Policy 015: Admissions Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This Policy outlines the open, transparent and accessible way in which ACM approaches student admission on to Higher Education Programmes (Degrees) and Further Education Courses (Diplomas).

1.2 This policy is consistent with good admissions practice in higher education, as defined in the Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code and the Schwartz Recommendations for Good Practice , and complies with current legislation affecting the admission of students.

1.3 The policy will cover all students looking to apply for a place and enter into study at any of ACM campus, in combination with any of our Learning Partners and all levels of study offered from level 2 to Degree.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 ACM aims to ensure that its admissions processes are fair, open and transparent. ACM strivesto admit students who, regardless of their background, demonstrate potential to successfully complete their chosen programme of study where a suitable place exists and where entry criteria are met.

2.2 ACM values diversity and is committed to equality in education and students are selected on the basis of their individual merits, abilities and aptitudes. ACM ensures that the operation of admissions processes and application of entry criteria are untaken in compliance with the Equality Act.

2.3 ACM ensures that student admissions are facilitated by professional admissions staff, in liaison with senior academic staff, to ensure the fair and consistent assessment of applicants for entry to programmes of study. Due regard is given to the potential of the applicant to be successful in their chosen programme of study.

2.4 Entry requirements and selection criteria will not exclude or favour applicants on grounds relating to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Sex
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation

2.5 It is the responsibility of the applicant to be confident that they can cope with the practical and physical demands of the course, accepting such changes as would constitute reasonable adjustments in case of disability.

Further Education (FE) Courses

2.6 Diploma qualifications offered by the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) are of the Diploma Level 2 and 3 standard, and validated by the University of the Arts London (UAL). Students who have followed the UK route to a Further Education qualification will normally be at least 16 years of age on admission.

Higher Education (HE) Programmes

2.7 Degree Qualifications offered by the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) meet UK Higher Education academic standards. Courses run at ACM Birmingham and ACM Guildford are validated by Middlesex University, whereas the courses run at ACM London are franchised and awarded by Falmouth University.

2.8 ACM recognises, however, that applicants will be at different stages of maturity and prior learning irrespective of age on application and will judge each application on its individual merits. It is expected that admission onto ACM's Degree programmes will be subject to students admitted at a minimum age, upon enrolment of:

Level 0 (Foundation Year): 17 years

Level 4: 18 years

Applicants

2.9 ACM will consider each application in a fair, equal and transparent manner.

2.10 All applicants must meet the prescribed course entry requirements, and will be selected on the basis of demonstration of an acceptable level of ability within the course specific Selection Criteria.

2.11 Over and above the academic entry qualifications, the needs of each applicant who declares a learning need or disability will be investigated and negotiated on a case by case basis. ACM strives to ensure that any reasonable adjustments are made or agreed prior to entry to the course and the student will not be disadvantaged.

Very occasionally it may not be possible to make the adjustments required to enable an applicant to undertake the course that they have applied for. This may be because the person is unable to meet the programme's competencies or because the adjustments required to support the applicant could not be considered reasonable under the terms of the Equality Act (or equivalent legislation as it applies to students at the University's overseas campuses). In the rare occurrence that there are concerns that an applicant's ability to practice in a professional programme may have been impaired due to health or disability they may be referred to the Fitness to Practice policy. Further information can be found in the Fitness to Practice Policy.

2.12 Places on ACM courses are limited. Offers will be made on a first come first served basis to every applicant that meets the requirements for an offer.

2.13 HE students would apply for a place on a course of study at ACM via UCAS. The only exception to that is where a student is already an ACM student on an FE or HE course and looking or transfer onto a new course at ACM and is not interested in attending any other institution. In this exception, ACM will accept a direct entry application form and complete a

Record of Prior Acceptance on behalf of these students.

2.14 Students that apply outside the normal applicant cycle, after the 30th June, are considered a Clearing applicant.

2.15 Applications and enrolments may be accepted after the commencement of the course, however, it should be ensured that students are in attendance by teaching week 2 of the academic term.

Entry Requirements

2.16 Basic entry requirements for all ACM courses and programmes are set out in the ACM Prospectus and website. However ACM is currently unable to accept students that need a study visa to enter the UK. ACM can only currently accept applicants from the UK or EU or who have indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

2.17 Due to the practical nature of many of the courses ACM runs, applicants may be required to attend an Audition in order to display the level of practical competency required to undertake the relevant course before being provided with an offer of a place.

