



Admission of Applicants with Criminal Convictions Policy

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 This policy aims to ensure that the University of Northampton meets its moral and legal obligations (e.g. GDPR, Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) in relation to the assessment of applicants with criminal convictions.
- 1.2 This policy provides the framework to determine whether an applicant is required to disclose criminal convictions as part of their application and how a declaration (where required) will be handled during the application process.
- 1.3 This policy aims to ensure that no prospective applicants to Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS) programmes are disadvantaged by declaring a criminal conviction. All applicants are treated fairly and transparently through the admissions process.

2.0 Purpose and scope

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to:
 - Applicants who apply (via UCAS, DfE, agents, partners or direct) for a programme of study at the University of Northampton.
 - Applicants who have applied to the university but have not yet commenced (e.g. received an offer).
 - Applicants who apply to study at partner institutions (Collaborative Partners).
- 2.2 This policy is applicable to all University of Northampton programmes, regardless of location and mode of study.
- 2.3 This policy works in conjunction with the Admissions Policy, Admissions Guidance, Student Code of Conduct, Student Disciplinary Policy and the University of Northampton Academic Regulations.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 A non-DBS programme is defined as a programme which does not require the applicant to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service Check prior to enrolment.

- 3.2 A DBS Programme is defined as a programme which requires applicants to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (and potentially other documentation such as a suitability declaration or probation check) which is deemed satisfactory in order to enrol onto the programme.
- 3.3 For the purposes of this policy, where an individual role is named, this refers to that role or a nominee.
- 3.4 For the purposes of this policy a criminal conviction may include a conviction, caution, warning, reprimand or any other offence which would appear on the required DBS check.

4.0 Key principles

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 The University of Northampton does not make moral judgements in its assessment of criminal convictions.
- 4.1.2 Information relating to criminal convictions of an applicant are only released to staff at the University of Northampton who require the information on a “need to know” basis.
- 4.1.3 The decision of the Criminal Convictions Panel is final.
- 4.1.4 All applications are assessed for their academic suitability for their chosen programme. If the applicant fails to meet the required academic criteria or other criteria (e.g. interview assessment), the application will be rejected through the standard process.
- 4.1.5 If the Criminal Convictions Panel decides to admit an applicant with a criminal conviction, this decision is based solely on the applicant’s suitability to study the chosen programme and does not guarantee acceptance into employment in the students chosen field or registration for relevant professional bodies/organisations upon graduation.
- 4.1.6 The University recognises that information regarding an applicant’s criminal conviction which is received anonymously or by a third party might be inaccurate or of a vexatious nature and will be treated with caution and assessed on a case-by-case basis. Where applicable the standard process will be followed.
- 4.1.7 Criminal convictions acquired outside of the UK will be assessed according to the corresponding offence in English Law. Applicants who require a visa to allow them to study in the UK are expected to offer the same level of disclosure as UK or UK resident applicants.

4.1.8 If the applicant does not commence their studies at the University of Northampton, copies of all information pertaining to a criminal conviction will be destroyed after the last permitted date of enrolment. If the applicant commences a course, information relating to the criminal conviction will be destroyed after their course is completed, or they have otherwise withdrawn from their studies.

4.2 Non-DBS Programmes

4.2.1 Applicants to Non-DBS programmes are not required to declare criminal convictions on their application or during the application/admissions process.

4.2.2 Applicants to Non-DBS Programmes may be required to declare unspent criminal convictions during other processes however these processes fall outside the scope of this policy.

4.3 DBS Programmes

4.3.1 UCAS applicants to DBS-Programmes are required to declare whether they have any criminal convictions which would appear on an enhanced DBS check at the point of application. However, at the point of application they are not required to declare the specific details (e.g. type, sentence) of their criminal conviction(s).

4.3.2 Applicants who are convicted of a criminal conviction (including cautions, reprimands, warnings etc) which would appear on an enhanced DBS check between completing the required DBS check and enrolling on their programme must immediately inform the University of Northampton Admissions Office. The conviction will be considered following the standard procedure.

