



Admissions and Recruitment Policy

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Version 1.1

Approved by the Board of Governors

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Vantage college understands that the success and continuity of its programmes is underpinned by the recruitment selection and admission of students who have the academic readiness, learning potential and motivation not merely to succeed in their programme of study, but to fully engage with the College in jointly enhancing the quality of its learning opportunities.

- 1.2. Vantage 's Admissions Policy accords with the College's mission to support individuals of all backgrounds, abilities and aspirations to fulfil their potential through learning, achievement and progression.
- 1.3. This document serves as a point of reference for all involved in the admission of students to the College's higher education programmes, as well as prospective students seeking to better understand the College's admissions processes and procedures.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1. Vantage College offers Higher Education programmes that lead to awards validated by another awarding body(ies); specific student admissions criteria and procedures may vary between programmes offered under different awarding bodies.
- 2.2. Irrespective of 2.1.the following guiding principles underpin all admissions to study at the College:
 - 2.1.1. The College considers all applications to study on the basis of the prospective student's ability and potential to succeed at the level of study applied for;
 - 2.1.2. The College aims, through its recruitment, selection and admissions policies and procedures, to create a student body that is:
 - capable of maintaining high academic standards and levels of achievement;
 - balanced and diverse in terms of background and experience;
 - motivated to engage with and contribute to the intellectual and cultural vitality of the College's academic community.
 - 2.1.3. The College seeks to achieve these aims by:
 - agreeing with its partners on the appropriate minimum entry criteria that assures a prospective student's academic readiness for the programme-level applied for;
 - ensuring that prospective students have access to the information they need to make informed decisions about higher education and the College's application process;
 - implementing prospective student assessment and vetting procedures which are robust and applied consistently, and which duly recognise a prospective student's prior learning and experience;

- using a variety of means to assess that prospective students have provided genuine documentary evidence to support their admission, and are themselves earnestly committed to study;
- ensuring that applied-for programmes represent academic progression, taking into account a prospective student's prior learning;
- Removing unnecessary barriers to study that might prevent certain groups from making a successful application and ensuring that prospective students are supported throughout the admissions process.

2.1.4. The College will at all times:

- provide a responsive, professional and student-focussed service;
- ensure that prospective students are guided through the application processes and competent advisors, who are thoroughly briefed and kept well informed about learning opportunities on offer from the College;
- inform prospective students of any significant changes to a programme to which they have applied at the earliest opportunity; prospective students will be advised promptly of the options available in such circumstances;
- relate feedback, if requested by a prospective student, as to why an application was unsuccessful;
- provide a clear and accessible complaints process for admissions-related complaints which facilitates fair and timely resolution;
- provide comprehensive induction and orientation activities to help students make the transition to study.

3. Allocation of Responsibilities for Student Admissions

The Academic Board is responsible for designing and implementing student recruitment and admissions processes that accord with the guiding principles outlined in Section 2 and align with any additional requirements of the programme's awarding body partner.

3.1. **Course Advisors are responsible for:**

- 3.1.1. encouraging applications from prospective students who have the academic ability, personal motivation and financial means to succeed in the higher education opportunities offered by Vantage College;
 - 3.1.2. furnishing prospective students with accurate and reliable information about the learning opportunities on offer from the College, as well as important information in its terms and conditions about prospective students' rights to cancellation and refund;
 - 3.1.3. identifying the applicant's academic and/or professional background and advising on the most suitable programme to enhance that applicant's career prospects;
 - 3.1.4. guiding applicants through the process of making an application;
- 3.2. **The Admissions Department is responsible for:**
- 3.2.1. pre-screening all applications against the entry criteria and ensuring that all supporting documentation has been provided before progression and application;
 - 3.2.2. organising applicant entry tests and coordinating interviews with academic staff;
 - 3.2.3. ensuring that prospective students are kept informed about the progression of their applications and prompting them for any further information they need to submit;
 - 3.2.4. preparing information about applications for the consideration of the Admissions Panel as required;
 - 3.2.5. conveying the decision of the Admissions Panel to prospective students;
 - 3.2.6. communicating feedback to unsuccessful applicants if requested to do so;
 - 3.2.7. inviting accepted students who have met the programme entry criteria to enrolment / induction events;
 - 3.2.8. issuing student ID cards to eligible applicants;
 - 3.2.9. enrolling students onto programmes and coordinating credit transfers or exemptions;
 - 3.2.10. registering approved students with the awarding body in accordance with stipulated procedures;
 - 3.2.11. addressing and resolving complaints about the application process fairly and promptly;
 - 3.2.12. in addition to regular provision of management diagnostic information, the Admissions team will keep the College's Academic Board informed of any anomalies, inconsistencies or procedural risks arising in a timely fashion.

