

UCS Admissions Policy

Our Mission

Raising Aspirations, Unlocking Potential, Advancing Futures

Our Values

Excellence, Passion, Teamwork, Integrity, Innovation,
Sustainability, Valuing Others and Supportiveness

Sparsholt College Group

The Sparsholt College Group (the College Group) includes Sparsholt College, Andover College, University Centre Sparsholt (UCS), Sparsholt College Services, Westley Enterprises and Andover Town Football Club. College Group policies apply to each part of the group unless specified otherwise.

The *UCS Admissions Policy* was reviewed and reconfirmed by the Board of Governors in April 2025 and supersedes previous versions.

Originator:	Dean of Higher Education
Located:	College Group Websites College Group Intranet
Due for review:	April 2028

1. Introduction	3
2. Principles	3
3. Roles and Responsibilities	4
4. Review of Borderline Applications	4
5. Information for Applicants and Entry Requirements	4
6. Interview	6
7. Confirmation	6
8. Mature Applicants	6
9. Part Time Application Process	7
10. Arrangements for Applicants who are Under 18	7
11. International Students	7
12. Deferred Applications	8
13. Disability	8
14. Data Protection	9
15. Fraudulent Applications	9
16. Criminal Convictions	10
17. Complaints or Appeals	11

UCS ADMISSIONS POLICY

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy applies solely to learners applying to study Higher Education Courses at University Centre Sparsholt (UCS). UCS, part of the Sparsholt College Group (the organisation), is committed to making available relevant, effective, high quality education and training to meet local, regional, national and international requirements by:

- Meeting the needs of students and industry through the appropriate range of courses securing higher level science and technical skills
- Developing and securing the competence and extending the knowledge of students to ensure they can drive added value to their sectors
- Providing industry experts who deliver high quality teaching and support.

1.2 This policy has been developed adhering to the QAA's Quality Code of Practice and Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, UCAS fair admissions code of practice, SPA's Guide on Consumer Protection and complaints, and the Competition and Markets Authority advice on Consumer Protection to Higher Education providers.

2 Principles

2.1 UCS values and seeks diversity in the student community. UCS will ensure that students are given the opportunity to achieve their potential in relevant subjects at appropriate levels.

2.2 UCS recognise the value of life and professional experience and particularly welcome applications from individuals who might not necessarily have formal academic qualifications.

2.3 UCS is committed to promoting equal opportunities for students. We recognise that student life is enriched by a diverse student body that is reflective of the wider community and includes students from the UK, the European Union and international destinations.

2.4 UCS endeavours (within its financial means) to support students who can benefit from our courses are not prevented from doing so because they face financial hardship.

2.5 In accordance with our commitment to fair admissions, selection is made based on a range of criteria. Evidence of eligibility for study includes academic achievement, professional and personal experience and potential to succeed in the intended programme of study.

2.6 The admission of any student will be determined by an assessment of the potential of the student to contribute to and benefit from their proposed course of study and by academic, personal, professional and other relevant criteria.

- 2.7 Individual programmes of study may specify entry requirements in addition to this minimum requirement and include subject specific elements. These are established in accordance with any individual programme requirements.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 Overall responsibility for the UCS admissions process is held by the Dean of Higher Education. Day to day responsibility lies with the Admissions Co-ordinator. The Admissions Team will manage the admissions process with support from the academic teams. The organisation agrees and publishes the specific eligibility criteria by which applications are assessed.

4 Review of Borderline Applications

- 4.1 In cases of applications from non-traditional routes or borderline applications the application is reviewed by the Dean of HE (or in their absence either the Assistant Principal or Senior Curriculum lead) and the relevant subject lead.

5 Information for Applicants and Entry Requirements

- 5.1 When applying to study a higher education course, applicants are given assistance to ensure that they make choices which are right for them. UCS will provide clear, accurate and comprehensive information about programmes and the services and facilities offered.
- 5.2 The admissions process will provide applicants with timely information which enables applicants to make sound and fully informed decisions.
- 5.3 Through prospectus, website, the UCAS website and other documents, University Centre Sparsholt will detail:
- the full-time and part-time higher education programmes offered
 - the aims, content and structure of individual programmes
 - entry criteria, skills requirements for individual programmes
 - clear guidance about how to apply for individual programmes
 - the expected fees and other costs of being a student and financial support available
 - likely additional costs or unusual requirements of specific programmes (e.g. relating to work or study placements, field trips, materials, or equipment)
 - the services and facilities offered to students
- 5.4 To ensure the applicant can make a fully informed choice, the information contained within the prospectus, website, and the UCAS website provides the

necessary pre-contract information to enable an applicant to decide to study at UCS. Any changes to these terms will be provided in writing prior to the applicant signing their student contract with the organisation and will also be detailed in the student contract between the student and the organisation.

