

# Under 18s Admissions Policy

## From August 2024

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## 1. Policy Summary

- 1.1. This policy sets out the requirements for admission to OCA study to anyone under the age of 18. Ordinarily students must be 18 to enrol to OCA courses, however in certain circumstances, meeting the requirements as outlined below, under 18s may be admitted to study specific options.
- 1.2. OCA wants you to be sure that study with OCA is right for you. OCA operates supported distance and online learning and may be different to what you have experienced previously. It is important that you feel comfortable with this style of learning and can positively benefit from the experience.
- 1.3. Studying at university level at a distance involves studying independently, managing your own time, setting your own deadlines, work with various media, display creative maturity, and engage with peers through work on a range of topics.

## 2. Scope

### 2.1. What does the policy cover?

- 2.1.1. This policy applies to all enquirers, applicants, and students under the age of 18 looking to study at OCA.
- 2.1.2. It outlines the study options available to enquirers, applicants, and students under the age of 18, as well as specific requirements relevant to them.

### 2.2. What is not covered by this policy?

- 2.2.1. General admissions principles and specific course requirements are not covered under this policy. For details on wider admissions criteria, please refer to OCA's Admissions Policy.

## 3. General principles

- 3.1. OCA offers a range of educational qualifications and preparatory courses including foundations, short courses, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees. At all levels of study, the content and subject matter may contain topics unsuitable for certain ages (for example discussion of a film rated 18), therefore OCA has a duty of care to ensure that studying through distance learning is appropriate.
- 3.2. must normally be aged 18 or over by the date of enrolment to a course of study with OCA. This policy sets out the admissions criteria for students under 18.

- 3.3. For students aged 16-18, OCA restricts the availability of study to short and foundation courses to ensure appropriate subject content.
- 3.4. OCA may restrict access to certain services if you are aged 16-18 for safeguarding purposes. This is to safeguard you and the wider OCA community. For full details see paragraph 7.3.
- 3.5. If you are admitted to study at OCA you will be allocated to a specialist tutor. All tutors who work with students under the age of 18 have undergone an enhanced check with the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS).
- 3.6. If you are under the age of 16 on the date you wish to enrol, you will not be permitted to study.
- 3.7. If you are under the age of 18 on the date you wish to enrol you will not be permitted to study undergraduate or postgraduate courses.
- 3.8. OCA does not offer any additional support based on age.
- 3.9. All OCA staff have undergone mandatory safeguarding training.

#### **4. Suitability of course materials**

- 4.1. OCA courses may contain material which is inappropriate for students under the age of 18 on safeguarding grounds, for example material which has been externally rated as suitable for adults only (for example, photographic images, discussion of adult themes in literature).
- 4.2. OCA courses may be considered inappropriate because the contents, though not unsuitable in their own right, may lead to a discussion of an adult nature in an online forum. Therefore the attention of students and that of parents/guardians/carers will be drawn to the risk of being confronted by adult content as a result of contributions from other students for these units.
- 4.3. Students under the age of 18 applying to OCA should also consider alternatives to studying with OCA. For example this could include studying by distance learning through the National Extension College (NEC) ([www.nec.ac.uk](http://www.nec.ac.uk)), or taking up one of the wide range of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for example <https://www.futurelearn.com> as a means of gauging their aptitude for open access distance learning.

#### **5. Admissions Process**

- 5.1. Enquirers and applicants are encouraged to speak to OCA before enrolling to OCA. If you wish to have an informal discussion about the course, any restrictions that may be applied, or any other query, please contact [enquiries@oca.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@oca.ac.uk) to discuss.

