

Open College of the Arts (OCA)

Admissions Policy

Version no.	Status	Owner	Approved by	Date approved
1	Approved	Craig Dewis	OMG	08/03/2021
2	Approved	Craig Dewis	OMG - Chair's Action	24/11/2021

1. The purpose of this policy

- 1.1 This policy sets out OCA's approach to admission to courses, including any specific requirements to certain courses, English Language requirements, and Information Technology competency.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

- 2.1 This policy is applicable to all enquirers, applicants, and students at OCA on short courses, foundation courses, undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate degrees. Certain clauses within this policy may only be applicable for specific students.

3. Linked and other relevant policies and legislation

- 3.1 This policy is subject to OCA's Terms and Conditions, and forms part of the OCA Student Regulations.
- 3.2 Enquirers, applicants, or students under the age of 18 who are thinking of studying with OCA should refer to [OCA's Under 18s Admissions Policy](#) and Fitness to Study Policy.
- 3.3 Enquirers, applicants, and students who are applying with a relevant unspent criminal conviction should refer to OCAs Criminal Convictions Policy, which references the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

4. General Admissions Principles

- 4.1 OCA is an open access provider of courses; this means that with certain exceptions we do not require evidence of prior qualifications to study OCA courses. This principle applies to all courses that OCA runs; short courses, foundation courses, undergraduate degrees, and postgraduate degrees.
- 4.2 Certain courses and/or course units may have specific requirements on entry; please see below for specific clauses and requirements.

4.3 In addition to prior qualifications and learning accreditation, OCA specifies four general requirements for students to be admitted to its programmes:

4.3.1 English language competency and

4.3.2 Access to a desktop computer or laptop with internet access

4.3.3 Access to basic technology to document work, for example photographic, scanning, or recording equipment such as a smartphone

4.3.4 The ability to easily manage a range of basic functions through ICT (information and communications technology).

4.4 OCA reserves the right to refuse entry to any course and/or unit under specific circumstances.

5. Information and Communications Technology Requirements

5.1 OCA courses are designed to be studied online and at a distance. This means accessing online resources, participating in forum and other online activities, preparing digital work that can be shared with your tutor, and submitting for online assessment. Consequently, it is essential that students have the necessary ICT equipment and competencies.

5.2 Students will be expected to have:

5.2.1 A desktop computer or laptop with internet access that they are able to use regularly,

5.2.2 The ability to undertake a range of basic ICT competencies, as detailed below:

- Information - Browsing, researching, filtering information, evaluating information, storing and retrieving information, including from cloud storage
- Communication - Interacting through technologies, sharing information and content, engaging in online citizenship, collaborating through digital channels, netiquette, managing digital identity
- Content creation - Developing content, integrating and re-elaborating copyright and licences, programming
- Safety - Protecting devices, protecting personal data, protecting health, protecting the environment
- Problem solving - Solving technical problems, identifying needs and technological responses, innovating and creating using technology, identifying digital competency gaps

Source: [DIGCOMP: A Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competence in Europe](#), referenced by JISC.

5.3 As part of some course units at undergraduate level, students are required to use specified applications in addition to those referred to above. For example; Photoshop image editing software for photography course units; Final Cut Pro or similar for moving image course units; scorewriter programme Sibelius or Dorico for music course units; vector graphics software Adobe Illustrator for visual communications and graphic design course units.

Students are expected to have a basic grasp of any software required for their course and to learn more complex usage as necessary as they progress in their course.

- 5.4 OCA will consider exempting students from the requirement to have access to ICT in specified circumstances. These include through requirements as a result of a disability, laid out in a Needs Assessment, or as a result of studying in a secure environment. In all cases, the request will be considered on its own merits.

