



<b>Admissions</b>	<b>Policy Name:</b>	Admissions
	<b>Policy Reference</b>	LeD02
	<b>Applies To:</b>	AoG Inc.
	<b>Approved By:</b>	Board of Directors
	<b>Approval Date:</b>	26/11/2020
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	<b>Policy Lead:</b>	Vice Principal (
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<b>PART 1 – Policy Statement:</b>
AoG Inc. is committed to an admissions policy which aims to help, train, equip and form the next generation of Christian leaders through appropriate training for ministry (understood in the widest sense of that term) and the development of critical skills that enable students to engage with, analyse and evaluate theory and praxis. The College will support this through a range of programmes, significant among which are the academic programmes – BA, GradDip, MA, DMin, MPhil and PhD – all of which are validated by the University of Chester.
<b>Background/Introduction/Statement/Preamble</b>
The Board of Assemblies of God Incorporated has formed an admissions policy to be operationally outworked which will support our overall leadership development goals and objectives.
<b>Definitions</b>
On-campus - refers to all students who will attend the College campus for teaching during the intensive weeks.
<b>Scope (if relevant)</b>
<b>Objectives/Purpose</b>
The College expects, normally, to admit students who can demonstrate both their ability to complete the academic programme or suitability to train for, or to further their studies in Christian ministry. <sup>1</sup>
In line with our access and participation priorities, <sup>2</sup> the College is also committed to admitting students from underrepresented groups.
<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>
The College Dean has responsibility for delivery of the Admissions policy and procedures.

<sup>1</sup> We will also consider candidates from non-Church backgrounds, where they have legitimate reasons for wanting to study within the particular ethos of the College/AoG, and are aware of the implications of studying within that ethos.

<sup>2</sup> See the Access and Participation Statement on the College website and in the Appendices.

<b>PART 2 – Version History of the Policy:</b>		
<b>Policy Author</b>	<b>Version #</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
R.Ridler	1.0	New Document

**PART 3 – Procedures**

**3.1 General Criteria**

In line with the two key admissions criteria – normally, a demonstration of suitability to train for, or further their studies in, Christian leadership and ministry, and the ability to complete the academic programme (though see note 1 below) – the College require the following for all students:

- Sympathy with the ethos and priorities of AoG.
- Two satisfactory references, including at least one pastoral reference.<sup>3</sup>

**3.2 BA Criteria**

For students who wish to join the BA programme, the following would also apply:

Entrance requirements for admission to the BA (Hons) programme in Year 1 are, normally, 2 A-levels or equivalent.

Mature applicants (21+), who do not have formal qualifications, may be admitted to the programme if the Admissions Department and Board of Studies deem them able to complete the programme successfully. As part of this assessment applicants will normally be required to submit an essay on a Biblical subject.

For on-campus students and distance-learning students, a satisfactory interview would normally be required.

Prospective students are also required to demonstrate an appropriate proficiency in the English language (see Appendix, English Language Requirements, below).

Prior to enrolment, prospective students will also be required to undergo a DBS check to ensure prospective students’ suitability for working with children and other vulnerable groups.

**3.3 MA Criteria**

For students who wish to join the MA programme, the following are also required:

One of the following:

- A recognised first degree in Theology or a cognate subject (normally second class honours or above); or
- A first degree in a non-theological area and a successfully completed Graduate Diploma; or

<sup>3</sup> The pastoral reference will normally be from a Church leader. Where a candidate is not from a Church background another appropriate character reference will be acceptable.

- At least two years of senior leadership experience in a Church or mission context.
- A satisfactory interview.

Demonstration of appropriate proficiency in the English language (see Appendix, English Language Requirements, below).

Information regarding Postgraduate Research Degrees (DMin, MPhil, PhD) is available separately. Students on these programmes go through a process of admission with the College, but need, too, to be approved by the University of Chester, before being admitted to the programme.

Applications for Accredited Prior Certificated Learning and Accredited Prior Experiential Learning will be considered. These will need to be submitted to the University of Chester for approval.

### 3.4 Information

Information relating to all aspects of College life, including details of programmes, fees, payment deadlines, are publicly available on the College website. We recognise that choosing a Higher Education programme and institution is an important decision, and it is our aim to provide clear, full and accurate information both before and during the application and admissions process, to enable candidates to make an informed choice about whether the College is the right place for them based on reliable evidence.