4.3.3 The University of Northampton reserves the right to prevent new students enrolling onto specific DBS programmes if they do not complete a necessary DBS check before enrolment or if they are found to have a criminal record which was not previously declared.

4.3.4 The successful completion of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is a requirement of all courses involving direct contact with children, young people or vulnerable adults. The University of Northampton reserves the right to reject an applicant or withdraw a student where a DBS check is completed after enrolment and subsequently deems a student unsuitable for their chosen programme

4.3.5 Once enrolled students on DBS programmes will be required to self-declare any changes in their circumstances at regular points (e.g. enrolment, prior to placement) during their studies.

4.4 Partner Programmes

- 4.4.1 Applicants to partner institutions (Collaborative Partners) are required to adhere to the relevant policies at the partner college.
- 4.4.2 All Collaborative Partners are required to have admissions with criminal conviction policies and procedures which are appropriate for their location.

5.0 Applicants to DBS Programmes

- 5.1 UCAS applicants to DBS programmes are required to state on their application whether they have any criminal convictions which would appear on an enhanced DBS check.
- 5.2 Applicants who have declared that they have a criminal conviction(s) on their application will not be asked to disclose the nature of their criminal conviction.
- 5.3 Applicants who do not meet the initial academic entry criteria will be rejected following the standard process.
- 5.4 Applicants who meet the initial academic entry criteria will be sent a Criminal Convictions and DBS Letter which outlines the process for assessing Criminal Convictions.
- 5.5 All applicants who are successful in receiving an offer (meet academic entry criteria and where applicable meet other criteria tested at interview) from us and choose the University of Northampton as their FIRM choice will be contacted to complete a DBS check (and complete additional processes where required e.g. Suitability Declaration) prior to the commencement of their programme.
- 5.6 Upon receipt of DBS checks (and additional requirements such as Suitability Declaration or Prohibition Check) which indicate a criminal conviction OR in cases where we have had to contact the applicant directly (e.g. DBS not completed early enough) to provide details of their criminal convictions to the University we will initiate the formation of a Criminal Convictions Panel (CCP).
- 5.7 Applicants to DBS programmes who do not disclose details of their criminal convictions (when requested) which are subsequently discovered may result in the offer of a place being withdrawn and/or terminated from the programme of study.
- 5.8 The Admissions team will refer the details of the criminal conviction to the admissions tutor for the programme.

5.9 The admissions tutor organises for the relevant CCP to convene to assess the criminal conviction.

6.0 Criminal Convictions Panel (CCP)

6.1 A Criminal Convictions Panel (CCP) will convene in the below circumstances:

- Where an applicant to a DBS Programme's DBS check has indicated a criminal conviction.
- Where an applicant has been asked to declare their criminal convictions directly to the University of Northampton (e.g. DBS not completed early enough).

6.2 The CCP must have at least two members with at least one being the Chair / Deputy Chair. The panel can include:

- Executive Dean (Chair)
- Dean or Deputy Dean (Chair or Deputy Chair)
- Programme Admissions Tutor or Programme Leader (Deputy Chair)
- Faculty Admissions Tutors or Programme Leaders
- A representative from the relevant practice setting
- Head of Admissions
- Head of Student Services
- Academic Registrar and Director of Student and Academic Services

6.3 The CCP will take into consideration (where applicable):

- The individual circumstances of the case (including length of time since the offence)
- The nature of the offence, and whether relevant to the programme
- The recommendation of any referees
- Mitigating or aggravating circumstances
- The likelihood of reoffending
- Professional or regulatory body requirements/advice
- Placement provider requirements/advice
- The ability of the applicant to successfully complete the programme including placement requirements

6.4 The CCP may do the following (where applicable):

- Request applicant attends a DBS/Criminal Conviction interview
- Request applicant to complete a reflective statement
- Request applicant to provide references
- Request additional information from probation officers or social workers
- Seek advice from professional/regulatory/statutory bodies (e.g. Department for Education, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council etc) on the suitability of the applicant
- Seek advice from placement providers (e.g. NHS Trusts, Schools etc) on the suitability of the applicant