6. English Language Competency

- 6.1 Students whose first language is not English are required to provide evidence of English language competency as part of the enrolment process. All OCA course units and communications are conducted in English.
- 6.2 Students unable to study effectively and complete assignments as a result of their lack of competency in reading and writing English are not entitled to a refund of the course fee except within the initial cancellation period. OCA reserves the right to withdraw a student from the course unit if their English language ability is not as declared at the time of enrolment. OCA also reserves the right to withdraw a student from a course if it is deemed that their English language ability is insufficient to continue on the course.
- 6.3 For students whose first language is not English, OCA requires evidence of English for admission to a degree programme. OCA has a set standard of English Language ability set against the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages \(CEFR\)](#). This is set at a minimum level B1 of CEFR for OCA foundation courses and short courses, and a minimum level B2 for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees courses and units.
- 6.4 Enquirers and applicants for OCA foundation courses or short courses may supply any of the following for acceptance of entry to the course. These are an example of minimum standards. The below list is not meant to be exhaustive and alternatives may be accepted provided these meet the general requirements as outlined below and accompanied by equivalence from UK NARIC:
- 6.4.1 AS-Level grade A* to C, or above, or equivalent qualification in English. Where an international qualification is provided, an equivalency certificate from UK NARIC will be required or alternatively confirmation from the awarding institution that the qualification is equivalent to UK A-Levels or higher or,
- 6.4.2 Any certified English language test confirming the recipient is at CEFR level B1 standard or,
- 6.4.3 A national of a majority English speaking country as defined by UK Visas and Immigration in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) or,
- 6.4.4 A certificated [Duolingo English Test](#) scoring 60-85.
- 6.5 Enquirers and applicants for OCA undergraduate or postgraduate courses may supply any of the following for acceptance of entry to the course. These are an example of minimum standards. The below list is not meant to be exhaustive and alternatives may be accepted

provided these meet the general requirements as outlined below and accompanied by equivalence from UK NARIC:

6.5.1 A-Level grade A* to C, or above, or equivalent qualification in English. Where an international qualification is provided, an equivalency certificate from UK NARIC will be required or alternatively confirmation from the awarding institution that the qualification is equivalent to UK A-Levels or higher or,

6.5.2 Any certified English language test confirming the recipient is at CEFR level B2 standard or,

6.5.3 A national of a majority English speaking country as defined by UK Visas and Immigration in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) or,

6.5.4 Completion of an OCA foundation course, or unit/s on any of OCAs degree programmes or,

6.5.5 A certificated [Duolingo English Test](#) scoring 90-115.

6.6 Where enquirers, and/or applicants do not have any of the above examples, OCA recommends to take the [Duolingo English Test](#).

7. Specific Entry Requirements

7.1 BA (Hons) Music units

7.1.1 Students enrolling to the core unit on the BA (Hons) Music degree pathway, entitled Music 1: Composing Music, must provide evidence of having passed the [ABRSM Music Theory Grade 5](#) or an equivalent qualification. Students can study OCA's Foundations Music in lieu of [ABRSM Music Theory Grade 5](#) or an equivalent grade 5 Theory qualification. On completion of Music Foundations, a sample of their work will be reviewed by OCA's Programme Lead to ensure suitability for enrolling onto Music 1: Composing Music as part of the degree.

7.1.2 If students opt to enrol to any of the other units on the BA (Hons) Music degree pathway at level one (HE4), they must plan to obtain the relevant Theory Grade qualification whilst studying it in order to continue with the degree and enrol onto Music 1: Composing Music.

7.2 OCA Masters degrees

7.2.1 Enrolment to any of OCA's Masters degrees is subject to the following entry criteria. Students will normally be accepted onto courses, where they can apply and claim for 100 points, made up as follows:

- A degree in any subject - 40 points
- A degree in a relevant subject - 50 points
- Evidenced experience of working in any relevant creative industry or context - 50 points
- Certificated and/or other training below degree level equating to three years or more of study - 50 points

- Higher National Diploma/Foundation degree or equivalent in Art - 30 points
- Higher National Certificate or equivalent in Art - 20 points
- A-Level Art or equivalent - 10 points
- A written statement detailing reasons for wishing to join the course and what is hoped to be gained from it - 25 points*
- A portfolio of work produced during the last two years - 25 points*

*All applicants will be required to submit a minimum of a written statement and portfolio of artwork in order to be considered for the course.

