



**ACTIVATE
LEARNING**

TITLE: HE Admissions Policy	REF:	VERSION:1
APPROVED: By HE Academic Board	DATE:25 th February 2014	REVIEW DATE:25 th February 2015
LEAD PERSON: Bill Hunt – Higher Education Manager		
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT:		
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: To provide clear guidance to students and staff regarding the process by which applications for entry to higher education at Activate Learning are managed		

Main points of policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide clear guidance to students and staff regarding the process by which applications for entry into higher education at Activate Learning are managed.
List of procedures for implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full-time and part-time applications procedure (appendix 1)
Related policies, documents and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code: Part B, Chapter B2 – Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B2.pdf Awarding body policies and procedures Programme Specifications UCAS procedures

Equality and diversity statement

It is the policy of Activate Learning to recognise and encourage the valuable and enriching contribution from all who work and learn here and the rights of all individuals who come into contact with the organisation such as prospective students and job applicants.

We believe that people from a range of backgrounds and experiences can enhance the life and development of the institution and that all individuals should be treated on the basis of individual merit and without prejudice. Activate Learning will, therefore aim to provide an education service which actively promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, cultural background, economic status, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion/belief, marriage/civil partnership or sexual orientation in both education and employment. We will strive vigorously to remove conditions which place people at a disadvantage and will actively combat bigotry and discrimination. Activate Learning expects all employees, students, and associated partner organisations to adopt this policy.

Activate Learning is committed to carrying out Equality impact Assessments on its policies and procedures in order that some measurement is made of the contribution that the policy/procedure makes towards equality and diversity objectives.

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1. HIGH LEVEL STATEMENT

Activate Learning is committed to promoting the benefits of higher education and continuing, lifelong learning for the whole community and to enabling fair access to the provision offered by the Colleges' within the Activate Learning group through the highest possible quality of professional support.

Activate Learning will seek to remove all barriers to the student to enable appropriate access to its range of programmes and higher education services, and will create learning opportunities which enable individuals to succeed.

We will support a student's application by providing:

- Clear and accurate information about programmes, qualifications and entry requirements.
- Referral to additional advice and guidance services whenever appropriate
- An opportunity to see the college(s) and the facilities available for the student prior to committing to a programme of study.
- Scheduled interviews for those students resident in the UK who wish to be admitted to a full time or substantial part time programme of study.
- An initial English and/or Maths Assessment.

Activate Learning will also ensure that it provides equality of opportunity to admissions and initial guidance services and acknowledges its responsibility to give positive support to minority groups and students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

When implementing this policy, Activate Learning will ensure that its Admissions procedures are of high quality and are positively supportive of applicants seeking to enter a programme of study.

2. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all admissions to higher education programmes within the Activate Learning group, which are provided at City of Oxford College, Banbury and Bicester College and Reading College. It covers all stages of an applicant's interaction, from initial enquiry through application, receipt of selection decision and the transfer to enrolment and induction for successful applicants.

The procedures outlined in this policy also meet the requirements of Activate Learning's awarding bodies as well as UCAS and the UKBA. In addition, they also reflect relevant legislation and good practice by higher education organisations, including SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions) and the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) UK Quality Code for Higher Education Part B, Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/quality-code-B2.pdf>

3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY

The Higher Education Admissions Policy is approved by Activate Learning's Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB). Implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the Executive Director Curriculum, Standards and Academies.

Curriculum areas, student services and the Higher Education Admissions Coordinator work in partnership to provide an effective admissions service.

The Higher Education Admissions Coordinator has responsibility for managing the Higher Education Admissions Policy and procedures, providing advice, guidance and support to curriculum areas, enquirers and applicants, assessing applications, making offers on behalf of curriculum areas and developing and managing effective systems for admissions.

Curriculum areas are responsible for assessing applicants and making offers and providing up to date programme information for enquirers and applicants. Heads of Learning delegate the responsibility for admissions matters to a principal admissions tutor, who is normally the Programme Leader.