- 5.5 University Centre Sparsholt holds regular Open days and 'Offer Holders' days providing opportunities to visit the campus and review the facilities, curriculum area and accommodation. Candidates have an opportunity to speak to staff and students about programmes, services and support needs that will assist them in making their choice.
- 5.6 Information about these Open events and 'Offer Holders' days and how to attend will be provided on the UCS website and invitations will be sent to prospective students.
- 5.7 All applications are acknowledged by email on receipt, to confirm receipt. Applications that are received by the deadlines of the UCAS application cycle are guaranteed equal consideration. Applications received after deadline will be considered where there are places available on the programme.
- 5.8 Applications are assessed in accordance with the published entry criteria. When assessing an application, the Admissions team will consider the following:
- Whether the applicant's academic potential is such that it is likely they would be successful on the programme;
 - Whether sufficient spaces are available on that programme.
- 5.9 UCS staff will first assess whether the applicant has met the minimum entry criteria for the programme. If entry criteria are met, the Admissions team will begin to assess academic potential, taking into account a wide variety of factors which include, but are not limited to, actual academic performance to date and predicted results for qualifications currently being studied. Other qualifications, including international qualifications, will be considered on their individual merits using UCAS and NARIC equivalencies of qualifications.
- 5.10 The Personal Statement is one way that we may use to assess each applicant's motivation and suitability for the chosen programme of study. When looking at each applicant's Personal Statement, the Admissions team will look for the following:
- Knowledge of, interest in and commitment to the subject
 - Non-academic achievement or relevant experience
 - Future career aspirations and how the course will support those aspirations
 - Positions of responsibility
 - Interests, hobbies and relevant work experience
- 5.11 The Admissions team is looking for references to provide:

- Predictions of examination results
 - An overall assessment of the applicant
 - Extenuating circumstances if earlier exam results are considered as a poor guide to ability
- 5.12 For applications received through UCAS, UCS will use UCAS as a communication channel, supplemented by emails from the UCS admin email account and letters to applicants sent from UCS. In the case of non-UCAS applications we will communicate directly with the applicant. All correspondence will be sent, in the first instance, by email. If email is not suitable, alternative communication methods will be used.
- 5.13 Undergraduate students wishing to transfer to the UCS for full time degree programmes should also apply through UCAS. Applicants will be required to complete a Recognition of Prior Learning prior to transfer which must be approved by UCS prior to enrolment. More information is available from the Admissions team.
- 5.14 As soon as a decision is made concerning an offer, applicants will be notified if their application has been successful or unsuccessful, or that it is not able to make a final decision until later in the cycle.
- 5.15 If the organisation decides that it cannot make an offer of a place on the specific course for which an applicant has applied, then alternatives will be considered and may make an offer on an alternative programme that it considers better reflects the candidate's needs. If an alternative course offer is made, then candidates will receive notification of this via UCAS.
- 5.16 Where an application is unsuccessful, we encourage the applicant to contact the Admissions team who will provide a reason why their application has been declined.

6 Interview

- 6.1 UCS reserves the right to interview applicants. If required, the interview will consist of a review of academic achievement including predicted grades and prior attainment, changes since application particularly academic results and work experience, aptitude and commitment / motivation to study. These will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant policies on equal opportunities. Decisions will not be provided to the applicant at the interview. Interviews may be conducted in person or by telephone / remote meeting. After a decision has been made and applicants informed, applicants may request feedback on the interview by contacting the interviewer.

7 Confirmation

- 7.1 University Centre Sparsholt receives most UK qualification results from UCAS for applicants who have accepted conditional offers. Applicants who achieve the grades required by their conditional offer have their place confirmed. Applications from those students who have not met the required grades are reviewed on an individual basis.

8 Mature Applicants

- 8.1 We welcome mature applicants. Applications will be considered on an individual basis including industry and academic experience. Mature applicants may be invited to interview or required to complete a written assessment set by the programme leader.

9 Part-time Application Process

- 9.1 Applicants who intend to apply for part-time study should submit their application on a part-time application form.
- 9.2 Part-time applications should be received by the end of June prior to enrolment. Applications will be considered outside of this period should places be available. The Admissions team will review the application and check that it is complete, has the minimum requirements and includes the relevant references and qualification certificates if applicable. The Admissions team will review all completed part-time applications. Decisions are made as quickly as possible and a written offer is sent to the applicant, accompanied by a pro forma to enable the applicant to accept the offer.