We will do our best to ensure the accuracy of all published information. Sometimes, though, changes in staffing and in academic programmes, including modules offered, cannot be avoided. Where that is the case, we will inform prospective students as quickly as we can, to enable them, if required, to review their decisions.

### PART 4 - Linked Policies:

Policy	Number #	Summary
Fitness to Study (Learn)	LeD01	Fitness to Study (Learn)

### PART 5 - Appendices:

Number #	Appendix Name
1	Admissions Process
2	Access & Participation Statement

## APPENDIX 1 - ADMISSIONS PROCESS

### The Admissions Process

- Applications are made, in the first instance, to the Admissions Team, which is headed up by the College Dean. Applications, together with references, are then submitted for approval to the Board of Studies, which decides, on the basis of the published criteria (which includes the content of references), whether or not to proceed with the application, and invite the applicant for interview.
- Applicants will be given official notification of the outcome of their application in writing. This will include details of whether or not an applicant has been invited for interview. Unsuccessful applicants will receive a courteous and respectful explanation of the decision, explained in terms of the entry requirements, references and any other relevant criteria. The letter will also contain grounds on which an appeal against the decision may be considered.

### Interview

- The interview serves two important functions, and students being called for an interview will be made aware of these things in advance. First, the interview is informational – it gives students information, and answers questions about the College and enables students to decide whether or not the College is the place for them. Second, the interview is evaluative. Students who are called for an interview will already have had their qualifications and references accepted; the purpose of the interview is to confirm the applicants' suitability, and whether they are serious about study and are committed to completing the programme. We will also check certificates, passport details, eligibility for student finance, etc. An interview may also give a borderline applicant the opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the programme.
- Students are usually given an indication of the outcome of the interview before leaving and this will be followed by a letter, usually within two weeks, confirming that outcome, and including any conditions that the candidate is required to satisfy.
- Where an applicant has not been successful, the reasons for arriving at that decision will be explained courteously. Information will also be given about the grounds, and procedure, for making an appeal against the decision (see below).

### Offer Letter

- Successful applicants will receive an Offer Letter, and will be given further information about the College. This will include, in a durable medium, details that have already been given, including information about applicable fees, and about the programme of study. It will also include information about assessment, timetables, key dates for the year. Much of this information is publicly available on the College website. This information, together with the letter confirming acceptance, will constitute our contractual commitment to the candidate. Once a place has been offered, the College is obliged to keep that place open, subject to the candidate meeting any conditions set out in the Offer Letter. And we are committed, too, insofar as it is reasonably possible, and excluding circumstances outside our control and our knowledge at the time, to deliver the programme as advertised in the Offer Letter and accompanying information.

- Where relevant, our Disability Officer will also be in touch, with details of DSA.<sup>4</sup>

### Acceptance Letter

- Successful candidates will also be sent an Acceptance Letter, which they will be asked to sign and return if they wish to accept the offer on the basis of the information supplied. This should be returned with the appropriate acceptance fee. From the date of signing and returning the Acceptance Letter, candidates have a fourteen day 'cooling off' period, during which they may cancel the agreement, and receive a full refund of the acceptance fee. After that fourteen-day period, the acceptance fee is non-refundable.
- Once a candidate has been accepted, and has returned the Acceptance Letter and acceptance fee, the Admissions Team will maintain regular contact. This is particularly important for those who may be accepted a long time before beginning the programme of study. Where there are unavoidable changes to the information that was given to a candidate at the time of acceptance, those changes will be made clear to the candidate, and his or her express consent to continue the process obtained.

### Tuition Fees

- The obligation to pay tuition fees for the first year begins from the time of his or her enrolment on the programme. The College is committed to offering the programmes and modules as advertised where it is reasonably possible. Where changes occur prior to enrolment, we will seek to minimise their impact on prospective students' learning opportunities and experience, and where those changes are significant we will inform prospective students and set out a range of options. Students will be made fully aware of any additional information and changes to information already given before enrolment.
- Fees charged will be those for the relevant academic year, as published by the College.
- The College reserves the right to make reasonable adjustments to fees annually. Any adjustments will be communicated to students in good time.