2.18 ACM welcomes applications for its Degree programmes from those who might not have formal qualifications. This could relate to those who did not achieve Level 3 qualifications (such as 'A' levels), as well as those who may have completed non-traditional forms of education that do not result in a formal academic award. Consideration will be given to applicants who do not hold prescribed entry requirements but who can demonstrate their suitability and preparedness to undertake a music or creative programme of study for which they have applied. This may be assessed through Recognition/Accreditation of Prior Learning or consideration of a 'Concessionary Entry Task'.

2.19 For more information on Accreditation of Prior Learning please refer to the ACM Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy & Procedure document.

Selection of applicants

2.20 Over and above the Entry Requirements for the course, ACM staff will exercise discretion in the selection process based on the UCAS Application proforma (for Degree Programmes), or Application pro forma documents (For Diploma courses) and/or Auditions and/or Interviews.

2.21 For each course, selection criteria enable ACM staff to select the most suitable applicants who meet the entry requirements for the course. The selection criteria will be used by all trained tutors involved in the selection process for a programme of study to ensure consistency.

2.22 Where admission auditions and Interviews are carried out, documentation is completed to ensure effective and accurate communication of decisions from Programme Managers to Registry staff.

2.23 Applicants will be sent Audition guides specific to their study route. Details of the audition and selection guidance provides in depth details of the audition requirements.

2.24 The selection criteria used when considering admission to ACM courses is:-

-   Ability to undertaken the program through musical ability, evidence of prior experience or published work or qualifications in relevant subject matter including musical theory examinations.
-   Proven level of English and Maths to ensure the student has the academic ability to undertake the course either via level of previous qualification or via the "Concessionary Entry Task"
-   Whether the student has displayed the relevant commitment, drive and suitability to be successful on the course following admission. This may include whether ACM can meet any additional needs should an applicant have declared additional learning needs or a disability.

Auditions/Videos and Interviews/Telephone Interviews

2.25 ACM courses and programmes can require applicants to be auditioned and/or interviewed.

2.26 The audition and interview process allows the applicant to visit the ACM campus, where the majority of scheduled learning activities will take place, to meet tutors and students, and to discuss the suitability of the course in relation to their needs and career aspirations. It is intended as a two-way exchange of information and questions.

A structured interview framework, with questions determined to enable selection of appropriate applicants, ensures that all interviewees have a comparable experience and are assessed equitably.

2.27 The audition enables the candidate to demonstrate their potential to undertake and be successful in the course for which they have applied.

2.28 Both the audition and interview provide opportunities for ACM Staff to assess more closely the suitability of the applicant for the programme of study.

2.29 Applicants that are invited to attend an audition or interview and will be sent an audition confirmation email that will have a link to with audition guidelines for what to expect from the day along with additional information on what to prepare.

2.30 Interviews/Auditions may exceptionally be conducted via video link if the applicant is unable to attend an audition or interview due to location or personal circumstances.

2.31 Interviews and auditions during Clearing will be held via video link where the applicant will be asked to prepare and perform a song of their choice, or they will be asked to provide digital submissions of some sample pieces that they have worked on.

Consideration of Applications

2.32 All applications submitted by the date specified on the ACM live website, or in UCAS publicity, will be given equal consideration.

2.33 Programme Managers will not allocate all available places before the equal consideration deadline set by UCAS for receipt of applications (normally in January each

year).

2.34 After the UCAS deadline for equal consideration, any applications for September of that year will be deemed late, and applications will be processed on a first come first served basis and invited to attend an audition or interview accordingly.

2.35 If all places on an FE Course or Degree Programme are allocated, any further successful applicants will be put on a waiting list and notified if a place becomes available. This is operated on a first come first serve basis.

2.36 The outcome of an audition will usually be communicated to applicants verbally at the end of their audition / interview, with successful applicants given an ACM "success" letter.

