securing an offer of a place.

College staff will follow the admissions process to ensure consistent and high standards of customer care. The College admissions policy is subject to annual review as part of the College's quality improvement and self-assessment cycle.

2. Use of Applicant Data and Data Protection

The Colchester Institute on-line application form feeds directly into the College management information system, with information added to it by staff during the admissions process.

All information gathered on the application form, and collected through the application process, will be retained and processed in line with the Colchester Institute [Privacy Notice](#) for relevant purposes connected with the application in accordance with data protection legislation.

Colchester Institute may be required to share data and information about all applications with Local Authorities, the Department for Education, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, or current schools/providers /colleges where necessary.

By submitting an application form all applicants confirm the following statements:

- I agree to abide by Colchester Institute expectations, policies and procedures.
- Where relevant, I authorise my current school/provider/college to provide Colchester Institute with relevant information to support my application, including my predicted grades.

- I authorise my current school/provider/college to release information to Colchester Institute where this is needed to ensure my support needs are met and/or where this information is needed for my safety and wellbeing at Colchester Institute.
- If I am aged 17 years or under on 31st August 2026 I provide consent for Colchester Institute to liaise with my named next of kin where relevant to my application.

Following the enrolment process, Colchester Institute will provide the names of enrolled students to Essex County Council under the Activity Survey and September Guarantee process. They will also send lists of enrolled students to applicants' most recent schools and other providers for their destination information, and to request confidential safeguarding files and student JCQ Forms to support Exams Access Arrangements.

3. Publicity and Information

The College will outline its FE course provision in the annual prospectus, published in September, with further information on the Colchester Institute website. The publicity will provide the minimum entry requirements for each course and applicants will be considered on the basis of their ability to meet those criteria plus any specified additional elements. The Colchester Institute website is constantly updated and will always display the most up to date information regarding minimum entry requirements.

School careers coordinators, guidance advisers and other Information Advice and Guidance professionals, will be invited into the College for an annual briefing which provides information on the range of courses available, updates and changes to the curriculum offer, and the admissions process.

Prospective students and their families have the opportunity to visit the College at a number of Open Events during the academic year to talk to staff and students and receive more information on courses. In exceptional circumstances these events may be offered in a different format, such as online and over video-conferencing platforms. Progression opportunities will be publicised to existing students via tutorials and progression events.

Colchester Institute will take reasonable steps to provide the programmes of study listed in publications but may have to modify or withdraw a particular course depending on customer demand and other factors. The College will take reasonable steps to cause as little disruption to applicants as possible but cannot be held responsible for any subsequent loss.

4. Application Deadlines

Applications will be accepted from 1st October 2025 online through the links at the Colchester Institute website. In exceptional circumstances, where a potential student cannot access the website, a hard copy application form will be available.

Applicants applying on or before 31st January 2026 will be in the priority category for a place on their chosen programme, subject to them satisfying the published entry requirements, uploading their GCSE and other exam results within the priority deadline (when GCSE results are published), and where the College continues to run the programme. Applications will be accepted after this date, but there will be no certainty of a place.

Online applications will cease, no later than, Friday 26th June 2026. The College reserves the right to close online applications prior to this date if deemed necessary. After online applications have ceased, potential applicants will be directed to register their interest in an August Advice Session to discuss their options and programme choices.

5. Use of Email Accounts

All communications regarding the application process will be made through the applicant's provided email address, and it is their responsibility to ensure emails are regularly checked and responded to.

Some email carriers, including "gmail, icloud and live" automatically direct emails generated by the College to alternative inboxes, such as Promotions, Important and SPAM. Applicants are advised to check all their email boxes regularly to prevent missing important communications.

6. Fast Track Offers

Where an applicant attends an Open Event and demonstrates their interest in and suitability for a programme, it is possible for a conditional offer to be made during the event. This will be at the discretion of the curriculum area. The applicant will be given a Fast Track offer form and must complete their online application at the same event at an application station. If they do this, they will not be required to attend a subject specific interview.