Applicants are expected to take responsibility for the following:

- Providing complete and honest information in applications submitted to one of Activate Learning's colleges
- Responding in a timely manner to requests for further information
- Communicating any changes to the information originally supplied in their application as soon as possible
- Being courteous and respectful in their communications with staff involved in the admissions process

4. REVIEW OF POLICY

Monitoring and review of the Higher Education Admissions Policy is undertaken annually by the Higher Education Learning Partnerships office, which reports to the Higher Education Quality and Standards groups, who in turn report to the Higher Education Academic Board.

5. TRAINING OF STAFF INVOLVED IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

Admissions team members and Admissions Tutors are required to undertake training when they are new to the role. Training is the responsibility of the Higher Education Manager working with Learner Services Managers and the Higher Education Admissions Coordinator. The Higher Education Admissions Coordinator will provide regular briefings for both Admissions team members and Admissions Tutors during the admissions cycle, with a particular focus on identifying and sharing good practice.

6. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS

Activate Learning recognises the value of diversity in enriching learning and teaching and is committed to equality of opportunity. It aims to provide an environment in which applicants

are treated with dignity and respect and solely on the basis of their abilities, merits and potential.

Activate Learning is committed to fair access and encourages and welcomes applications from all students who are able to demonstrate the potential to meet the entry criteria for the relevant programme.

Individual applicants are considered on the basis of their merits, abilities and potential, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, socio-economic background, family circumstances, religious or political beliefs and affiliations or other irrelevant distinction.

We recruit students by:

- Providing clear and transparent admissions information to prospective applicants
- Operating a fair and effective admissions process
- Ensuring the consistent application of policy across the Colleges
- Encouraging applications from the widest range of educational, cultural and social backgrounds

Activate Learning acknowledges the principles and precepts governing good admissions practice as defined in the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK Quality Code, Part B; *Assuring and enhancing academic quality, chapter B2: Admissions*.

In addition, this policy has been informed by guidance published by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) with specific reference to; *Good practice statement for College higher education providers: Admissions Policies and Responsibilities*.

7. INFORMATION FOR ENQUIRERS AND APPLICANTS

Activate Learning is committed to providing information, advice and guidance which is accurate, complete and easily accessible to enquirers and applicants.

Admissions and programme information, including detailed information about entry requirements are published on the following websites under 'university-level':

www.activatelearning.ac.uk

www.cityofoxford.ac.uk

www.banbury-bicester.ac.uk

www.reading-college.ac.uk

We aim to provide accurate and up to date information in all our publications, but as the printed HE programme Guide is published 12 months before the start of the programme, applicants should always refer to our website for the most up to date admissions and programme information.

8. ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Activate Learning welcomes applications from students who can demonstrate that they are able to benefit from the programme they have chosen to study and from the learning and teaching environment provided.

To ensure that all applicants are prepared for their studies, each programme has a specific set of academic entry requirements which each applicant will need to fulfil. The entry requirements for each programme can be found on the websites listed in section 7.

In addition to academic entry requirements, students are also required to show that their English language is at a level which allows them to successfully complete their chosen programme of study. Applicants whose native language is not English and who have not been educated in an English-speaking environment are normally required to achieve a minimum overall score of IELTS 6.0 or equivalent to be admitted to the first year of a higher education programme. Specific IELTS requirements are listed against each programme and can be found on the relevant website listed in section 7.

There are also additional non-academic requirements for applicants to health and social, and Policing programmes, for example.

For the Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care, applicants will be required to be certified 'fit for practice' and also have a clear DBS

For the Foundation Degree in Policing, applicants will be required to have successfully completed the Thames Valley Police vetting process.

9. ASSESSING APPLICANTS

In assessing applicant's suitability for a programme, Activate Learning looks for motivated students with the necessary academic preparation, as detailed in the entry requirements for each programme, who will benefit from the learning and teaching environment provided by the relevant curriculum area.

We are keen to ensure that all applicants are provided with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their skills, potential and achievements. The methods of assessment employed by Activate Learning are fair, transparent and valid, applied to each programme consistently and regularly reviewed. The fairness and consistency of offer making for each programme is managed by the admissions tutor and monitored by the Higher Education Admissions Coordinator. Each applicant is assessed on an individual basis, with academic discretion used in assessing the range of evidence presented by applicants.