Equivalency to the qualifications stated, include international qualifications provided these are accompanied by a UK NARIC equivalency certificate, and/or un-certificated training or work experience to an equivalent level. In all cases acceptance is at the discretion of Open College of the Arts.

7.2.2 OCA Masters programmes run through a cohort model and require a minimum number of students to run. Students who meet the above criteria will be issued with a conditional offer which will be made unconditional once the minimum number to run the course has been reached.

8. Accreditation of Prior Learning

8.1 Students can make an application of Accredited Prior Learning (APL) based on previous study. The learning must have taken place in the last 5 years and be relevant to the level and subject of study.

8.2 Exemption is not available from Level Three (HE6) courses. To apply for exemption from Level Two (HE5) you must also apply for and be awarded exemption from Level one (HE4).

8.3 Students awarded APCL / APEL credit must enrol on the relevant OCA course within 3 months of being notified of the APCL / APEL credit exemption.

8.4 Please be advised some of the degree pathways require core units to be completed ahead of elective units. You cannot apply / be awarded exemption from elective units unless you have successfully been exempted from (or studied) the core units.

8.5 All applications are reviewed by the Director for Learning and Teaching, and Head of Quality and Academic Support.

8.6 Accreditation of Prior Certified Learning (APCL)

8.6.1 Students applying for APCL (credit transfer) are asked to provide evidence that the learning has been completed. You will need to provide certificated originals of any transcripts in the post to:

Open College of the Arts
 Michael Young Arts Centre
 Unit 1A & 1B Redbrook Business Park

Wilthorpe Road
Barnsley
S75 1JN

8.6.2 If you are applying for exemption at Level One (HE4) you must also provide:

- Up to 12 digital images from your previous study with an explanatory statement for each image.
- Original certificate and transcripts. Please note no decision can be made without the evidence to show previous credits, levels and marks.
- APCL Application form and payment form

8.6.3 If you are applying for exemption at Level One (HE4) and Level Two (HE5) you must also provide the following:

- A portfolio of 10 to 12 pieces of work plus written material.
- Your written work must demonstrate contextual understanding including academic writing. This could be in the form of an essay / critical review.
- Original certificate and transcripts. Please note no decision can be made without the evidence to show previous credits, levels and marks.
- APCL Application form and payment form.

8.6.4 For an Honours degree the maximum APL is 66% of the total programme i.e 240 credits. You can send an APCL application to us at any time, and will usually receive an outcome between 1 - 2 months for an outcome. There is a standard fee of £250 for applying for APL, payable when you send the application form; if you are an UCA student or graduate this fee is waived.

8.6.5 If your credits have been achieved outside of the UK, you will need to obtain a Statement of Comparability report from UK [NARIC](#).

8.7 Accreditation of Experiential Learning (APEL)

8.7.1 Students applying for APEL are asked to provide a portfolio of relevant work. There is a standard £200 fee for *each unit* for which credit exemption is sought, whether your application is successful or not. For an Honours degree the maximum APL is 50% of the total programme i.e 180 credits. APEL applications are reviewed three times a year, with the following deadlines;

- March Review - Applications no later than 31st January
- July Review - Applications no later than 31st May
- November Review - Applications no later than 30th September

8.7.2 All applications for APEL must provide the following:

- You must submit a portfolio of work that covers similar things that the course has covered, section by section.
- You must write a short personal statement that explains your interest in your creative practice and learning and your learning experience.
- You must write and submit an essay that supports your application. For level one APEL the essay is 1000 words. For level 2 APEL an essay of 1500 – 2000 words is required.
- You must complete and submit an APEL Application form and payment form.

In addition the following requirements also apply, dependent upon subject area.

Students applying for exemption from Visual Arts courses (Creative Arts, Drawing, Fine Art, Graphic Design, Garden Design, Illustration, Interior Design, Painting, Textiles, Visual Communications) should submit a maximum of 10 images per course unit (supplied as JPG, TIFF, PNG, or PDF files) you are seeking credits for. You should supply an index of the images, via email, and a short sentence alongside each image to contextualise it.