All Fast Track offers are conditional subject to academic and/or non-academic requirements, including information received from the applicant's current education provider. Where an applicant has a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) need and / or an Education Health and Care Plan the conditional offer may also be reviewed subject to the College being able to meet the individual's needs. In these cases the College reserves the right to request that the applicant attends a further interview to discuss support.

7. Applications to Apprenticeship Programmes

Applicants are able to make an application either just for an apprenticeship, or to be considered initially for both an apprenticeship and a full time Further Education programme.

To be considered for an apprenticeship the applicant will need to secure an employer, which they can source themselves, apply for an apprenticeship vacancy, or with support from the College apprenticeship team. In these instances, an applicant's full time Further Education Programme choice will be prioritised until such time as the apprenticeship is fully confirmed.

8. Funding Assessments

If an applicant declares that their previous country of residence is outside of the UK, or that they are not a UK National but live and work in the UK, they will need to complete a funding assessment. The funding assessment will determine the type of fee an applicant may need to pay, and therefore the application cannot be progressed to the enrolment stage until this is provided.

9. Reviewing Applications

All applications are checked for accuracy and completeness on receipt; where information is missing the applicant will be emailed and asked to provide additional information or clarification. All communications will be made through the applicant's provided email address, and it is their responsibility to ensure emails are regularly checked and responded to. Reminders will be sent for missing information but failure to reply may lead to an application being withdrawn at any point in the admissions process.

Applicants are asked to provide their predicted or actual GCSE grades at application, and their application will be processed using this information. Where applicants are currently at school, or at another education provider, the College will liaise with that school/provider to provide predicted and achieved grades, information on their progress and to request any other information that the College may need to know to inform the decision-making process. If the applicant and/or the school/provider fail to provide predicted or actual GCSE grades within two months of the initial request for this information, this may lead to the application being withdrawn.

If an applicant does not, or is not predicted to, reach the published GCSE grades required for entry to their chosen course area they will be notified and asked to review their choice. Applicants will also be signposted for further Information, Advice and Guidance on their options, either at their current school, Colchester Institute Careers team or the National Careers Service.

Once an application has been received and processed on a suitable course choice, applicants will be invited to book an interview.

10. Applicants not taking GCSEs

Applicants who have had a non-traditional school education, including being home educated, having had extended breaks in their schooling, educated overseas or attending an alternative education provision, may not be taking or holding GCSEs. These applicants should be considered on an individual basis. This includes applicants who have studied other qualifications, such as functional skills, pre-entry and entry level qualifications at school and within the Colchester Institute Foundation and Supported Learning area.

The College may request such applicants to undertake Functional Skills assessments online to establish their current level of maths and / or English and they may be requested to attend one or more transition visits to support a possible enrolment to the College.

In these cases, applications will be referred to the subject Area Head who should review their circumstances and whether adjustments to entry criteria can be considered. Decisions on entry will be at the discretion of the Area Head and based on their professional opinion of each applicant's ability to achieve on their chosen programme.

11. Applicants with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Colchester Institute welcomes applications from people with SEND. Where this is identified on their application this will be referred to the Additional Learning Support Team so that further enquiries can be made with the applicant, and parents/carers where required, about their

needs and how these can be supported during the admissions process and on programme. If the applicant is still at school, then this information may be discussed with the school to ensure any relevant SEND assessments and information are shared.

Information about a student's SEND information (including an Education Health and Care Plan) will be shared with the curriculum leaders for their subject area, and with Additional Learning Support staff to ensure appropriate provisions are in place and that reasonable adjustments can be made to their programme of study.

Once enrolled, applicants who previously had Exam Access Arrangements, such as extra time, a reader or a scribe, due to their SEND will be asked to liaise with their previous school / College to obtain copies of their JCQ forms which would be used to apply for Exam Access Arrangements at College.

Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP)

All applicants are asked to state on their application form if they have an EHCP. If an EHCP is declared, the applicant will be informed that their application will be paused until the College has been provided with a copy of their EHCP so that the College can take account of all support needs and consider how these can be met. The parent/carer, current school / education provider and relevant Local Authority will also be informed and copies of the current EHCP and reviews will be requested.

Colchester Institute should be consulted in advance by the Local Authority if the intention is to name the College in an applicant's EHCP; any applicant whose EHCP does not name Colchester Institute should contact their local authority and school to discuss the matter as soon as possible. In certain circumstances, Colchester Institute may use the consultation process to object to being named in an EHCP. This might happen if there are very significant concerns that the College may be incompatible with that particular learner's needs, or that by enrolling them, the education of other students would be adversely affected. In these cases, the decision will be referred to an Admissions Review Panel.

12. Interview Process

Interviews will usually be conducted by phone at a time and date booked by the applicant. Some course areas may conduct interviews in person. For applicants applying for Art and Design, Access to Higher Education or Music and Performing Arts the interview will also include a portfolio review, audition or pre-interview task which will either be online or in person on campus.

Some applicants with EHCPs or complex SEND needs, may follow an adapted admissions process which will include an interview on campus to establish the applicant's support needs, the suitability of the College environment and the level of reasonable adjustments required for them to access the programme. This will form part of the applicant's transition to college.

Following the interview, tutors will consider each applicant fairly and decisions to make an offer will be made based on the full profile of an applicant, including their predicted/achieved GCSE grades and their engagement with the interview. Tutors will be required to demonstrate that admissions decisions have been based on objective criteria equally applied to all.

If an applicant does not respond to their phone/face to face interview, they will be invited to a further date. Failure to attend two arranged interviews, without prior notification or request to rearrange, will result in the application being withdrawn from the process.

Applicants will be notified of this by email and they may request to have their application reinstated after which they will only have one further opportunity to attend an interview event before being finally withdrawn.

13. Making Offers

Following interview or review of audition, portfolio or pre-interview materials, successful applicants should receive a decision within 2 weeks. This will usually be a conditional offer subject to academic and/or non-academic requirements.

13.1 Where no offer can be made

Following the interview, if no suitable offer of a place can be made the application will be referred to the Area Head of the chosen subject area for consideration and final approval.

All 'no offers' will be referred to the Head of Admission, Registration and Exam Services for authorisation or for referral to an Admissions Review Panel for decision, see section 15.

14. Internal Progression Process

All decisions on a current students' suitability to progress onto the next level of study in their current subject area, will be made through the College Progress Boards. Progress Boards are held twice a year, with mid-year boards in and around January, and end of year boards meeting in and around June.

The outcome of the mid-year progress boards will be communicated to the person who has been named as the primary next of kin for students aged 16 or 17 years of age on 31st August 2025. Students who were aged 18 years on 31st August will receive the outcome via email to either their college and/or personal email address.

All communications about the end of year progress boards will be made by email either to the students' college and/or personal email address. It is the responsibility of all students to check their college email accounts on a regular basis, and to ensure that the College has up to date email contact information for their parent / carer / next of kin.

The College cannot take responsibility for progress board communications which have not been received due to incorrect email address addresses, or for emails which have not been read in a timely manner, if these were sent to the addresses held on the College management information system.

14.1 Mid-Year Progress Boards

After the mid-year boards in January, all students will be advised whether or not they are on track to be supported to progress to the next level, based on their progress to date, attendance and commitment to study. Where a student is supported to progress at that point, they will not need to make an application to the next academic year, a conditional offer will be made on the College management information system by the Admissions and Curriculum Support Team.

If a student is not yet supported to progress they will be informed of this, inviting them to make an appointment to talk to their curriculum Head of Area to discuss the mid-year progress board decision and agree actions to recover their position.

If the student was born on or after 1st September 2007, these decisions will be sent to their parent / carer as part of the annual parent report process. Reports will be sent to the to the Next of Kin email address recorded on the college management information system.