In assessing the academic suitability and potential of applicants, we consider the following information:

- Achievement in awarded qualifications
- Predicted achievement in qualifications which are being studied
- Personal or supporting statement, for evidence of motivation and commitment to the subject area
- References, for confirmation of academic potential and personal qualities

Admissions tutors may also draw on a variety of additional methods to assess the suitability of applicants, including:

a) Interviews

Some curriculum areas invite all applicants who are based in the UK at the time of application to attend an interview, which provides an opportunity for applicants to meet one or more members of academic staff in order to provide them with a mutually beneficial assessment of their suitability for the programme. Applicants who are not invited to attend an interview will receive equal consideration. However, Activate Learning reserves the right to reject applications from applicants who are invited to attend an interview and who do not respond to one, or exceptionally two, specific invitations to attend.

b) Portfolios of work

Applicants to specific programmes such as those in Creative Arts will normally be required to provide a portfolio or other evidence of competence for assessment by the Admissions Tutor. Such requirements are set out in the entry requirements published on the relevant college's website and will be communicated to relevant applicants directly.

10. APPLYING

10.1 How and when

All applications for full-time undergraduate programmes are submitted via UCAS.

Detailed information on how and when to apply can be found at www.ucas.com

All applications for part-time undergraduate programmes are submitted directly to the relevant College via an on-line HE Application form, which is located on the website and also available in hard copy

10.2 Time taken to consider an application

We aim to consider applications and make decisions as quickly as possible.

However, given the volume, range and quality of applications we receive, we are not always

able to make an admissions decision immediately. Where we are not able to make a decision

for some time, we contact applicants to explain the situation and when they should expect a decision

10.3 Communication with applicants

Activate Learning recognises the importance of keeping applicants informed and aims to provide effective updates at key points during the admissions process. This is normally done by email with applicants or by phone.

We send a range of communications to applicants which include some or all of the following:

- Acknowledgment of the receipt of an application
- Confirmation that a decision has been made on the application
- Confirmation of the offer of entry and the terms and conditions for offer holders
- Confirmation of meeting the terms of any offer of entry
- Enrolment information

- Additional information such as reading lists, summer projects and/or materials/equipment list.

10.4 Offers of entry

Successful applicants will receive an offer of entry from Activate Learning. The offer of entry will either be conditional on the basis of qualifications requirements yet to be completed or unconditional. We reserve the right not to confirm an applicant's place if he/she does not provide evidence of having met the conditions of his/her offer by the published deadline (normally 31st August). Some programmes also require additional conditions to be met such as those required for entry to the Foundation Degrees in Policing and Health and Social Care.

In cases where the applicant is deemed unlikely to achieve the entry requirements for the programme which he/she has applied but where an alternative programme is available, a 'change of programme offer' may be made.

10.5 Feedback

We feel it is important that unsuccessful applicants have the opportunity to receive feedback on their application. Activate Learning provides feedback on request

10.6 Applicants with additional support needs

Activate Learning welcomes applications from students with additional support needs. Their application is assessed following standard procedures (see section 7) and consideration of their support requirements will remain entirely separate. If an offer is made, an assessment of needs is carried out to ensure that the required support is provided. In the unlikely event that the adjustments needed to provide the required support could not be considered reasonable, Activate Learning undertakes to offer the applicant support in submitting an alternative application.

10.7 Applicants with criminal convictions

As part of its duty of care to students and staff, Activate Learning asks applicants for information about any relevant criminal convictions. This information is assessed before any offer of entry is made. The assessment is undertaken by a panel of experienced staff and the process is managed by the Higher Education Admissions Coordinator. Having a criminal record does not necessarily prevent applicants from studying at one of Activate Learning's colleges. This will depend on the nature of the programme applied for and the circumstances and background of offences.