3.3. Programme Academics / Lecturers are responsible for:

- 3.3.1. Interviewing prospective students in accordance with the College's candidate interview protocol and giving their impressions of the candidate's suitability to the Dean and the Admissions Officer.
- 3.3.2. Responding to prospective students' questions about academic aspects of the programme and further advising them on the potential career benefits.

3.4. The Dean (or a Senior Programme Academic nominated by them) is responsible for:

- 3.4.1. Reviewing applications to study with all supporting documentation and approving, rejecting or referring applications to the Admissions Panel.
- 3.4.2. Participating in any secondary candidate interviews where specified by the Admissions Panel.

3.5. The Role of the Admission Panel

- 3.5.1. The Admissions Panel reviews all study applications that require discretionary contributions from senior academics and those with particular expertise; it considers chiefly matters relating to students with special educational needs, safeguarding concerns, and other cases which fall outside of the standard admissions procedure. The Panel additionally considers appealed decisions of refusal.

3.6. The Role of the Readmission Panel

- 3.6.1. The Readmission Process applies to former Vantage College students who were previously enrolled on a course and have requested permission to be readmitted to study.
- 3.6.2. This procedure applies to students who previously withdrew from a course or were withdrawn by the College.
- 3.6.3. Applications from applicants who were academically dismissed (termination of registration) or excluded from the College will not be considered for readmission.
- 3.6.4. Students are required to provide documentary evidence to explain why they were unable to complete their previous course, and their activity since leaving the College.
- 3.6.5. The Readmission Process and the application form is available on the College's website.

4. Information about Learning Opportunities

- 4.1. The College ensures that applicants have access to accurate and reliable information about its learning opportunities from the first point of contact. Information about learning opportunities is made readily available via the College's website, as well as hard-copy factsheets and promotional materials. Upon enquiry, all prospective students receive a one to one consultation with a programme leader, to assess whether the chosen programme is suited to the prospective student's academic and professional goals.
- 4.2. The College ensures that all material information given to students about the learning opportunities it offers, including all pre-contract information, is consistent with the requirements of UK Consumer Protection Law; the College exemplifies the principles of openness and accountability for published information set out in the *CMA's Guidance for Higher Education Providers*¹.

5. Procedural Approach

5.1 Application

- 5.1.1. The Prospective Students enquiring about Vantage's learning opportunities will be directed to a programme leader who will consult with them about their study options and guide them through the process of application.
- 5.1.2. Applicants with any special requirements should make these known to the College as soon as possible to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be made to the admissions process accordingly.
- 5.1.3. All applicants are required to complete an electronic application form and provide the following supporting documentation as a minimum:
- Valid identification
 - Proof of address
 - Evidence of previous academic qualifications; where required, these will be cross-checked against relevant databases, or ECCTIS (formerly NARIC)
 - A Personal Statement

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/428549/HE_providers_-_advice_on_consumer_protection_law.pdf

- Supporting funding documents
- A signed copy of the College's terms and conditions, acknowledging that the student has read and understood them

5.1.4. Additional evidence or documentation may be required in order for the College to reach a decision; where this is the case the prospective student will receive a clear explanation as to why this information is needed and how it will be used in the admissions process.

5.1.5. The College may require evidence of personal, professional and educational experience that provides indication of an applicant's ability to meet the demands of the programme.

5.1.6. The College shall decline to admit an applicant to a programme of study if the application is found to have been based on or to have included false or incomplete information. Any applicant whose application was based upon or included false or incomplete information may be excluded from the College.

5.2 Pre-screening (Admissions Team)

5.2.1 All applicants will need to demonstrate they have the required prerequisite knowledge and motivation to study and complete their desired course; an applicant seeking entry to a course must satisfy the College that there is a reasonable expectation they will be able to fulfil the defined objectives and to achieve the standard required for the award.

5.2.2 The Admissions team will check all applications and supporting documents against the programme's entry criteria and coordinate subsequent academic interviews and candidate entry tests where these are required.

5.2.3 The College employs a range of assessment techniques to assess the suitability of applicants for their chosen course.

5.3 General Entry Criteria

Admissions criteria and entry requirements are prepared for each programme in accordance with the awarding body's requirements; which are consistent with national standards and practices.