14.2 End of Year Progress Boards

At the end of year progress boards, all mid-year board decisions will be reviewed and a final decision made on each individual student about their suitability to progress to the next level of study. Tutors will be required to demonstrate that all progression decisions have been based on objective criteria equally applied to all. All progress board decisions are approved by the subject Area Head and by the relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Students who are supported to progress will be sent information by email inviting them to complete their re-enrolment online to the next level of study.

In some circumstances, the course they wish to progress to will require specific entry requirements and students will only be supported to progress on the condition they pass essential qualifications to meet these entry requirements. The relevant students will be informed of this. They will be sent instructions to upload all examination results and / or enrol online when exam results are published in August.

If a student is not supported to progress, they must have been previously made aware of their unsatisfactory progress, and attempts must have been made to support them to improve. Evidence of these conversations and interventions, where relevant, must be documented on the College management information system. The student will be informed of this decision by letter, sent via email to their college email address. This will outline the reasons for this decision, which must be based on objective criteria equally applied to all.

For students who are not supported to progress and who were 17 or under on the 31st August of the year their programme started, these decisions will be copied to their parent / carer / next of kin using the email address recorded on the College management information system.

It is the responsibility of all students to check their college email accounts, and to ensure that the College has up to date email contact information of their parent / carer / next of kin.

It is important to note that this communication will be sent after the applications close, so students who are not supported to progress and are interested in another course area will need to attend one of the August advice sessions.

For those that have already submitted an application to another course area, this may not be progressed through to interview if behaviour and attendance on current course falls below College expectations.

14.3 Appeals against Progress Board Decisions

A student may ask for a review of the outcome of a progress board decision by completing an [appeal form](#) within 7 days of the outcome decision email being sent. Any appeal requests must include the reasons for the review, including providing any additional information or evidence to support the request.

The Quality team will convene a progress board appeal panel to consider the appeal and consider whether the substantive reasons, additional information or supporting evidence have been provided which would support the amendment of the original decision. This panel will be comprised of managers who are independent of previous decisions related to their progression. The outcome will normally be communicated to the student by email within 10 days of the receipt of the appeal. This decision will be final.

15. Panel Meetings

Panel Meetings are an internal process that make decisions on either the admission of a student or continued enrolment of a student in cases of a complex nature.

The Panel Meeting will hear, review and make decisions on:

Admissions Review – Applicants that have applied to Colchester Institute or enrolled students new to the College in their first 4 weeks of study.

Enrolment Review – Enrolled students (after 4 weeks of study) where decisions are required relating to continuation or progression which cannot be dealt with by any other process.

Fitness to Study - Enrolled student cases that are following the College's Fitness to Study Policy.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) – convictions, pending prosecutions, ongoing police investigations or student DBS checks that are returned with content (Students requiring DBS checks for their programme of study will be informed by their course area).

Admissions Review

An Admissions Review Panel could be convened for a number of reasons, see below for a non-exhaustive list:

- Concerns raised through the application process, either through information provided from other education providers, previous programme areas within the College or behaviours exhibited through the interview events or Welcome and Induction days.
- Concerns about the College's ability to meet the applicant's specific needs or implement the level of reasonable adjustments required for them to access a programme.

- Identified Safeguarding concerns.

15.1 Operation and Reporting

The Panel operates to:

- A) ensure a supportive and fair admissions process for applicants;
- B) provide assistance and support to admissions staff in carrying out their duties; and
- C) provide guidance on current issues that may impact on an admissions decision, or on the continuation of a current student

An Admissions / Enrolment Review Panel is required to explore all relevant issues and obtain information from all appropriate sources pertaining to each case to reach a collective agreement on whether a student is accepted onto, or retained at, a course at Colchester Institute.

The College reserves the right to refuse a place to an applicant or cease an enrolled student's place if the individual is considered to be a risk to others, themselves or if the College is unable to provide a safe or controlled environment for an applicant's / student's specific needs.

Panel meetings are held fortnightly to hear Admissions Reviews, Enrolment Reviews, Fitness to Study or Disclosure of Criminal Convictions and DBS cases. The meeting will not go ahead if there are no cases to hear.