### Appeals following an unsuccessful admissions outcome

- Where an application has not been successful, we aim to handle any appeal based on the grounds for the decision, or on the way the application was processed, as efficiently as possible. All appeals will be treated seriously and in an understanding way; and there will be no repercussions or discrimination as a result of making an appeal.
- A letter explaining the reasons for rejecting an application will be sent, normally within two weeks of the application being received, or in cases where the applicant has been invited for an interview, within two weeks of the interview. The unsuccessful applicant may request further explanation, and this, again, will normally be provided within two weeks of the request being received by the College. Any appeal must be made in writing, by the applicant him- or herself, within three weeks of receiving the original decision. After that, an appeal may not be considered.
- Applicants may appeal a decision where new information, not included in the original application, is available. Additional letters of support and further references may also be provided. An appeal might also be made in cases where evidence can be given that the application was not processed correctly. Appeals against decisions based on professional

<sup>4</sup> For further details of the role of the Disability Officer, and of provision for students with disabilities, see our Disability Policy on the [College](#) website.

judgement of an applicant's ability to complete the academic programme or the College Diploma will be considered, only in the light of additional information.

- We will normally respond to an appeal, in writing, within three weeks. If elements of the appeal require further investigation, that will be explained, and a date given by which a full response to the appeal might be expected.

#### English Language Requirements

- It is a requirement that all students admitted on to programmes for which we seek designation for student finance, have sufficient competence in the English language to engage with, and benefit from, their chosen programme of study.
- The guidelines have set the minimum language requirements at CEFR level B2 (which has been assessed to be equivalent to IELTS 5.5–6.5).

#### Students for whom English is not their first language

- Our current admissions policy (in line with that of the University of Chester) requires that students for whom English is not their first language demonstrate proficiency equivalent to IELTS 6.0 (UG) and IELTS 6.5 (PG).

#### Students for whom English is their first language

- In our view, and pending further guidance, we do not consider it reasonable or practical to require all applicants for whom English is their first language to undergo an English language test designed to assess the proficiency of those for whom English is not their first language (e.g. IELTS, CEFR). We do recognise, though, that some of those who do speak English as a first language may not have the required proficiency.
- According to one guide, those proficient at CEFR level B2 (Vantage) 'can use English effectively, with some fluency, in a range of contexts'.<sup>5</sup> This is further elaborated; they
- Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation.
- Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
- Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.<sup>6</sup>
- This policy amendment formalises procedures that allow us to assess whether applicants demonstrate appropriate proficiency. Where, in our view, they are not appropriately proficient, we will require applicants to undergo further English language study.
- Currently, at UG level, we admit two groups of students: those with appropriate Level 3 qualifications (A-levels, etc.), and mature students (over 21) who do not require formal academic qualifications. In all cases students are formally interviewed by admissions staff.
- It seems reasonable to assume that those who have Level 3 qualifications, which have been taught and assessed in English, satisfy the English language requirements. For others, the level of English language proficiency can be assessed through:
- The application form, which requires a written personal statement, outlining aspects of the applicant's life journey up to the point of application.
- A formal interview, which includes discussion of the course and aspects of its content.

<sup>5</sup> *Introductory Guide to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English Language Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Introductory Guide*, p. 5.

- An assignment on a subject related to the programme of study, which is submitted to and marked by College faculty.
- In our view, those three things allow us to make a formal assessment of whether or not an applicant satisfies the key criteria for CEFR level B2, and so has the required English language proficiency to be admitted to the programme.

#### Post Graduate

- As with UG applicants, it seems reasonable to assume that those who have Level 3 and above qualifications, and in particular a bachelor's degree, which have been taught and assessed in English, satisfy the English language requirements. For those with no formal academic background, as with UG applicants, we ask for a personal statement and also an essay related to the chosen programme of study. We also carry out formal interviews of all PG applicants.

## APPENDIX 2 - ACCESS & PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

### Our Aims

This statement sets out two key aims of the College:

- First, the College is committed to widening access to, and participation in, Higher Education (HE). This entails making the possibility of involvement in HE more widely known, increasing availability and removing potential barriers to study. This has two main aspects: promoting HE and encouraging the idea of study on an HE programme among those who would not otherwise think about, consider themselves suitably qualified to apply for, or feel able to complete such a programme; and ensuring equality of access to HE across age, gender, ethnicity, social and educational background, and disability.
- Second, we are committed to work with those who study with us in order to enhance their potential for employment.