5.3.1 Undergraduate Programmes – Standard Entry

For learners seeking to apply via standard entry, who have recently been in education, the entry profile for higher education programmes is likely to include one of the following:

- BTEC Level 3 qualification in a relevant subject

- An Access to Higher Education Certificate awarded by an approved further education institution.
- Other related Level 3 qualifications

5.3.2 Undergraduate Programmes – Non-standard Entry

- Prospective students that are over the age of 21 who do not have the above qualifications can apply via the college's assessment-based entry. The college will consider the prospective student's prior experiences (work, voluntary, life, and other experiences that are relevant to the course). The following must be provided /completed:
 - A Personal Statement (of 500 words)
 - An English language test (with a minimum 60% score, equivalent to IELTS 5.5)
 - A Maths test (with a minimum 50% score)
 - SAPE Assessment (Screening for Accreditation of Prior Experience)
 - An academic interview with a member of the programme team

5.3.3 General Document Submission

The following documents must be provided by applicants to support their application.

- I. Valid ID
- II. Proof of address (dated within the last three months)
- III. Proof of prior qualifications; if applying via standard entry, this will be compared with applicable databases such as ECCTIS, if necessary.
- IV. Personal Statement (300 words for postgraduate applications)
- V. Academic and/or professional reference (if applying for postgraduate via non-standard entry)
- VI. To be able to fully process an application, the College may require more information or additional documentation. In this situation, applicants will be provided with detailed information on why this information is required and how it will be utilised during the admissions process.

5.4 English and Maths Tests

- 5.4.1. In addition to the general entry criteria set out above, applicants applying for an undergraduate course may also be required to demonstrate a standard of literacy in the English language and a standard of numeracy sufficiency through a compulsory English and Maths tests irrespective of the route learners have applied.

- 5.4.2. Vantage 's programmes are delivered in English. The grading of the English entry test will align with the International English Language Testing System (IELTS); applicants must achieve a minimum IELTS score of 5.5 for undergraduate degree programmes.
- 5.4.3. Applicants applying for a postgraduate degree may be required to complete the English Language test. This will be determined by the Admissions team depending on the nature of the application.

5.5 Screening for Accreditation of Prior Experience (SAPE)

5.5.1 Applicants applying for an **undergraduate programme** that are unable to present relevant qualifications on application will be considered via non-standard entry and can apply on the basis of prior learning which is acquired through personal and professional experiences. This learning can take place at work, home or leisure activities and if they can be measured and are relevant to the course then applicants can apply for SAPE.

5.5.2 Re-applying students and applicants who have previously completed a SAPE assessment need not submit another application unless they are changing course.

5.5.3 The SAPE may not be required of applicants who have submitted any Level 3 qualifications in the relevant subject

5.5.4 This process does not apply where a student seeks to use prior learning to obtain a credit towards an award or exemption from part of a course. Such applications are instead dealt with as admissions with Advanced Standing as set out below in 5.7.

5.6. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is a process for assessing work experience in the field of the applicant's chosen course for credit for your **postgraduate programme** if the applicant does not meet the standard entry requirements. Similar to the Screening for Accreditation of Prior Experience (SAPE) which is used for undergraduate level.

Applicants may be required to submit a short-written paper which is used to assess the applicant's suitability for the demands of the course.

The Course Leader will facilitate this process and will discuss the RPEL options directly with the applicant.

Applicants would be expected to highlight this during their application. It is advised that this is done well in advance before the course start date.

5.7. Advanced Standing and Direct Entry

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which includes credit transfer that offers applicants the following opportunities:

- I. Utilise the academic credits applicants have already earned.
- II. Convert relevant prior knowledge, skills, and experience into credits, which can be applied towards the applicant's qualification.

Applicants admitted by direct entry to any stage of a course other than stage 1 are regarded as being admitted with advanced standing. The award of credit necessary for that purpose shall be made by the Admissions Panel.

Applicants who wish to apply for RPL must submit original transcripts and certificates of prior learning with their application. Applicants who are eligible for RPL with specific credit, will be informed of this upon consideration by the Admissions Panel and with consultation with relevant awarding bodies.

Applicants may have to undertake elements of the Admissions process as instructed by the Admissions Panel depending on the nature of the application.

5.8 Prospective Student Interviews

5.8.1 Programme academics will consider the suitability of prospective students by holding applicant interviews, which also provide an opportunity for prospective students to learn more about the Programme as well as the College's approach to teaching and learning.

5.8.2 Where prospective students have recently been in formal education, the interview will explore their previous study experiences and achievements. Where prospective students have not recently been in education the interview will focus on prior professional experience with reference to an applicant's employment history, personal statement, SAPE, or RPEL submission.

