Cardiff Academy

POLICY /// ADMISSIONS AND STUDENT JOURNEY

Admissions Policy

How Cardiff Academy recruits and admits students fairly and transparently – entry requirements, English language and UKVI requirements, credibility checks for international applicants, under-18 admissions, recognition of prior learning, disabled applicants, offers, and how to ask for a decision to be reviewed.

REFERENCE	**CA-ADM-01**	VERSION	**1.0 (Approved)**
POLICY OWNER	**Admissions and Compliance Manager**	APPROVED BY	**Board of Governors**
ISSUE DATE	**October 2026**	APPROVAL DATE	**October 2026**
REVIEW CYCLE	**Annual (and before each recruitment cycle)**	NEXT REVIEW DUE	**October 2027**
APPLIES TO	**Applicants, parents, agents, admissions and academic staff**	PUBLISHED	**Website; agent portal; staff portal**

RELATED POLICIES CA-ADM-02 Fees, Payments, Refunds and Cancellations; CA-ADM-03 UKVI Sponsor Compliance; CA-GOV-12 Education Agent Recruitment and Management; CA-GOV-11 Marketing and Provision of Information; CA-WEL-01 Safeguarding and Child Protection; CA-WEL-06 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; CA-ACA-01 Academic Regulations

LEGAL ENTITY Cardiff Education Group Ltd, trading as Cardiff Academy (Company No. 14569122). Registered office: 168 City Road, Cardiff CF24 3JE. Teaching premises: 8 Drake Walk, Cardiff CF10 4LG

1 Policy statement

Cardiff Academy is committed to a fair, consistent and transparent admissions process. We admit students who have the academic ability, English language level, maturity and motivation to succeed on their chosen programme and to progress to university. Decisions are based on published criteria and evidence, made by trained staff, and recorded.

2 Scope

This policy covers all applications to Cardiff Academy programmes: International Foundation Year (IFY), International Year One (IYOne), Pre-Masters, Pre-Sessional English, English language

programmes, short courses and summer school, and any other programme the Academy offers. It applies to direct applications and applications through agents.

3 Principles

- We publish clear, accurate entry requirements, fees and course information (CA-GOV-11).
- We assess every applicant against the same criteria, while considering individual circumstances.
- We do not discriminate on the grounds of any protected characteristic. We make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants.
- We only admit students we believe can succeed, and we never admit an applicant to a programme for which they are not suitable in order to meet recruitment targets.
- We protect applicants under 18 throughout the admissions process.
- For international applicants requiring a Student visa, we assess whether the applicant is a genuine student and meets Home Office requirements before issuing a CAS.

4 Entry requirements

Entry requirements are published for each programme and intake. The table below summarises the current requirements; the published programme page takes precedence.

Programme	Academic requirement	English requirement	Minimum age
International Foundation Year (IFY)	Completion of secondary education to a standard comparable with UK Year 11–12 (e.g. 11–12 years of schooling), with satisfactory grades in subjects relevant to the pathway	IELTS 4.5 overall (minimum 4.0 in each component) or equivalent; applicants below IELTS 5.0 normally join the Extended route	17 on the programme start date
IFY – Extended route (4 terms)	As for the IFY	IELTS 4.5 overall (minimum 4.0 in each component) or equivalent	17 on the programme start date
International Year One (IYOne)	Completion of 12 years of schooling or a foundation qualification with satisfactory grades	IELTS 4.5 overall (minimum 4.0 in each component) or equivalent	17 or over
Pre-Masters	A bachelor's degree (or equivalent) from a recognised institution	IELTS 4.5 overall (minimum 4.0 in each component) or equivalent	17 or over
Pre-Sessional English	Conditional offer from a university (recommended)	According to course length and target score	17
English language programmes	Placement test	Placement test	17 or over
Summer School	Educational background	Placement test	12–17

4.1 English language for Student visa applicants

For programmes **below degree level** (which includes all current Academy programmes), the Immigration Rules require applicants to prove English language ability at **CEFR level B1 in reading, writing, speaking and listening** through a **Secure English Language Test (SELT)** from an approved

provider, unless they are exempt (for example nationals of majority English-speaking countries). The Academy's own programme requirements may be higher. The Admissions and Compliance Manager checks every SELT certificate using the provider's online verification service.

4.2 Equivalence of qualifications

International qualifications are compared using UK ENIC (formerly NARIC) guidance and the Academy's published country equivalence table, approved by the Academic Board.

5 The application process

1. **Application:** the applicant (or their agent) submits the online application form with: passport; academic certificates and transcripts (with certified translations); English test results; a personal statement; at least one academic reference; and details of any disability, health or learning needs.
2. **Initial check:** Admissions confirms the application is complete and records it on the admissions register.
3. **Academic assessment:** a trained admissions officer, and where needed the Director of Studies, assesses academic suitability against the criteria. Borderline cases are referred to the Principal.
4. **Interview / credibility check:** applicants for sponsored programmes have a recorded interview (online or in person) to assess motivation, understanding of the course and progression plan, English communication, finances and immigration history. Applicants under 18 are interviewed with a parent or guardian present or aware.
5. **Document verification:** we verify qualifications and English tests; where documents appear suspicious, we contact the issuing body. Applications with false documents are refused.
6. **Decision:** an offer, a conditional offer, an offer of an alternative programme, or a refusal with reasons. We aim to make decisions within **10 working days** of receiving a complete application.
7. **Acceptance:** the applicant accepts the offer in writing, accepts the Terms and Conditions, and pays any fees due on acceptance.
8. **CAS:** for Student visa applicants, a CAS is assigned only when all conditions are met, the credibility assessment is satisfactory and the required fee payment is received (see CA-ADM-03).