10.8 Fraud and omitted details

Activate Learning reserves the right to withdraw any offer made on the basis of an application which has been found to contain fraudulent information. We may also withdraw the offer of a place if an applicant has been found to have omitted key information from their application. Any student found to have been admitted on the basis of fraudulent information may have their studies terminated.

10.9 Verification of qualification

Activate Learning will normally verify the result of any qualification that is not received from UCAS through the Awarding Body Linkage (ABL). Applicants will normally be required to submit evidence of results before they are permitted to enrol.

10.10 Deferred entry

Applications for deferred entry are welcomed and will be given equal consideration with applications for entry in the admissions cycle in question

10.11 Accreditation of Prior Learning

Applicants wishing to be considered for entry into the second year of study, or wishing to import credits or evidence of prior learning into the programme, for which they are applying, will be considered in accordance with the validating University's policy on Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL).

11. DISCONTINUATION OR SUSPENSION OF PROGRAMMES

Activate Learning reserves the right to discontinue or suspend a programme for which offers have already been issued, but undertakes to do this only in exceptional circumstances. Where a programme is discontinued, applicants holding offers are informed as soon as possible, and where appropriate, are offered a place on an alternative programme offered by Activate Learning.

12. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Activate Learning requires all applicants to provide evidence that they have access to sufficient funds to pay tuition fees during their studies. Detailed information on student finance can be found at either www.activatelearning/he.ac.uk or www.gov.uk

13. APPLICANT DATA

The data submitted as part of each application is used to assess the suitability of an applicant for study. Anonymised data is also used for statistical and reporting purposes.

Applicant data forms part of the student record for applicants who are admitted to one of Activate Learning's colleges. Personal data for applicants, who are not admitted, is deleted after two years.

Activate Learning aims to operate in compliance with data protection legislation and good records management practice. Applicant's data is treated as confidential by all staff involved in the admissions process and is not divulged unnecessarily or inappropriately. Staff involved in admissions communicate only with applicants themselves, unless the applicant has given express permission for a third party to communicate on his/her behalf. Third parties may be parents, teachers, advisers or agents acting on behalf of applicants.

14. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

Activate Learning aims to consider all applicants fairly and in line with the principles outlined in this admissions policy. However, we recognise that there may be occasions where

applicants wish to request an appeal (review of their application), or make a complaint about the admissions process.

If an applicant feels that they may have cause for an appeal or complaint, Activate Learning has an appeals and complaints procedure (see appendix 4)