- Seek advice or information from a third party who is relevant to the case
- 6.5 The Chair/Deputy Chair (or nominee) will determine the required process and request admissions contact the applicant to attend interviews or provide further documentation.
- 6.6 The Chair/Deputy Chair (or nominee) or admissions on behalf of the chair/deputy chair will liaise with third parties (e.g. probation officers, professional bodies, placement providers etc) where required.
- 6.7 The CCP may take such action relating to the application as it considers appropriate. This includes, but is not limited to:
- Permit the applicant to enrol on their chosen programme (subject to any other conditions being met)
 - Permit the applicant to enrol subject to satisfactory completion of a DBS (and subject to any other conditions being met)
 - Reject the applicant
 - Withdraw a student in circumstances where the CCP convenes after enrolment
 - Suggest an alternative programme
- 6.8 The Chair/Deputy Chair will complete a Criminal Conviction Assessment Form.
- 6.9 The applicant will be informed of the outcome and the reasons for the decision.
- 6.10 The Chair/Deputy Chair will provide all relevant documentation to Admissions who will store the information on the applicants file in alignment with retention requirements as detailed in 4.1.8.

7.0 Key Responsibilities

- 7.1 All applicants to DBS programmes are required to comply with the Admission of Applicants with Criminal Convictions Policy.
- 7.2 All University of Northampton staff involved in the admission of students studying DBS programmes are required to comply with Admission of Applicants with Criminal Convictions Policy, guidance and processes.
- 7.3 The Admissions team are responsible for ensuring that applicants who declare that they have a criminal conviction on their application receive a detailed process letter explaining how the University will handle their declaration.
- 7.4 The Admissions team are responsible for ensuring that all applicants who apply for DBS programmes and make the University of Northampton their FIRM choice receive guidance on how to apply for their DBS check.

- 7.5 The Chair/Deputy Chair is responsible for the formation of the CCP and management of the criminal convictions assessment process. Admissions will support the Chair/Deputy Chair in the collation and requesting of required documentation from applicants and third parties (e.g. trusts, professional bodies).
- 7.6 The Head of Admissions is responsible for the oversight of the Admission of Applicants with Criminal Convictions Policy including the monitoring of effectiveness and reporting of statistical data to relevant University committees.

8.0 Links to related UN Policies/Guidance/Regulations

- 8.1 Admissions Policy
- 8.2 Admissions Guidance
- 8.3 Academic Regulations

9.0 Links to related external documents (e.g. QAA)

- 9.1 UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access

10.0 Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix 1: Summary Sheet

11.0 Annexures

- 11.1 Annexure 1: Criminal Convictions Process Letter
- 11.2 Annexure 2: Request for Criminal Conviction Details Letter
- 11.3 Annexure 3: Criminal Convictions Details Form
- 11.4 Annexure 4: Request to Attend Criminal Conviction/DBS Interview and Provide Further Information Letter
- 11.5 Annexure 5: Criminal Conviction Assessment Form
- 11.6 Annexure 6: Criminal Convictions and DBS Admissions Flowchart

Appendix 1: Summary Sheet

Policy Title:	
Admission of Students with Criminal Convictions Policy	
Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):	
To meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access; best practice recommendations related to the Rehabilitation of Offenders and dealing with applicants and existing students with criminal convictions	
Owner and Department:	
Dawn Mains, Head of Admissions	
Principal contact:	
Dawn Mains, Head of Admissions	
Dissemination and implementation plan:	
Via SEC and SSECs Via Web	
Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):	Senate 2013-14
Date of Senate approval:	2 July 2014
Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:	September 2014 for new and continuing students
Proposed date of annual update:	June 2022
Date of last annual update:	June 2023
Proposed date of full review:	July 2025
Date of last full review:	n/a
Version number and date:	2.0