10 Arrangements for Applicants who are Under 18

- 10.1 UCS welcomes applications from people of all ages. No applicant shall be refused admission on grounds of age.
- 10.2 UCS has a duty of care towards all students, employees and visitors and in the case of students joining before their 18th birthday this duty is enhanced as such students are regarded as children under UK law.
- 10.3 Principles, institutional responsibilities and procedures relating to the protection of under 18s and vulnerable adult students are set out in the Residential Rules and Regulations document.

11 International Students

- 11.1 The Admissions team will make an assessment of fee-paying status (where possible) using the information provided in the application and ensure this is consistent with UKVI guidance.
- 11.2 Where required, we will utilise NARIC guidance on qualification comparisons to ensure that programme entry requirements are met.
- 11.3 International and EU applicants for whom English is not a first language, and who are seeking to join undergraduate programmes, are expected to hold an IELTS certificate, with a score of 6.0, or an equivalent qualification with no subcategory below 5.5. Applicants to postgraduate programmes are required to hold an IELTS certificate with a minimum score of 6.5 or an equivalent qualification. Further guidance and regulations for international student entry requirements can be found on the UCS website

- 11.4 When considering an application, the Admissions team will take into account whether or not a student is able to meet the necessary UK visa requirements for the full duration of their programme. The organisation reserves the right to reject an application in circumstances where these requirements cannot be met.

12 Deferred Applications

- 12.1 Applicants that wish to defer their entry by one year are welcomed provided they have met the conditions by 31st August of the year that they make their application. If applicants wish to defer by more than one year, it is recommended that applicants contact the Admissions team to discuss the best way forward.

13 Disability

- 13.1 We encourage participation in our learning programmes by all sections of the community and the industries it serves and welcomes applications from applicants who have a disability. All reasonable attempts will be made to ensure that students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities are able to follow a programme of study most suitable to their needs, with appropriate support provided as appropriate. This support will be monitored and changed as necessary.

Applicants with disability who apply to study Veterinary Nursing should discuss their support needs with the Head of Centre to ensure that they meet Fitness to Practise guidelines for the profession.

- 13.2 UCS is unable to meet additional needs or can only do so by compromising the learning experience which would disadvantage the applicant, UCS undertakes to inform the applicant immediately the situation is apparent.
- 13.3 All applicants who accept an offer will receive an email link to an online Registration 'Next Steps' Form which will include a Disability Questionnaire. Once the applicant submits this form via the online portal, information from the Disability Questionnaire will be directed to the Head of Wellbeing. This enables applicants, who have not declared a disability on their original application, an opportunity to inform the UCS of any access arrangements and support that they might require during their studies.
- 13.4 Information provided in relation to disability will not be used in the initial assessment of applications. Offers to study at UCS can be made prior to disability and learning support information being received.
- 13.5 Applicants who are aware that they have specific needs are strongly recommended to outline them at this stage so that appropriate arrangements can be made and are advised to arrange an appointment with the UCS Academic and Learning Support tutor to discuss appropriate study support arrangements. Students with a known learning disability need to be in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) funding in order to receive some forms of support, it is advisable to undertake the DSA Assessment and Needs Assessment prior to starting a degree course, to ensure that appropriate support is in place at the commencement of study.

Further information is available at <https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/university-centre/he-study-support/>
<https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/university-centre/support-resources-higher-education/>

- 13.6 The Student Contract will contain clear statements specifying precisely the offer to the student and details of the commitment the student is making to the organisation. Any changes to the student's circumstances will automatically require a full review of the Student Contract. Applicants with additional needs that are identified part way through their course of study will be counselled and guided through an assessment process to establish how they can be supported through the remainder of their course.

14 Data Protection

- 14.1 UCS will handle data and information in a manner that ensures that it safeguards individuals and personal data. Information will always be managed in a manner that complies with our Data Protection Policy. All staff involved in admissions will have received training that enables them to discharge their responsibilities in relation to data protection.
- 14.2 UCS may share applicant data with programme delivery partners where the partner is directly involved in the admissions process. All such third parties are prohibited from using an applicant's personal information except for this purpose, and they are required to maintain the confidentiality of this information.

15 Fraudulent Applications

- 15.1 UCS cannot admit applicants on the strength of information believed to be fraudulent and reserves the right to reject or cancel an application under these circumstances.
- 15.2 UCS also reserves the right to:
- request additional information to verify an application
 - place the application process on hold while investigating the alleged fraudulent application
 - withdraw the application / place if it is proven, or if the organisation has reasonable belief that the information provided is false, or if the applicant / student refuses to provide the requested information
 - terminate a student's registration if he / she is found at a later stage to have submitted a fraudulent application
 - notify UCAS of the action it has taken in respect to the application
- 15.3 All students will be required to present original academic and personal documentation at enrolment prior to the start of the programme of study. Veterinary Nursing students cannot be enrolled with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons until original documentation has been presented and copied. Delays in providing this information may prevent completion of required work

practice. Under-graduate students enrolling on a 'Top-up' programme or transferring with prior credits will be required to provide a transcript or similar documentary evidence of prior study.