8.8 BA (Hons) Music exemptions

8.8.1 Students applying for exemption from all Music courses are required to provide the following. This replaces clauses (8.6.2, 8.6.3, 8.7.1, and 8.7.2) above in this instance:

- A minimum of three compositional pieces.
- For APCL applications you must provide an original certificate and transcripts. Please note no decision can be made without the evidence to show previous credits, levels and marks.
- For APEL applications you must write and submit an essay that supports your application. For level one (HE4) the essay is 1000 words. For level 2 (HE5) an essay of 1500 – 2000 words is required.
- Relevant application form and payment form.

8.9 BA (Hons) Creative Writing exemptions

8.9.1 Students applying for exemption from all Creative Writing courses are required to provide the following. This replaces clause (8.6.2, 8.6.3, 8.7.1, and 8.7.2) above in this instance:

- A minimum of three pieces of creative writing relevant to the course unit you are seeking exemption from; for example for exemption from Creative Writing 1: Art of Poetry, at least three poems are required.
- For APCL applications you must provide an original certificate and transcripts. Please note no decision can be made without the evidence to show previous credits, levels and marks.
- For APEL applications you must write and submit an essay per course unit you are seeking exemption for of a maximum 10,000 words, or a synopsis only if the work you wish to gain credits for is lengthy.
- Relevant application form and payment form.

9. Refusal of entry

- 9.1 Under certain circumstances, OCA may choose not to accept an enrolment. Ordinarily this will be because the student does not meet the specified criteria for entry; for example a student does not have Grade 5 Music Theory required for Music 1: Composing Music.
- 9.2 If a student is refused a place on a course at OCA either undergraduate or postgraduate due to not meeting entry criteria, the decision and reason why will be sent to them via email by the OCA Information Advice and Guidance team.
- 9.3 In considering whether to accept an enrolment there may be other factors taken into account. These include but are not limited to:
- 9.3.1 Previous history of debt with OCA
 - 9.3.2 Previous academic failure with OCA
 - 9.3.3 Previous conduct as a student at OCA
 - 9.3.4 Other facets covered in full in OCAs Fitness to Study Policy, including physical, mental, emotional, and behavioural factors
 - 9.3.5 Disclosure of criminal convictions, as outlined in OCAs Criminal Convictions Policy
- 9.4 If any of the above factors are raised whilst reviewing an enrolment, the decision to accept will be considered by OCAs Senior Management Team and the outcome communicated to the applicant via email.

10. Appeals

- 10.1 OCA considers all applications and enrolments fairly and in line with the provisions laid out in this policy.
- 10.2 Applicants do not have an automatic right of appeal against a decision as to whether or not they are offered a place on a course at OCA, except where they believe an administrative error has been made. Applicants may raise a complaint against the process and/or the outcome. Details on complaints and how to make one are covered in OCAs [Enquirer Complaints Policy](#).
- 10.3 An applicant may appeal against a decision made under section 9 of this policy, if they believe that there has been an administrative error in reviewing their enrolment/application. Such appeals will be considered by OCAs Senior Management Team, whose decision will be final.

11. Support for the policy

11.1 Should you need any help with this policy whilst you are enrolling to an OCA course, you should contact our Information, Advice, and Guidance team at enquiries@oca.ac.uk, where they will be able to answer any queries you have.

11.2 For an informal discussion on Accreditation of Prior Learning applications, please also contact our Information, Advice, and Guidance team at enquiries@oca.ac.uk for support.

12. Control of the policy

12.1 This policy was authored by Craig Dewis, Head of Student Services in consultation with OCA Staff and given approval through OCA Oversight Management Group in June 2020.

13. Reviewing the policy

13.1 OCA will work closely with OCASA to gather student feedback on the outline of the policy, its intentions, the administration of the policy, and a review of all these points in practice. These will then be fed into the next review point for the policy.

13.2 The next review date is June 2021. If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then you should contact enquiries@oca.ac.uk, or if you are a student, you might also wish to raise these with the appropriate OCASA representative.