

Admissions Policy

From August 2024

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1. The purpose of this policy

- 1.1. This policy sets out Open College of the Arts (OCA) approach to admission to courses, including any specific requirements to certain courses, English Language requirements, and Information Technology competency.

2. Scope

2.1. What does this policy cover?

- 2.1.1. 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.

2.2. What is not covered by this policy?

- 2.2.1.** This policy does not cover specific entry criteria relating to students under the age of 18. For information on under 18 specific criteria please see OCA's Under 18s Admissions Policy.

3. General Admissions Principles

- 3.1.** OCA is an open access provider of Units, Programmes of Study, and Courses; this means that with certain exceptions (see section 7, entry to BA Hons Music, and Postgraduate entry) we do not require evidence of prior qualifications to study with OCA. This principle applies to all study options that OCA runs up to Level 6 of the [Regulated Qualifications Framework](#); short courses, foundation courses, undergraduate degrees.
- 3.2.** Certain Units and/or Programmes of Study may have specific requirements on entry; please see section 7, Specific Entry Requirements for specific clauses and requirements. This includes requirements for BA (Hons) Music courses and Postgraduate degrees.
- 3.3.** In addition to recognition of prior learning, OCA specifies four general requirements for students to be admitted to its programmes:
- 3.3.1.** English language competency (see section 6)
 - 3.3.2.** Access to a desktop computer or laptop with internet access (see section 5, Information and Communication Technology Requirements)
 - 3.3.3.** Access to basic technology to document work, for example photographic, scanning, or recording equipment such as a smartphone (see section 5, Information and Communication Technology Requirements)
 - 3.3.4.** The ability to easily manage a range of basic functions through ICT (information and communications technology) (see section 5, Information and Communication Technology Requirements).
- 3.4.** In making your application students are deemed to have considered all information available at www.oca.ac.uk/our-courses/ and understand the requirements.
- 3.5.** At OCA there are capacity limits to our undergraduate Units (excluding those set out in paragraph 4.6) relating to availability of tutors; where we are unable to accept your enrolment due to unavailability of tutors we will let you know and provide you with an estimated waiting time, within 10 working days of your submitted enrolment.

- 3.6.** Numbers of spaces on OCA Short Courses and Postgraduate Programmes of Study are limited and entry to those study options is subject to there being an available space, in addition to any other entry criteria. If we are unable to accept your enrolment or offer you a place to study on a Course or Programme of Study due to lack of available spaces we will let you know within 10 working days after you apply.
- 3.7.** Postgraduate Programmes of Study at OCA are subject to an application process. If applying for entry to a Postgraduate Programme of Study your application will be considered against the entry criteria for that Programme of Study. If your application and any provided evidence meet the entry requirements we will make you an unconditional offer, subject to there being available places on the Programme of Study (please see paragraph 4.6). If you do not meet the entry requirements we will issue a letter setting out any outstanding criteria needed to satisfy the requirements and the timeframe available for you to do so.
- 3.8.** OCA reserves the right to refuse entry to any Unit, Programme of Study, or Course under specific circumstances set out in section 10 (Refusal of Entry) of this policy;
- 3.8.1.** Failure to meet entry criteria for the course,
 - 3.8.2.** Bad academic debt with OCA,
 - 3.8.3.** Previous academic failure with OCA,
 - 3.8.4.** You have been previously refused entry to OCA or The Open University or have been subject to disciplinary procedures as laid out in either the [OCA Student Code of Conduct](#), or [The Open University Code of Practice for Student Discipline](#),
 - 3.8.5.** Failure to disclose relevant spent or unspent criminal convictions.
 - 3.8.6.** Insufficient spaces on the specified study option
 - 3.8.7.** Where following a risk assessment due to disclosure of a relevant unspent criminal conviction, there are risks to the OCA and/or The Open University community which we cannot mitigate against.
 - 3.8.8.** Where following a risk assessment due to disclosure of a relevant unspent criminal conviction, OCA is unable to support access to study.
 - 3.8.9.** Previous conduct that has resulted in their expulsion from OCA and/or The Open University.