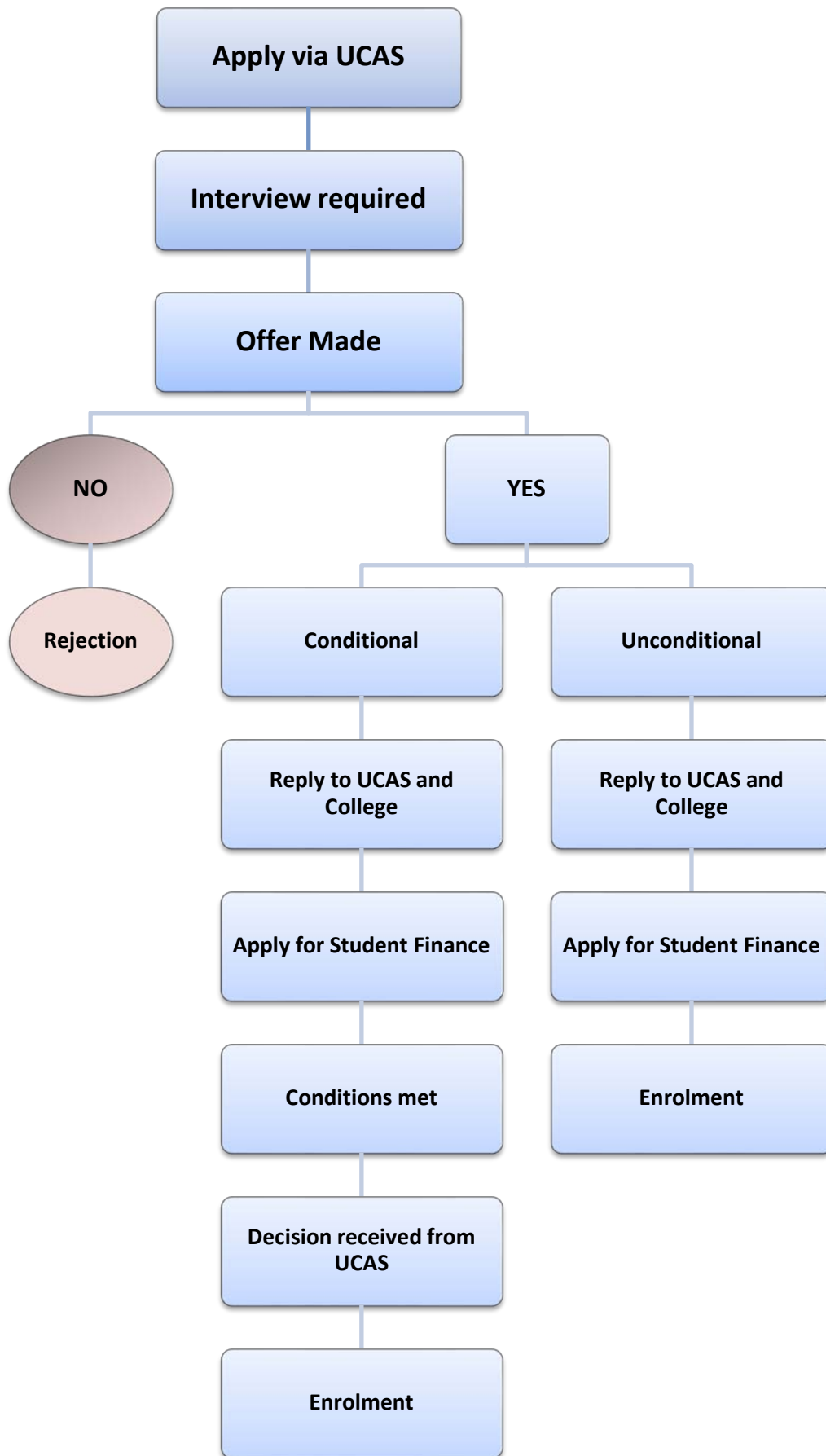
15. ENROLMENT AND INDUCTION

Activate Learning aims to provide a comprehensive academic and pastoral induction programme in order to support the transition of applicants to enrolled students at the end of the admissions process. Before arrival, applicants are provided with information about registration and enrolment and induction activities. During induction, students will also be provided with a Higher Education Student Handbook in addition to their specific Programme Handbook.