5.8.3 In addition to the Academic Interview, prospective students are required to attend a Student Finance Interview with a member of the Admissions Team or a Student Finance Officer. The purpose of this interview is to provide applicants an opportunity to discuss affordability and eligibility for any financial support.

5.8.4 The academic interviewer may further request additional interviews for the applicant with a more senior academic staff member, senior admissions officer or the Student Support department.

5.8.5 Prospective students must attend all interviews to which they are in order for their application to progress.

5.9 Consideration and Approval of Applications

5.9.1 Upon completion of the Assessment process, an applicant's file will be submitted to the Dean, or a Senior Programme Academic nominated by them, or the Admissions Panel for consideration.

5.9.2 The admission of individual applicants is at the discretion of Vantage having regard to the safety and welfare of the College community and the general principles as outlined in its Equal Opportunities and Anti-bullying and Harassment.

5.9.3 The final decision to admit an applicant shall rest with the Dean, or a Senior Programme Academic nominated by them, or the Admissions Panel.

5.10 Acceptance of an Offer

5.10.1 The Admissions Team will relate the decision of the Dean or the Admissions Panel to applicants.

5.10.2 Where the Admissions Panel has approved the application to study, an *Offer Letter* will be sent to them.

5.10.3 At the point of accepting the offer, the applicant will be required to complete the Admissions Satisfaction Survey. This survey provides feedback to Vantage in terms of the applicant experience. Vantage may use the results of this survey to implement changes and further improve processes and procedures.

5.10.4 Acceptance of an offer marks the point at which the signed Enrolment Terms and Conditions become effective; cancellations and refunds terms and conditions will be effective from the day the College confirms acceptance of an offer.

5.10.5 Following acceptance of an offer, the Admissions team will provide information about enrolment and induction events the student must attend to formally commence their studies.

5.10.6 Where the College is minded rejecting an application, the reason for refusal will be communicated to the applicant, along with information about the admissions appeals procedure and how they might successfully reapply in future.

5.11 Induction

5.11.1 Vantage College will provide a comprehensive and appropriate induction to all new students as part of their formal enrolment into study programmes.

5.11.2 The purpose of induction to study programmes is primarily to:

- i. Prepare students for the rigors of study and adjusting to academic life,
- ii. Familiarise them with the College's campus layout, facilities, support services and its Virtual Learning Environment,
- iii. Provide students with the information and resources they need to begin their studies (such as handbooks and timetables),
- iv. Introduce students to key staff members and make formal introductions,
- v. Provide new students with their Vantage Student ID Cards.

5.11.3 The College will normally notify students of their induction details at least 14 days prior to the induction date, except where students enrol to programmes late, in which case they will be notified as soon as possible.

5.11.4 Students' attendance at inductions is a mandatory requirement of the programme and the College will inform students of this.

6. Our Commitment to Equal Opportunities and Widening Access

6.1 Access and Participation

6.1.1 The College's recruitment and admissions strategies are guided by a commitment to upholding equality of opportunity and fostering diversity.

6.1.2 Vantage will ensure that no student is treated less favourably or disadvantaged during the admissions process for reasons of their race, ethnicity, religious belief, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, age or disability, including mental health.

6.1.3 The College seeks in particular to extend the reach of higher education to persons underrepresented in higher education; particular focus is given to the recruitment of students in local communities where the College has teaching locations.

6.2 Disabilities and Special Educational Needs (SEN)

6.2.1 The College welcomes applications from all disabled applicants, those with specific learning difficulties and special needs.

- 6.2.2 Applicants with a disability or specific learning difficulty are encouraged to consult with the College at the earliest opportunity to determine appropriate forms of support. This can be done through the College's online application form, during the interview or by speaking to a member of the Admissions team. Early disclosure enables the College to provide students with appropriate information and make reasonable adjustments as early as possible.
- 6.2.3 Where a disability or specific learning difficulty is disclosed, applicants will be invited to attend an interview with a member of the Student Support department to discuss the nature of the disability or special need. Applicants must submit suitable supporting evidence from a recognised body, which confirms the nature of the disclosed disability.
- 6.2.4 Should the College be unable to accommodate any particular support needs, or can only do so by compromising the learning experience which would disadvantage the applicant, the College will inform the applicant immediately as soon as the situation is apparent.