2.37. An offer letter, whether conditional or unconditional will be sent to an applicant within 2 weeks of successfully passing any Audition and/or meeting all of the pre-offer qualifications.. This will be sent via email in the form of a digital contract. UCAS track will also be updated by ACM Admissions Officers to reflect the offer status, if the student is applying via UCAS for an HE Programme.

Criminal Convictions

2.38 Applicants are required to disclose any unspent relevant convictions. Failure to disclose any unspent relevant convictions may result in an offer of study to be rescinded. Please refer to the Criminal Conviction Policy for more information.

2.39 Where a student indicates that they have a relevant criminal conviction, they will be contacted by the Admissions Manager within 2 working days to provide further detail for consideration. Applicants must, upon request, provide full details of any/or all convictions they may have disclosed under point 2.38 above.

2.40 Applications from candidates with criminal convictions will receive careful consideration by the Admissions Panel consisting of Designated Safeguarding Lead, Admissions Manager and relevant Programme Managers, with advice from Senior Managers where deemed necessary.

2.41 ACM reserves the right to reject any applicant with a relevant unspent criminal conviction or any applicant who may jeopardise the security, safety or reputation and integrity of ACM or its community, or where there are other relevant professional considerations.

2.42 Matters relating to disclosures of Criminal Convictions are managed by the DSL, under the Disclosure of Convictions Procedure.More information can be found in the ACM's Criminal Conviction policy.

Staff Development and Training

2.43 The Admissions Manager will ensure that all tutors and Admissions staff involved in the selection of applicants are trained in ACM's specific audition and admission procedures and selection criteria, and familiar with ACM's course offerings.

2.44 Provision is made within the budget for administrative staff to attend external training such as;

- Equality and Diversity - opportunities and challenges in HE admissions
- International admissions
- HE networking events

2.45 Internal training for Admissions staff will be provided by the Admissions Manager on any new programmes, processes or policies to ensure that all staff are informed of any new changes or developments.

2.46 Written guidance is provided to tutors responsible for the auditions of applicants onto courses and programmes at ACM. The guidance is reviewed annually to ensure the content is current and valid and aligned with professional standards.

'Clearing'

2.47 Clearing is a part of the UCAS university application process. It is a way for universities to fill any spaces they have left for the new academic year. It gives applicants who do not hold an offer another chance of finding a university place.

2.48 ACM will participate in and accept applicants through Clearing if there are places remaining for a programme of study. Concessions will not be sought for applicants at this stage nor will applicants be able to apply for AP(E)L/RPL

2.49 Applicants presenting at the Clearing stage will only be considered for Scholarships or ACM Bursaries if one should become available during the Clearing process. The same criteria used for those applying earlier in the application process will then be applied.

Deferred Entry

2.50 ACM will accept applications for deferred entry for all courses.

2.51 Deferred entry offers will be held for a maximum of one year. Scholarships and ACM Bursaries will only be allocated in respect of the current entry cycle.

Registration

2.52 All students are required to complete the registration process at the start of their course.

2.53 Registration information about students on ACM programmes is passed to the learning Partners and any funding bodies within six weeks of the start of the trimester.

Provision of Information

2.54 Entry requirements, application, audition and interview procedures will be communicated to applicants through the ACM Prospectus and by electronic communication on receipt of the application. (UCAS inform applicants of their own processes; however

additional ACM processes will be communicated to applicants as appropriate).

2.55 Information on fees, additional expenses and funding opportunities is provided through our Registry, issued on request before an application is received and systematically at audition or when an application is received. Applicants are directed to appropriate information in respect of Government and other funding sources, including ACM Bursaries.

2.56 Successful applicants will be notified in writing of any significant changes that may be made to a programme of study after an offer of a place has been made.

2.57 Information relating to the ACM Admissions Appeals procedures will be made available to applicants on request. Prospective students and applicants may request a review of an admissions decision by accessing the procedures available to them under the Complaints and Grievances Policy. Please contact admissions on Admissions@acm.ac.uk or 01483 550841 for any additional information.

2.58 ACM undertakes an annual and mid year review all the Admissions processes and policies to ensure consistency and continued validity. Any review will consider recent feedback, complaints and any outcomes as part of its standard processes.

Allocation of Scholarships and ACM Bursaries

2.59 Scholarships to be allocated by ACM will be done so in accordance with the current published criteria for awarding that is current.