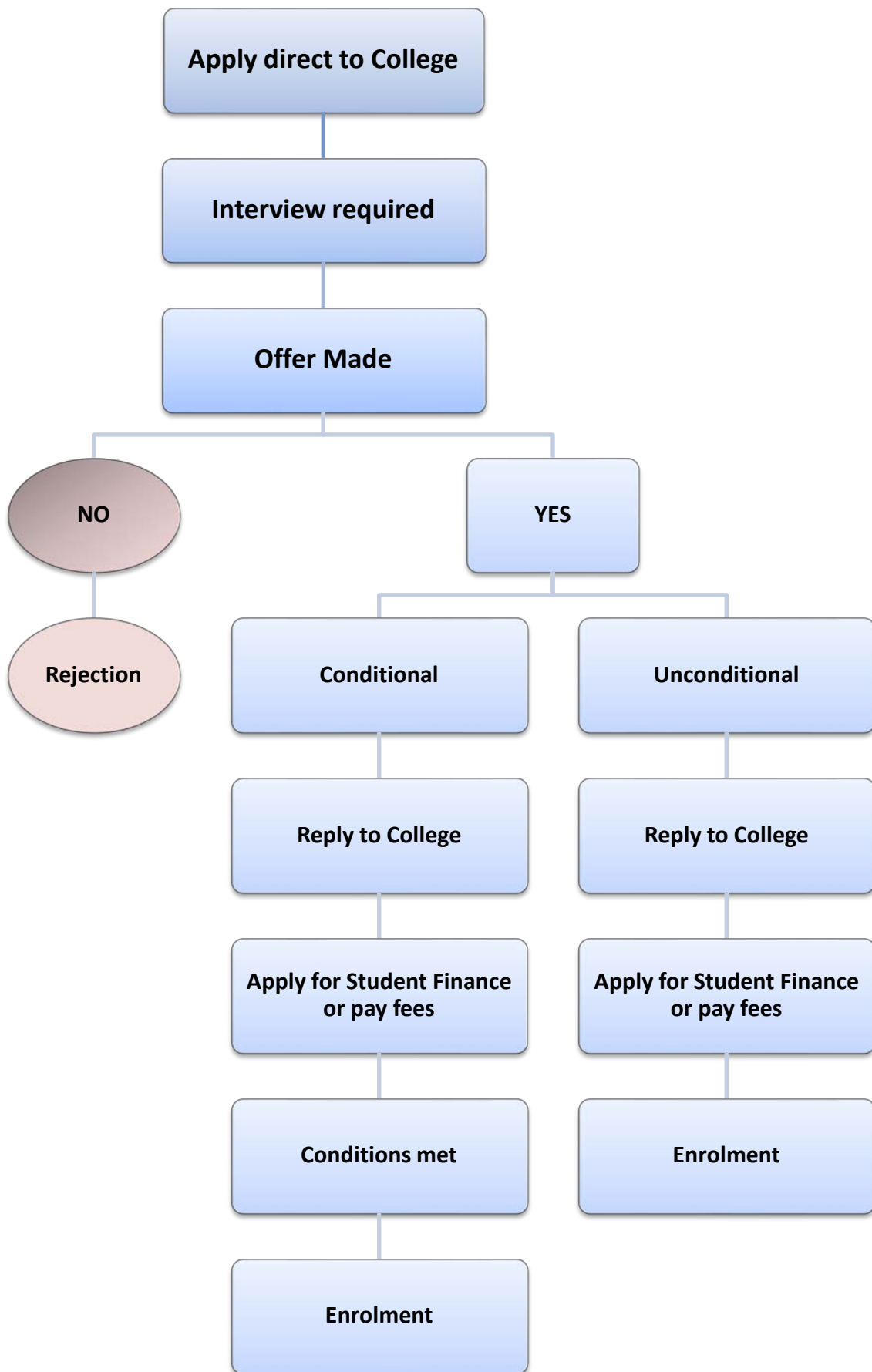
16. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about Activate Learning, please visit our website at www.activatelearning.ac.uk

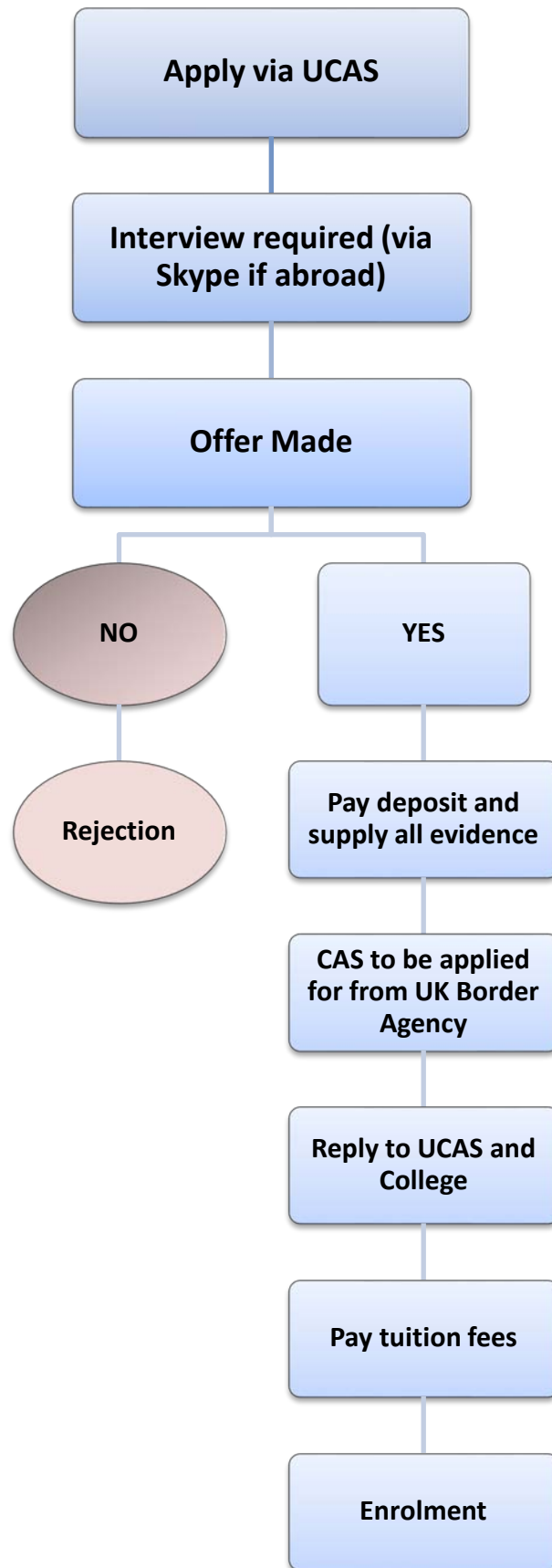
Appendix 1: Flowchart for full - time Higher Education applications