6.3 Prospective Students with Criminal Convictions

- 6.3.1 Vantage College wants to make sure that everyone who will benefit from higher education may access it. In this situation, having a criminal record does not automatically rule out admission to the desired course. The *Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974)* governs how all criminal convictions—including warnings, reprimands, and cautions—are taken into account, and the College will only take into account convictions that are relevant.
- 6.3.2 For those applying for other courses that does not require a DBS check, the College will solely request disclosure of relevant unspent convictions that could endanger the health and safety of other students or the College's employees. Relevant unspent convictions in this case, whether they were obtained in the UK or elsewhere, are associated with:
- Any kind of violence including (but not limited to) threatening behaviour, offences concerning the intention to harm or offences which resulted in actual bodily harm.
 - Sexual offences, including those listed in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
 - The unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking (drug offences only involving possession are not relevant offences).
 - Offences involving firearms.

- Offences involving arson.
 - Offences involving terrorism.
- 6.3.3 Applicants that have declared any previous convictions will be invited to attend an interview with an Admissions Officer. Following this interview, the application will be referred by the Admissions Officer to the Admissions Panel for consideration.
- 6.3.4 The Admissions Panel exercises the College's duty of care towards its employees and students. Their safety and security are its prime concern and it is responsible for assessing the risk of admitting an applicant.
- 6.3.5 The College retains the right to refuse entry to any applicant with a previous criminal conviction which may jeopardise the security, safety or reputation of the College or its community, or where there are relevant professional criteria which apply.
- 6.3.6 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of these assessments. The Admissions Panel may request additional information or documentation from the applicant to enable the Panel to make a formed decision. In cases where applicants are unsuccessful, an explanation will be provided by the designated Admissions Officer of the Admissions Panel.
- 6.3.7 If it is later discovered that the applicant failed to declare such convictions and they should have done so, the applicant may be withdrawn from the College without notice.

7. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals

7.1 Appealing a refused application

7.1.1 Applicants who are unsuccessful in their application to study at the College and who wish to appeal the decision, may appeal in writing to the Admissions Panel.

7.1.2 Applicants can submit an appeal by completing the Admissions Appeal Form available on the College website.

7.1.3 Applicants must submit an Appeal within 20 working days of receiving a decision outcome on their application. The Admissions Panel will consider the appeal if the applicant can show that:

- i. refusal was given as result of the applicant not being properly assisted throughout the admissions process, or not being given the information they needed,
- ii. there was an administrative error in considering the application to study which led to the refusal, for example:
 - the application was considered against the wrong entry requirements for that programme, or
 - supporting evidence provided by the applicant has not been considered, or
- iii. the College has not followed its normal procedures (as outlined in this guide), or applied them fairly, and this has had a material impact on the decision of refusal.

7.1.4 The Admissions Panel will normally reply in writing to student appeals within 10 working days. If there is a delay in replying, the applicant will be notified of the reason for the delay.

7.1.5 Where the appeal is upheld, the response will indicate the outcome of the College's reconsideration of the application.

7.1.6 The Admissions Panel's decision will be considered final.

8. Submitting a complaint about the admissions procedure

8.1.1 Vantage College is committed to providing fair, transparent and consistent admissions procedures for all of our applicants. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when applicants are dissatisfied with the conduct of the admissions process in which case they may invoke the Admissions complaints procedure.

NB: the Admission complaints procedure is distinct from the Student Complaints Procedure.

8.1.2 The complaints procedure may be invoked by any individual who has submitted an application to study at the College.

8.1.3 A complaint should only be made by the applicant; complaints made on behalf of the applicant by parents, representatives or another third party will only be considered in exceptional cases where there are clear reasons for doing so. Complaints that are made anonymously cannot be dealt with under this Complaints procedure.

- 8.1.4 An applicant making a complaint, and those whom the complaint is made about, can expect the complaint to be dealt with confidentially. It may be necessary however, to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure.
- 8.1.5 The applicant should first raise their complaint informally with a member of the Admissions team. In most cases, this would be the member of staff who processed the application unless the complaint is about that individual. In such cases, the complaint may be addressed to the Head of Admissions.
- 8.1.6 If the applicant is unable to resolve the complaint informally with the relevant member of the Admissions team, they should submit a complaint form available on the College's website.
- 8.1.7 The Head of Admissions will acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint. It will then be investigated and submit a written response to the complainant within 10 working days from acknowledgement of receipt of the complaint.
- 8.1.8 If the applicant is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, the applicant may further write to the Dean.
- 8.1.9 The Dean's decision upon the investigation of the complaint will be considered final.

9. Prospective Students Personal Data

The College collects and retains personal data about applicants, current and former students in order to fulfil its functions as an education provider and processes such data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

10. Review and Update

Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the Admissions Policy resides with the Admissions and Marketing Committee. Updates to this policy will be coordinated by the Head of Admissions, all revisions and amendments will be reviewed by the College's Academic Board and ratified by its Board of Governors.

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