- 5.2. Applicants should use the enrolment forms for study options found on the [OCA website](#).
- 5.3. When you submit an enrolment to study with OCA, we will check that you meet the age requirements for the study option you have chosen to enrol to. If you have selected a study option that you are unable to join due to your age we will contact you within 10 working days of receiving your enrolment to advise you that we are unable to accept your enrolment.
- 5.4. If you are currently in full-time education you must obtain permission from your school or college before enrolling with OCA. This permission must be in writing and submitted with your enrolment.
- 5.5. The enrolment form for students under the age of 18 will ask for a signature from the parent, guardian or carer to confirm that they have read and understood the safeguarding guidelines for young students and vulnerable adults.
- 5.6. There are capacity limits for study options at OCA relating to the availability of tutors. Tutors support a certain number of students at a time. Tutor availability is limited for students under the age of 18 as tutors are required to have a valid enhanced DBS check. If on receiving your enrolment, there are no tutors either with capacity or who have a valid enhanced DBS check available, we will contact you within 10 working days of receiving your enrolment to advise that we are unable to accept your enrolment.
- 5.7. Once your application has been confirmed as eligible for the course you have chosen, it will be reviewed by the Learner Support Manager to consider any safeguarding restrictions to be applied to your study. For details of restrictions please see the section 7 on Safeguarding.
- 5.8. If you have a disability, we recommend that you speak to us as early as possible before your course is due to start. This is to consider how your disability may affect your studies, and how OCA can support you. Where possible, we would recommend that you submit OCA's [Disability Support Form](#), and send any relevant documentation (for example a medical practitioner's letter, a copy of an Educational Health and Care Plan) to [learnersupport@oca.ac.uk](mailto:learnersupport@oca.ac.uk).

## 6. Payment of Fees

- 6.1. Although the contract for the services OCA provides is directly with you, if you are under the age of 18, payment can only be accepted from your parent/guardian/carer on your behalf.

## 7. Safeguarding

- 7.1. As described in paragraph 5.7, before confirming your enrolment to a course, your application will be reviewed by the Learner Support Manager to consider any issues from a Safeguarding perspective.
- 7.2. In reviewing your application OCA considers Safeguarding for yourself, and the wider OCA community, and any mitigations that may need to be put in place to enable you to study.
- 7.3. Where we identify risks to study, either to yourself or the wider OCA community we may apply restrictions to mitigate those risks. These restrictions include but are not limited to:
- 7.3.1. Restriction of forum access
  - 7.3.2. Restriction to specific courses
  - 7.3.3. Restriction of OCA-provided communication tools including email, video conferencing services and others
  - 7.3.4. Restriction of facilities within OCA's virtual learning environment
  - 7.3.5. Restriction of access to cloud-based storage facilities
  - 7.3.6. Restriction of access to study events
  - 7.3.7. Restriction of access to The Open University Library
- 7.4. OCA may apply additional mitigations to your studies in addition to the restrictions listed in paragraph 7.3:
- 7.4.1. Alternative assignments
  - 7.4.2. Alternative activity formats
  - 7.4.3. Changes to pathways to focus on more appropriate content
- 7.5. All students under the age of 18 will be assigned a tutor who has undergone an enhanced DBS check. Your tutor will be your principal point of contact during your course, and will help you to understand the course materials and advise on the suitability of course content.

## 8. Conditions of Study

- 8.1. Applicants and students between the ages of 16 and 18 may enter into a contract for education without the consent of a parent, guardian, or carer. Any contract with OCA and a student between the ages of 16 and 18 is therefore with you, and not with your parent, guardian, or carer.
- 8.2. Support from parents, guardians, carers, or partner during study is valuable, but it should be recognised that the teaching relationship is between the student and OCA. The student is responsible for their academic progress and for complying with OCA regulations.
- 8.3. OCA students may elect to appoint an advocate. An advocate is any person appointed by you to speak and/or otherwise act on your behalf. An advocate

could be a parent, guardian, carer, partner, support worker or a member of an advocacy organisation. An advocate's role is to empower students to communicate independently and make informed decisions regarding their studies. To appoint an advocate please complete an Advocacy Authorisation Form.

## 9. Appeals

9.1. Applicants do not ordinarily have a right of appeal against a decision to refuse entry to OCA courses, except where you believe that processes have not been followed correctly. If you wish to request an administrative review of an admissions decision, please see the Student Complaints and Non-Academic Appeals Policy for details.

9.2. If you wish to appeal against restrictions applied to your study, please see the Academic Appeals Policy.

## 10. Support for the policy

10.1. 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](mailto:enquiries@oca.ac.uk), where they will be able to answer any queries you have.

10.2. For an informal discussion on applying for courses under the age of 18, please also contact our Information, Advice, and Guidance team at [enquiries@oca.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@oca.ac.uk) for support.

## 11. Linked and other relevant policies and legislation

11.1. This policy is subject to OCA's [Terms and Conditions](#).

11.2. This policy should be read in conjunction with OCA's [Safeguarding Policy](#), [Admissions Policy](#), [Criminal Convictions Policy](#), and [Student Code of Conduct](#).