2.60 As a part of the admissions process, an admissions placing list is established based on the applicant's entry qualifications (or projected outcome of results) and their performance at audition and interview. This list is then used as the guide for allocating Scholarships and ACM Bursaries. The highest placed eligible applicants will receive available Scholarships.

2.61 Applicants for ACM Bursaries must apply by published deadlines to be considered for awards for the forthcoming academic year. ACM Bursaries will be allocated taking into account the applicant's financial circumstances, along with other factors that ACM may wish to include to ensure fairness and inclusive intakes each year.. Applicants must agree to the terms and conditions of any Bursary offered.

2.62 The number and value of ACM Bursaries varies at the start of each Academic Year.

Recruitment

2.63 All promotional literature on ACM programmes of study will reflect the diverse social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the potential students for those courses and programmes, and outreach initiatives will reflect the ACM's Equality and Diversity Policy.

2.64 The ACM Prospectus will give sufficient information to enable applicants to make informed decisions about their career options.

2.65 Target recruitment numbers for each course are agreed annually between the Head of Education, Programme Managers and the Executive and take into account:

- market demand;
- target numbers from outside agencies i.e. Office for Students (OfS) and

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Education Funding Agency (EFA);
- ACM resources available;
- a requirement to recoup course delivery costs.

Data Protection

2.66 Successful applicants' records will be kept and maintained for the duration of their course of study and for one further year after programme/course completion or withdrawal. After this date only a transcription of achievements ratified by a Final Exam Board (or UALab Student Report Form process will be maintained electronically and/or manually.

The records of applicants who are unsuccessful will be kept for one month to allow applicant requests for review against the decision in line with the student complaint procedures set out by the ACM Student Complaint and Grievance Policy, if they wish to exercise this policy. If no complaint is lodged and received by ACM within this timeframe the records will be destroyed.

2.67 The application form includes a declaration for applicants to sign which provides information on the ACM's compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) , Data Protection Employment Practices Code, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the United Kingdom Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) Order 2006 and the Protection of Freedom Act 2012.

Feedback, Appeals and Complaints.

2.68 ACM is committed to providing full and constructive feedback of the reasons for rejection to help applicants make successful applications in the future. Applicants should request feedback from ACM within fourteen working days of the decision being made.

All requests for feedback must be made in writing and feedback will only be given in writing within 14 days of request. Where an applicant believes they have been rejected in error, or wishes to appeal the decision, they may do so using the complaints and appeals procedure below.

2.69 Prospective students and applicants may utilise ACM's Complaint and Grievances Policy and Procedure during the admission and auditions process, up to and including point of an offer being made. Students may utilise ACM's Complaints procedure to request a review of the admissions decision and the process followed and completed in issuing an offer of study. Applicants may opt to provide any additional information they feel relevant and confirm why this information was unable to be provided at the time of original application.

2.70 Prospective students will be signposted to ACM's Complaint and Grievances policy during the auditions process and in writing at point of offer.

2.71 Through utilising the Complaints and Grievances Procedure, applicants may request a review of ACM's admission and offer decision, but may not appeal a decision itself. This is because ACM's Appeal Policy is used alongside a request to review an academic decision.

3. Responsible Parties

3.1 The policy lead is responsible for the cyclical monitoring and review of the policy in liaison with the Registrar (risk and Records). The Admissions Policy lead is:

- Admissions Manager

 3.2 Policies will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated where any enhancements or changes are deemed necessary through the annual and mid year review cycles.

3.3 Decisions and appropriate actions in support of the implementation of the Policy will be authorised by the following designated staff:

- Admissions Manager
- Admissions Officers
- Education Strategist
- Programme Managers
- Group Head of Education
- Registrar (Risk and Records)
- ACM Data Protection Officer

4.   Reference Points
4.1.   Internal:
- Admissions Guidance
- Student Grievance Policy
- Data Access and Protection Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Disclosure of Convictions Procedures
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy

4.2.   External:
- Middlesex University Regulations, B: General Regulations for Admissions
- UALab Admissions Policy
- QAA Quality Code Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education
- Data Protection Act 1998
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The United Kingdom Data Protection (Processing of Sensitive Personal Data) Order 2006
- Protection of Freedom Act 2012

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