Appendix 2: Flowchart for part-time Higher Education applications



Appendix 3: Flowchart for International Higher Education applications



Appendix 4.

HIGHER EDUCATION APPLICANT FEEDBACK, APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

Although Activate Learning does not provide automatic feedback to every unsuccessful applicant, we are happy to provide written feedback upon request. The following information provides details of our Applicant feedback policy, as well as details about the complaints and appeals procedures for applicants. These policies and procedures would also apply to former students of Activate Learning's colleges who had been unsuccessful in gaining re-admission (whether to their former programme or to another subject).

FEEDBACK (defined as a request for information on why an application was unsuccessful)

- All applications are considered fairly, equally and in line with Activate Learning's higher education admissions policy.
- Activate Learning believes in a holistic approach to selection. In considering applications we therefore take into account all aspects of the application, including qualifications achieved to date, any predicted results on qualifications that are still pending, personal statement, relevant work experience, academic reference, any mitigating circumstances that we are alerted to (such as long-term illness or personal difficulties which can be emailed in support of the application to HE@activatelearning.ac.uk and any contextual data. On occasion, we may also ask for additional information, which might include additional or updated references, further information on qualifications (including transcripts), an additional or enhanced personal statement, examples of work, a set essay and/or an interview. In taking the decision to offer or reject, Activate Learning is therefore taking into account all the information that has been made available to us.
- All decisions (including those to turn down an applicant) are checked by staff in central Admissions team for consistency of Admissions tutors in applying the entry criteria and adhering to the Higher Education Admissions Policy. All decisions are therefore taken by at least two members of staff.
- Activate Learning does not write automatically to unsuccessful applicants, but communicates the decision via UCAS (*Note: the exception to this are former students seeking re-admission or part time applications, where the decision will be issued in writing by the HE Admissions Coordinator direct to the applicant*).
- Activate Learning is, however, happy to provide written feedback (upon request) to unsuccessful applicants, in accordance with the procedures set out below and as outlined in the Higher Education Admissions Policy.
- If applicants have additional information to submit in support of their application, this can be provided as part of the request for feedback.
- The most common reason for an application to be declined is that the applicant *either* does not meet a specific entry requirement (for example, having GCSE Grade C or above English/Maths or a suitable alternative qualification) *or* does not have (or is not likely to achieve) the required grades for admission (i.e. our standard offer level) as advertised in our University level Programme Guide. Unsuccessful applicants are therefore strongly encouraged to check the University level Programme Guide and UCAS entry profile for details of specific entry requirements *before* requesting feedback.