### Widening Access and Participation

- We encourage wider participation through our involvement with groups and organisations outside the usual HE forum. This includes having staff and faculty members speak to churches and conferences, both within our immediate constituency (Assemblies of God Local Churches) and within other church groups. This raises the profile of pursuing further training and continuing professional development through appropriate academic programmes. A significant number of our current students have come to the College through this means. Most current students at the College are also involved with churches as part of their course, and this, too, raises the profile of the College and of academic study among a wider audience. Former students also publicise the College and we have recently had applications from clients who have been helped by homeless projects, supported by former students.
- Students are involved in Church Placements, most weekends. This involves them in church initiatives to the wider community, which contributes more generally to the public good. Their presence within the community also makes HE more visible by providing a positive model to those who might not otherwise come into contact with HE, or consider it as an option. Annual Missions Trips, some of which are within the UK, likewise, enable students to become involved in community projects, and also raise the profile of HE.
- It is planned that a significant part of our advertising budget (currently £10,000 per annum) will be used to attend churches, conferences and other points of contact, where HE might not normally be on the agenda, in order to promote both the benefits of HE more generally, and the HE provision offered by the College.
- Whilst we encourage excellence in our academic standards, we are willing to admit mature undergraduate students, who may not have formal Level 3 qualifications, but who show, through conversations at interview and the submission of an essay, that they have the potential to complete the programme. The current overall level of students at the College without formal entry-level qualifications is 38%. Several students come with no academic qualifications at all. In 2017-18, 31% of Level 4 students entered the College without Level 3 qualifications, and all went on to achieve grades of over 50% at the end of Level 4, with a third achieving grades of over 60%. Continuation rates among full-time students is almost 90% according to our most recent TEF metrics. There is no noticeable



difference in continuation rates between those with and without Level 3 qualifications on entry. In 2018, of those who graduated with an honours degree, 30% had entered College with Non-tariff qualifications, and of those, 80% of those attained a second-class degree or above, with 60% attaining a 2.1.

- There is also provision for MA applicants without formal qualifications to enrol on the basis of appropriate church and leadership experience.
- We are committed to widening access and participation across age groups. The proportion of mature students at the College is significant: 62% of our current students are aged over 21 and 41% are over 30. This percentage is reflected in the 2017–18 cohort, where 23% were over 40 on entry, and 10% were over 50. It is clear that those who have not studied for many years find the programmes more challenging. Nevertheless, an analysis of data over the last few years shows that over 70% of those aged 40 and above on entry achieved grades of above 50%. Of those who graduated in 2018, 35% were over 40, and half of those were over 50.
- We also seek to widen access and participation by keeping our tuition fees at a low level. Fees for our BA programme in 2019–20 are currently set at £6950, and these are among the lowest in the sector. There is a substantial dependence among our students on student finance. All eligible students apply for student finance, and a significant proportion of full-time on-campus students receive higher levels of maintenance. Of our current students, 19% are from the lowest undergraduate participation areas (POLAR quintile 1), which is substantially higher than the national figure of 10%. By contrast, only 10% are from the highest participation areas (POLAR quintile 5), and this is very much lower than the 34% national figure. To help students not in receipt of student finance small bursaries may be available. We believe, however, that the best way to help current and potential students is to keep fees low and that means that the opportunity to provide bursaries is very limited.
- Amongst current students at the College, 32% are from Black and Ethnic Minority groups, while 68% are White British. We very much appreciate the ethnic and cultural mix of students. There is no significant difference in the overall levels of performance of different ethnic groups. In 2018, 47% of graduating students were from Black and Ethnic Minority groups.
- Potential students are made aware of what is involved in pursuing a degree programme. Those who are thinking about taking a HE course with us are invited to a ‘Taster Day’, where, over a two-day period, they have a tour of the College, talk to current students and sample something of student life, including a sample lecture. The subsequent application process includes a formal interview, in which information about the programmes of study, and practical issues relating to it are discussed, and options for overcoming potential difficulties are considered. There is also a programme of induction that helps students to be aware of the responsibilities of participating in a HE programme.
- Most of our students enrol on a full-time, campus-based programme. This includes teaching, but also wider personal and spiritual formation, through campus-based activities. We realise, though, that this is not possible for all students, and we offer several variations, including a part-time campus-based programme and full- and part-time Distance Learning options. In recent years, numbers on the Distance Learning programmes have grown. This provides access to HE provision to students who would not, otherwise, be able, often for practical reasons, to study for a degree. We are

currently working on enhancing our Distance Learning provision, through better access to key resources, audio and video files of on-site teaching, and increased direct engagement with students via VLE.