- 3.9.** There is no normal right of appeal against decisions to refuse entry except where you believe that an administrative error has been made; please see section 10 and the [Student Complaints](#) and Non-Academic Appeals Policy and [Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) for full details.
- 3.10.** Applications and enrolments to study with OCA are reviewed and checked by OCAs Information, Advice, and Guidance team, with complex cases escalated for review by the Head of Student Services and/or Head of Quality and Academic Support.
- 4. Information and Communications Technology Requirements**
- 4.1.** OCA provides online and at a distance study options . This means accessing online resources, participating in forums 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.
- 4.2.** Students will be expected to have:
- 4.2.1.** A desktop computer or laptop with internet access that they are able to use regularly,
- 4.2.2.** The ability to undertake a range of basic ICT competencies, as detailed below:
1. Information - Browsing, researching, filtering information, evaluating information, storing and retrieving information, including from cloud storage
 2. Communication - Interacting through technologies, sharing information and content, engaging in online citizenship, collaborating through digital channels, netiquette, managing digital identity
 3. Content creation - Developing content, integrating and re-laborating copyright and licences, programming
 4. Safety - Protecting devices, protecting personal data, protecting health, protecting the environment
 5. 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.

- 4.3.** As part of some 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 Units; vector graphics software Adobe Illustrator for visual communications and graphic design units.
- 4.4.** Students and prospective students are required to self-certify their ability and confidence with Information Technologies as set out in section 5.2 above as part of their application and enrolment to OCA. OCA bears no liability in this regard.
- 4.5.** Students may apply for an ICT Exemption where they have a medical reason, or disability, or other compelling reason (for example, service overseas) that may prohibit them from using ICT or be detrimental to them to use ICT. Cases for ICT exemption are considered by the Learner Support team, and evidence will be requested in support of your application. This may include medical documentation, Needs Assessments, or other documentation depending on the nature of your application.

5. English Language Competency

- 5.1.** Students whose first language is not English are required to provide evidence of English language competency as part of the enrolment process. All OCA study options and communications are conducted in English.
- 5.2.** 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 their enrolled study if their English language ability is not as declared at the time of enrolment. OCA also reserves the right to withdraw a student if it is deemed that their English language ability is insufficient to continue on their enrolled study.
- 5.3.** For students whose first language is not English, OCA requires evidence of English for admission to study options. 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

- 5.4.** 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 examples 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 ENIC](#):
- 5.4.1.** 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,
 - 5.4.2.** Any certified English language test confirming the recipient is at CEFR level B1 standard or,
 - 5.4.3.** A national of a majority English speaking country as defined by UK Visas and Immigration in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) or,
 - 5.4.4.** A certificated [Duolingo English Test](#) scoring 60-85.
- 5.5.** Enquirers and applicants for OCA undergraduate or postgraduate degrees may supply any of the following for acceptance of entry to the degree. These are examples 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 ENIC](#):
- 5.5.1.** 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,
 - 5.5.2.** Any certified English language test confirming the recipient is at CEFR level B2 standard or,
 - 5.5.3.** A national of a majority English speaking country as defined by UK Visas and Immigration in the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#) or,
 - 5.5.4.** Completion of an OCA foundation course, or unit/s on any of OCAs degree programmes or,
 - 5.5.5.** A certificated [Duolingo English Test](#) scoring 90-115.
- 5.6.** Where enquirers, and/or applicants do not have any of the above examples, OCA recommends taking the [Duolingo English Test](#).

6. Specific Entry Requirements

6.1. BA (Hons) Music units

- 6.1.1.** 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 Leader to ensure suitability for enrolling onto Music 1: Composing Music as part of the degree.
- 6.1.2.** If students opt to enrol to any of the other units on the BA (Hons) Music degree pathway at Stage 1 (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.