- If an applicant wishes to receive feedback, then this will be provided on request to the HE Admissions Coordinator at HE@activatelearning.ac.uk or requested in writing to the following address:

HE Admissions Coordinator
 Activate Learning
 City of Oxford College
 Oxpens Road
 Oxford
 OX1 1SA
 UK

- The request should include the applicant's full name (as declared on the application form), UCAS Personal ID number (where relevant) and programme(s) applied for. The letter/email should state that the applicant is seeking feedback on their rejection.
- Please note that requests for feedback **must** be submitted within the same UCAS admissions cycle as the application about which the feedback is requested.
- When the request for feedback arrives, the applicant will be sent a letter or email acknowledging receipt of the request and giving an indication of the date by which they can expect to receive written feedback. Whilst every effort will be made to respond to requests quickly, at certain times of year this is not possible. Activate Learning will aim to respond within 28 working days, but the acknowledgment letter will give a better indication of the expected length of time required to reply.
- Feedback, where appropriate, may include advice on possible courses of action.

Advice on possible courses of action is merely guidance aimed at helping the applicant. Applicants are reminded that independent guidance is also available from advisers within their existing school or college or from careers services or Connexions service and applicants should consider consulting these sources for help.

- Requests for feedback should normally come from the applicant. Activate Learning will not respond to requests for feedback from those advising applicants (whether parents, guardians, teacher or careers advisers) *unless* that individual/parent has been explicitly appointed (in writing) to act on behalf of the applicant. A copy of the written authority to act for the applicant would need to be provided along with the request for feedback. In the vast majority of cases, however, we would expect to receive the request for feedback direct from the applicant.

APPEAL (An appeal is defined as more formal and would be a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision)

- Applicants do *not* have a right of appeal against the *academic judgment* of Activate Learning. However, if following receipt of feedback (as detailed above), an applicant feels that an error has occurred, they have the right to request a formal review of the selection decision on one of the following grounds:

1. pertinent information was missing from the original application;
2. there has been a misinterpretation of information or data contained within the original application; and/or
3. there was a procedural anomaly in the handling of the application.

- This review can only be requested after an applicant has received feedback on the reason for their original rejection. The request for a review must then be placed (in writing) within twenty-eight calendar days of the feedback being sent to the applicant, stating clearly on what grounds the request for a review is being made.

This request should be sent to the HE Admissions Coordinator at the following address:

Activate Learning
City of Oxford College
Oxpens Road
Oxford
OX1 1SA
UK

or emailed to HE@activatelearning.ac.uk for the attention of the HE Admissions Coordinator.

- As with the original request for feedback, the subsequent request for a review *must* be made by the applicant and not a third party. Activate Learning will not respond to requests from anyone other than the applicant (unless written permission has been granted by the applicant).
- Once received, the HE Admissions Coordinator will review the record of the application (normally in consultation with the relevant Admissions Tutor) and will respond by letter or email. If the original decision is upheld, this correspondence will include the reasons for the decision.
- A separate fee status appeals process exists for applicants who wish to challenge their fee status assessment and these must be directed in the first instance to HE@activatelearning.ac.uk for the attention of the HE Admissions Coordinator.

COMPLAINTS (A complaint is normally a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration in the admissions procedures or policies)

- Complaints are different to requests for feedback or appeals.
- A complaint does not necessarily have to be in connection with a decision to turn down an applicant. A complaint is a concern about a particular procedure, an irregularity in the administration of an application, or a belief that a policy has not been correctly implemented. Complaints may cover any aspect of the admissions process and will normally focus on a specific issue or situation (which could include the feedback request). A complaint does not necessarily question the decision of Activate Learning, but raises a concern about how the selection process has been managed.
- As with requests for feedback and appeals, the complaint must come from the applicant. The complaint must be submitted within three months of the conclusion of the admissions process against which the complaint is being made. Complaints must initially be sent (in writing or by email) to:

HE Admissions Coordinator
Activate Learning
City of Oxford College
Oxpens Road
Oxford
OX1 1SA
UK

or should be emailed to HE@activatelearning.ac.uk The HE Admissions Coordinator will seek to resolve the complaint or explain the situation and will respond in writing to the applicant in line with Activate Learning's complaints procedures.