- 15.4 All documentation is verified by UCS admissions staff. If any information relevant to the application is found to be fraudulent, inconsistent with the application or missing, the application will be deemed void, and the offer of a place may be rescinded.

16 Criminal Convictions

- 16.1 UCS requires applicants to declare any relevant unspent criminal convictions. We will use the information declared relating to relevant criminal convictions to ensure that we fulfil the organisation's responsibilities and obligations for the safeguarding of children, young people and adults who engage with our staff and students.
- 16.2 Applicants are required to declare any "relevant" unspent criminal convictions in the Next Steps Registration and at any time prior to enrolment. Where "relevant" is defined as 'crimes involving drugs and crimes against the person'. Any student arrested, or convicted of a 'relevant' criminal offence during their course of study is required to declare it immediately to the Head of Wellbeing. It is advisable that any student interviewed under caution for a relevant offence notifies the UCS Admissions Team to enable us to fulfil our safeguarding obligations.
- 16.3 Applications are initially checked by the academic teams, to ensure that they meet entry requirements and other basic expectations for the programme. The academic team are not aware of criminal offences at the initial consideration of suitability for the programme.
- 16.4 Where an applicant declares a criminal conviction at registration or prior to enrolment, the applicant will be asked to provide written details of the nature of the offence (conviction notices and any information about whether conviction(s) are 'spent' including dates, the sentence imposed and the name of the court, with a copy of any date). This information is reviewed by UCS Student Support and Safeguarding Coordinator. The applicant may also be asked to give details of their Probation Officer and to give their consent for the Student Support and safeguarding Coordinator to contact him / her to obtain the Probation Officer's views as to the likely danger or otherwise of the applicant's behaviour to other students and staff.
- 16.5 When the information detailed in 16.4 is received, the Student Support and Safeguarding Coordinator will consider the information provided and will complete the UCS Risk Assessment. In doing so, they will refer to the Child Protection and the organisation's Safeguarding Policy and Procedure. The Head of Admissions (or nominee) will liaise with the Head of Student Support and / or the Assistant Principal - Higher Education and a Vice Principal to consider whether the conviction is of sufficient seriousness to warrant refusal of a place.
- 16.6 Liaison and consultation will always occur if the following convictions are declared:
- 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

- Offences listed in the Sex Offences Act 2003
 - The unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing, trafficking, possession or with intent to supply
 - Offences involving firearms, knives and weapons
 - Offences involving arson
 - Offences listed in the Terrorism Act 2006
- 16.7 The Dean of Higher Education (or in their absence either the Assistant Principal or Senior Curriculum lead) will have discretion to refuse admission for reasons not covered by this list where they determine that there are sufficient grounds on the basis of risk for withdrawing the offer of a place. In all cases the confidentiality of the applicant will be maintained, and personal information will only be made available on a need-to-know basis.
- 16.8 The decision, whether made by the Head of Admissions or by a group, will be communicated direct to the applicant with an appropriate reason for rejection provided.
- 16.9 If an applicant is found to have a relevant offence which was not declared at the point of registration or enrolment process, the application may be considered fraudulent. Applicants who submit fraudulent applications may be reported to UCAS and have all applications withdrawn for the remainder of the academic year.
- 16.10 Any student who is arrested or convicted of a relevant criminal offence – during the course of their studies is required to disclose this and the process outlined above (16.4 to 16.9) will be implemented. It is advisable that any student interviewed under caution for a relevant offence notifies the Dean of Higher Education by email and also to degrees@sparsholt.ac.uk to enable us to fulfil our safeguarding obligations. For clarity the organisation will not assume any level of guilt.
- 16.11 Veterinary Nursing applicants are required to declare any criminal convictions and should be aware that entry onto the register of the RCVS as either a Registered Veterinary Nurse or Student Veterinary Nurse may be refused depending on the conviction.

17 Complaints or Appeals

- 17.1 If applicants feel that the process has not been followed or the decision reached by the organisation is unfair or incorrect, they have the right of appeal or complaint, for more information see UCS Complaints and Feedback Policy which can be accessed at <https://www.sparsholt.ac.uk/policies-reports/> Appeals should be put in writing and submitted to feedback@sparsholt.ac.uk
- 17.2 Applicants who have been unsuccessful are welcome to re-apply during Clearing for alternative courses if they feel that is suitable and where they have taken into account the reason that their original application was unsuccessful.