6.2. OCA Masters degrees

- 6.2.1.** 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:
1. A degree in any subject - 40 points
 2. A degree in a relevant subject - 50 points
 3. Evidenced experience of working in any relevant creative industry or context - 50 points
 4. Certificated and/or other training below degree level equating to three years or more of study - 50 points
 5. Higher National Diploma/Foundation degree or equivalent in Art - 30 points
 6. Higher National Certificate or equivalent in Art - 20 points
 7. A-Level Art or equivalent - 10 points
 8. A written statement detailing reasons for wishing to join the course and what is hoped to be gained from it - 25 points*
 9. 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 degree.

Equivalency to the qualifications stated, include international qualifications provided these are accompanied by a UK ENIC 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.

- 6.2.2.** 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.

7. Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL)

- 7.1.** Students can make an application of RPCL towards undergraduate degrees based on previous study. The learning must have taken place in the last 5 years and be relevant to the stage and subject of study.
- 7.2.** Exemption is not available from Stage 3 (HE6) Units. To apply for exemption from Stage 2 (HE5) you must also apply for and be awarded exemption from Stage 1 (HE4).
- 7.3.** Any award of RPCL credit will be made towards a specific OCA qualification, commenced in a specific academic year, and may only be counted toward that qualification if you commence study within that academic year.
- 7.4.** 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.
- 7.5.** Details of how to make an application for RPCL are available in the [RPL Policy](#) and the RPCL Guidance Notes.
- 7.6.** The maximum amount of RPL that can be awarded is two-thirds for the full BA Hons degree (360 credits) and for full Masters degrees (a minimum of 180 credits) and not sub-awards such as CertHE/DipHE where the maximum is 50%.
- 7.7.** You can send an RPCL 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 RPL, payable when you send the application form

8. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)

- 8.1. Students can make an application of RPEL towards undergraduate degrees based on experiential or work-based learning.
- 8.2. Exemption is not available from Stage 3 (HE6) Units. To apply for exemption from Stage 2(HE5) you must also apply for and be awarded exemption from Stage 1(HE4).
- 8.3. Any award of RPCL credit will be made towards a specific OCA qualification, commenced in a specific academic year, and may only be counted toward that qualification if you commence study within that academic year.
- 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. Details of how to make an application for RPCL are available in the [RPL Policy](#) and the RPEL Guidance Notes.

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 academic debt with OCA
 - 9.3.2. Previous academic failure with OCA
 - 9.3.3. Previous conduct as a student at OCA

- 9.3.4. Previous conduct that has resulted in their expulsion from OCA and/or The Open University.
- 9.3.5. Other facets covered in full in OCAs [Fitness to Study Policy](#), including physical, mental, emotional, and behavioural factors
- 9.3.6. Capacity limits on OCA study options, as outlined in paragraphs 2.5 (Short Courses and Postgraduate Programmes of Study) and 2.6 (Undergraduate Units) of OCA's Terms and Conditions.
- 9.3.7. Disclosure of criminal convictions, as outlined in OCAs [Criminal Convictions Policy](#).
- 9.3.8. 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. 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 request an administrative appeal as set out in OCA's [Student Complaints and Non-Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

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 Recognition of Prior Learning applications, please also contact our Information, Advice, and Guidance team at enquiries@oca.ac.uk for support.

12. Changes to this policy

- 12.1. Format changes and inclusion of contents page
- 12.2. Specification of terms that apply to stage of study; Unit for Undergraduate, Programme of Study for Postgraduate, and Courses for short and foundation courses
- 12.3. Inclusion of paragraphs 3.5-37
- 12.4. Inclusion of paragraphs 3.8.6-3.8.8

13. Linked and other relevant policies and legislation

- 13.1. This policy is subject to [OCA's Terms and Conditions](#).
- 13.2. Enquirers, applicants, or students under the age of 18 who are thinking of studying with OCA should contact OCA's Information, Advice and Guidance Team (enquiries@oca.ac.uk).
- 13.3. Enquirers, applicants, and students who are applying with a relevant unspent criminal conviction should refer to [OCA Terms and Conditions](#) and OCA's [Criminal Convictions Policy](#), which references the [Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#).
- 13.4. Students should also be familiar with OCA's [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#), [Refund Policy](#), [Student Protection Plan](#) and [Student Complaints and Non-Academic Appeals Policy](#) and [Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure](#)