Notes of the meeting will be kept and the Admissions Review Panel decision will be communicated to the Applicant / Student in writing.

15.2 Appeals against Admission / Enrolment Review Panel Outcomes

A student may appeal against the outcome of the Admission / Enrolment Review Panel in writing within 10 working days of receiving written notification of the Review Panel decision. The letter / email must outline the grounds of the appeal including any new and additional information that was not available to be considered at the meeting. The appeal will normally be heard within 10 working days of receipt of the written appeal.

Appeals should be emailed to executivesupportteam@colchester.ac.uk and will be reviewed by the Principal – if the Principal is unable to review the appeal, they will delegate to another Senior Manager.

If the appeal is received outside of term time, the review of the appeal will be delayed and possibly go beyond 10 working days.

The decision made by the Principal will be final.

15.3 Membership

The Admissions Review Panel and Enrolment Review shall comprise:
Deputy Principal (Chair)
Area Head from relevant subject area

Head of Student Services
Head of Additional Learning Support
Head of Admission, Registration and Exam Services or their representative
Additional members may be co-opted in on a case-by-case basis.

For more information on Panel Meetings – Fitness to Study: please see the Fitness to Study Policy.

For more information on Panel Meetings – Disclosure of Criminal Convictions and DBS: please see the Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Policy and DBS Policy

16. Course Closure and Centre Approval Withdrawal

The College reserves the right to withdraw a course at its discretion, including for example, where a course is under-subscribed or there is a significant change to how a course is funded. In such cases, applicants will be offered advice on the availability of alternative courses, which may include an alternative campus. However, the offer of a place cannot be guaranteed.

If for any reason an external regulatory body withdraws Colchester Institute's Centre Approval, then we will be unable to deliver the specified qualification. Should this happen, we will suggest alternative training providers which are authorised to deliver this qualification.

17. Oversubscribed Courses

If the number of offers made to a particular course suggests that it is likely to be oversubscribed, then the College reserves the right to close the course to further applications. In these cases, the course will be removed from the website so that no further applications can be made or progressed to enrolment.

Where conditional offers have been made to an oversubscribed course, offers will only be confirmed once GCSE results have been published and places will be given to applicants who have achieved the published entry criteria in the following priority order until the College Leadership determines the course is full:

- Applicants who applied before the 31st January 2026 application deadline, who uploaded their confirmed GCSE results before the cut off time stated on their individual enrolment information.
- Applicants who applied before 26th June 2026 who uploaded their confirmed GCSE results before the cut off time stated on their individual enrolment information.
- Applicants who achieved the published entry criteria and attended a late advice event.
- All other applicants, including those who uploaded GCSE results after the stated cut off time. Where enrolment numbers are close to the curriculum plan, these will be prioritised in date and time order.

After the August advice events, if there are still places available on a course, curriculum managers may agree to hold a waiting list and accept some applicants who have just missed the entry criteria based on the date of their application and how well they have met the published entry criteria. Such acceptances are at the discretion of College Leadership.

18. Exceptions to the Normal Admissions Process

Colchester Institute reserves the right to refuse admission to an applicant at the Principal's discretion. This could be for a number of reasons, examples would include an applicant who has previously been refused admission or excluded from this or any other educational institution, or where there is reason to believe that the admission of an individual could present a risk to him or herself, other students, staff or other college visitors.

In these cases the Principal's decision is final and there is no right to appeal.

Whilst Colchester Institute is committed to widening participation and to providing opportunities to all students who will benefit from its programmes and services, it must be noted that Further Education Colleges are under no statutory obligations to admit any individual student or to provide any specific programme of study. Ultimately decisions regarding the admission of individual students and the provision, or continuation, of specific programmes rest with College leadership.

19. Associated Policies

Safeguarding Policy

Student Disclosure of Criminal Convictions and DBS Policy

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

SEND Policy

Data Protection Policy