- We also have adapted the delivery of our Level 4 modules and made them available to the wider public as 'short-courses', in which visitors sit in lectures alongside our undergraduate students. These short courses are not validated, but they introduce a wider audience to the possibility of engaging in academic learning, and so, again help to widen access and participation.
- Widening access involves, too, offering appropriate student support, in order to secure progression and successful completion of their programme of study. Students receive pastoral support from the Pastoral Team (headed up by the College Dean), through mentoring groups led by members of staff, and through the general availability of members of faculty and staff. Academic support takes the form of study skills sessions, substantial help from the academic team. We will seek to work with students to resolve issues that may arise with their course and offer a range of options, which may include changing the mode of learning, to enable them to complete their academic programme. In our recent TEF metrics we received a rating for 'Academic Support' of over 94% (last year it was 92%). Our goal is to enable all students to perform to the best of their ability and to achieve their potential.
- There is considerable support, too, for students with learning disabilities, primarily through our dedicated Disability Officer, who applies the College's Disability Policy. Students with learning disabilities are contacted on acceptance, and where necessary helped through the process of post-16 assessments. Through staff training sessions and regular communication, all lecturers are made aware of the importance of taking learning needs into account in their teaching, including their use of appropriately revised learning resources and visual aids. All students with learning disabilities are given extra time to submit assignments. Currently, 16% of our undergraduate student body have diagnosed learning disabilities. Both historically and within the present cohort, the performance of students with learning disabilities is consistent with that of other students who entered College with similar qualifications.
- The Disability Officer, working with other staff, will also offer support to students with physical disabilities, to ensure access to teaching and learning. Most teaching areas are on the ground floor, with full wheelchair access. The Chapel and part of the Research Centre is on the first floor. These are both served by a lift. There is, currently, one student with a stated physical disability amongst on-campus students, and special provision for accommodation has been made.
- Our goal is to make the training that we offer, which has the degree programme at its centre, available and accessible to a widening range of students. A significant proportion of our students come to us without formal academic qualifications, and many are unlikely, otherwise, to access HE. Given the range of backgrounds from which our students are drawn, and the high proportion of successful outcomes, we believe that our goal is largely being fulfilled. We will, nevertheless, continue to work hard to increase access and improve our provision.

### Preparing for Employment

- The College aims to serve two main constituencies. First, we offer an Undergraduate programme, together with key formational elements, in order to provide theological and pastoral training for those who are seeking to serve churches and communities. Second, we offer post-graduate programmes that offer continuing professional development to those already in pastoral ministry or serving in related professions. Our Programme Specifications, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, include benchmarks relating to careers and employability, and we take our commitment to deliver on those benchmarks very seriously. According to the most recent TEF metrics, among those who come to the College as full-time undergraduate students, two-thirds go on to highly skilled employment or further study, and that figure increases to 95% for all forms of employment or further study.
- We also aim to prepare our students for future employment by including key formational elements, which are built into our provision, and enrich the academic programmes. So, for example, all of the teaching staff are involved, practically, in local churches, and they ensure that, while the degree programme is marked by academic excellence, it is also grounded in practical relevance and application. Classroom discussions, as well as assignments, will frequently include how particular topics may be related to contemporary life. Students are also given extensive experience of ministry through the integrated church placement elements of the undergraduate programme. All students participate, too, in annual Missions Trips, where they gain experience of working in teams alongside others, both from inside and outside the College, usually in a cross-cultural setting.
- The ethos of the College, which is reflected in the values clearly articulated through lectures, key formational and enrichment elements, opportunities for service within the community, reflects our commitment to service and to social justice that is part of our commitment to leadership formation. Through our programmes, and through the additional formational elements that the College offers, we believe we help our students to fulfil their potential, and encourage the practical skills and abilities that contribute towards their future employability, and with it, a significant contribution to service in the communities in which they will be working.