6 Genuine student and credibility assessment

Before assigning a CAS, the Academy must be satisfied that the applicant is a genuine student. We consider:

- the applicant's academic history and how the programme fits their education and career plans
- any gaps in education or employment and the explanation
- previous UK immigration history, visa refusals, and **academic progression** (any previous UK study must normally be at a lower level than the proposed programme)
- the time the applicant has already spent studying in the UK below degree level, which must not exceed the maximum permitted by the Immigration Rules
- the applicant's knowledge of the course, the Academy and life in Cardiff
- the applicant's financial capacity to pay fees and maintenance as required by current Home Office rules
- the source of any third-party funding

The outcome is recorded on the Credibility Assessment Form. Where serious doubts remain, the application is refused.

7 Applicants under 18

- The minimum age for the IFY and other academic programmes is **17**. Applications from younger students (other than for the Summer School) are considered only exceptionally, with the approval of the Principal and the DSL.
- Parents or legal guardians must sign the **Parental Consent Form**, covering consent to study, travel and living arrangements, medical treatment, emergency contact, and the Academy's safeguarding requirements.
- Student visa applicants under 18 must also provide the parental consent letter required by the Home Office.
- **The Academy does not provide or arrange accommodation.** Before an offer is confirmed for a student under 18, the DSL must approve the student's proposed living and care arrangements (for example living with a parent, a close relative or a family friend, or in suitable accommodation with a UK-based guardian). We require details of the adult responsible for the student in the UK, and a UK guardian where parents live outside the UK.
- See CA-WEL-01 for the full under-18 arrangements.

8 Disabled applicants and those with additional needs

Disclosing a disability or learning need will never be used to refuse an application on that ground alone. The Student Welfare Officer will contact the applicant to discuss reasonable adjustments to study, assessment and the premises, and to agree a Learning Support Plan before arrival. If, after careful consideration and consultation, we cannot make adjustments that would allow the applicant to study safely and effectively, we will explain why in writing.

9 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Applicants may ask for prior study or experience to be recognised, for example to enter an English programme at a higher level or to be exempt from a module. RPL decisions are made by the Director of Studies against documented evidence and recorded. RPL cannot be used to reduce the minimum length of a sponsored programme below Home Office requirements.

10 Criminal convictions

We do not ask all applicants about criminal convictions. Applicants are asked to declare **relevant** unspent criminal convictions (offences against children or vulnerable adults, violence, sexual offences, or offences involving weapons or drugs supply) because of our safeguarding duties. A declaration does not automatically lead to refusal; the DSL and Principal carry out a risk assessment.

11 Admissions through agents

Agents must follow CA-GOV-12. All decisions are made by the Academy, not the agent. We communicate directly with the applicant as well as the agent.

12 Offers

- Offer letters set out the programme, start and end dates, fees, any deposit, conditions, refund terms, and a link to the Terms and Conditions, Student Protection Plan and this policy.
- Conditional offers state the conditions and the deadline for meeting them.
- We may withdraw an offer if: conditions are not met; the applicant provided false or misleading information; fees due on acceptance are not paid by the deadline; or, before arrival, the applicant's conduct raises serious safeguarding or safety concerns.

13 Requesting a review of an admissions decision

Applicants who believe that the published procedure was not followed, or that there was a material error, may request a review within **10 working days** of the decision by writing to the Admissions and Compliance Manager. A senior manager not involved in the decision will review the case and respond within **10 working days**. Disagreement with academic judgement alone is not a ground for review. Complaints about the service received are handled under CA-WEL-08.

14 Monitoring

The Admissions and Compliance Manager reports each term to the Compliance Group and the Academic Board on: applications, offers, conversion, refusals and reasons, CAS issued, visa refusals, no-shows, diversity of the intake and agent performance. The Academic Board reviews the correlation between entry qualifications and student outcomes annually to make sure entry requirements are set at the right level.

15 Records

Admissions records are kept in line with CA-INF-01. Records for sponsored students include all documents used to assess the application and to assign the CAS.

Compliance mapping

This policy has been written to meet, and to evidence, the following external requirements. Inspectors and university partners can use this table to locate the relevant provisions.

ISI Educational Oversight (PFE) standards	Standards 2, 3, 6, 7 (courses suitable for students' ages, aptitudes and language abilities; initial assessment to place students); Standard 4 (qualifications meeting UKVI requirements); Standard 33 (admission register); Section 3 admissions procedures
British Council Accreditation UK criteria	M15 (information and advice on course choice); M16 (effective enrolment systems); T15 (correct placement of students); S3 (parental consent for under 18s)
UKVI Student sponsor guidance	Student sponsor guidance – genuine student assessment, English language (SELT at CEFR B1 for courses below degree level), academic progression, maximum study time below degree level, financial requirement, parental consent for under-18s, CAS assignment, BCA refusal-rate threshold

University partner due diligence	QAA UK Quality Code principle on admissions; partner entry requirements; consistency of admissions decisions; agent oversight
Legislation and statutory guidance	Equality Act 2010; Consumer Rights Act 2015; UK GDPR; Immigration Rules Appendix Student

Document control

Version	Date	Author / reviewer	Summary of changes
0.9	Pre-2026	Various	CA BC Admissions Policy (2025); Admissions Policy Tier 4; Admissions Policy Sept 2018
1.0	October 2026	Admissions and Compliance Manager	New policy written for university partnerships, ISI Educational Oversight and British Council Accreditation UK. Supersedes all previous versions.

APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD	SIGNATURE	DATE
Chair of the Board of Governors		