Ravensbourne

Title **Admissions Policy**

Scope
This policy is intended to provide a framework for the management of admissions to courses at Ravensbourne

Regulation: *N/A*
Aligned to: UK Quality Code Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education

Date approved/re-approved
Approved by Academic Board in October 2013
Minor revisions approved by Academic Board in December 2014
Minor revisions to be approved by Academic Board in December 2017

Date for review To be reviewed annually.

Approved by: Academic Board

To be read in conjunction with:
Equalities Framework
Data Protection Policy
Recruitment Policy

Document Owner: Registry

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SECTION A: POLICY AIMS

1.   Ravensbourne's Strategic Plan 2015-18 states that one of our values is to be:

- recognised as a national and international leader in creative industries education and training, strengthening our reputation for short courses and consultancy, and delivering new generations of highly-skilled employees for our specialist industry sectors.

- enhance a culture of progression – from FE to UG and on to PG and

- incubation for graduate start-ups and alumni.

2.   The policy underpins the admissions framework around which the processes that we use, and the decisions that we make, to attract, recruit, select, admit and enrol applicants are clear, fair and consistent. Quality Code B2: "Its development principle of transparency is of paramount importance to the recruitment, selection and admission context, where the drivers of change can lie outside the direct control of individual higher education providers and their staff, who may find themselves trying to balance the principles with the implications of new legislative and regulatory requirements. Adherence to the principle of transparency ensures that all those engaged in recruitment, selection and admission are able to act with integrity and professionalism in all circumstances."

The Admissions Policy aims to ensure that:

- there are clear procedures for the applications process which are readily accessible by all.

- selection criteria are kept under review so as to ensure that individuals are selected and treated solely on the basis of merit and the ability to complete the course of study successfully.

- decisions will be made by assessing applicants consistently against the published generic and course specific criteria. This is to ensure that the process is fair, clear and explicit and implemented consistently.

- no one receives less favourable treatment on grounds of gender, sexuality, race, ethnic origin, age, disability, learning difficulties, religious beliefs, marital status, gender identity, views on politics or Trade Union membership, family responsibilities, or socio-economic background.

- disabled students are enabled to access and participate in our programme of study and that applications from people with disabilities, learning difficulties and particular learning needs are encouraged. Ravensbourne will make all reasonable efforts to make provision for applicants who have particular learning and support requirements at interview and for students on course.

- our distinctiveness based on the creative exploitation of digital technologies within a lively interdisciplinary learning community is promoted through encouraging applications from all sections of the community.

- we ensure sustainability through increasing applications and efficient and effective admissions processes.

SECTION B: SCOPE

1. The Admissions Policy governs all activities, processes and information related to the admission of students to Ravensbourne's higher and further education courses, specifically covering:

   - admissions information;
   - communication with applicants;
   - selection and assessment of applicants;
   - conduct of interviews;
   - decision making;
   - key responsibilities;
   - applications from disabled students;
   - applications from international candidates;
   - English as a second language;
   - accreditation of prior learning;
   - equality of opportunity;
   - criminal convictions;
   - confidentiality;
   - changes to programmes;
   - feedback, appeals and complaints;
   - monitoring, evaluation and review.

2. The policy informs all aspects of student admissions including the marketing and promotions to prospective students, their parents, employers and advisers, and specific initiatives within Ravensbourne leading to student recruitment.

3. Similarly the policy links to post selection activities including the enrolment of students onto a programme of study and induction and orientation of new students.

4. The policy covers applications to all higher and further education courses at Ravensbourne, regardless of application route and UK, EU and international students.

SECTION C: ADMISSIONS FRAMEWORK

1.   Admissions information

1.1   Admissions information published electronically and in hard copy will be reviewed annually by Marketing, in consultation with the Registrar (with a particular focus on UCAS codes) and the Head of Quality (focussing on course titles, entry requirements and compliance with validated documentation), to ensure that it is accurate and up to date.

1.2   Ravensbourne will publish on its website clear information about how admissions decisions are made including generic and course specific selection criteria and guidance on what to include in a personal statement, putting together a portfolio and what to expect at interview.

2.   Application routes

2.1.   Applicants to full-time undergraduate courses apply via UCAS, which has its own procedures and rules, agreed by its members. Deadlines for processing applications are laid down by UCAS and adhered to by Ravensbourne.

2.2   Applications to FE courses are made directly to Ravensbourne which will determine any deadline dates.

2.3   Applications to PG courses are made via UKPASS or directly to Ravensbourne which will determine any deadline dates.

2.4   Application deadlines will be published on Ravensbourne's website.

3.   Selection process

3.1   Every application submitted by the advertised deadline will be considered individually in accordance with Ravensbourne's process.   Applications submitted after the deadline will only be considered if the course is open. Where a course is closed, applications received after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

3.2   Ravensbourne will screen applications received on time before deciding whether to invite a candidate to interview.

3.3   Ravensbourne will use a number of methods to assess an applicant's suitability for their course of choice. Primarily applicants are selected on the basis of:

- an applicant's prior academic achievement / qualifications and/or previous employment / life experience;
- assessment of the applicant's ability and aptitude to succeed on the course for which s/he has applied;

4.   Initial screening

4.1   Applications will initially be screened to determine which candidates will go forward to portfolio review and / or interview. Whether a portfolio review is used to filter applicants prior to interview will be dependent on the volume of applicants. Where there is a high volume of applicants for few course places,

it is advisable to implement filtering, in order to identify those candidates most likely to benefit from the course. Where there is a low volume of applications, it is advisable to interview all candidates who meet the minimum entry requirements.

4.2 Applications will be screened on the basis of the personal statement, reference and qualifications (actual or predicted) taking into account:

- commitment to and understanding of the subject area;
- extra-curricular activities, including work experience, voluntary work and school/college productions;
- awareness of particular features of Ravensbourne programmes and relevance of the course in relation to the candidate's stated interests;
- the referee's assessment of the candidate's potential.

4.3 Screening will normally take place within three weeks of receipt of the application.

4.4 Candidates who are successful will either be requested to submit a portfolio for review and / or invited to attend an interview, as soon as is possible.

4.5 Candidates who are not considered to be suitable for a particular course will be offered advice about alternative programmes at the institution which may be suitable for particular candidates, with a potential new interview date offered to the affected student.

5. Portfolio/Show-reel Review

5.1 Candidates who pass the screening process will be asked to submit for review their portfolio or show-reel. The review may take place in advance of or at the interview.

5.2 Information on how portfolios or show-reels will be assessed will be published on Ravensbourne's website.

5.3 Following review of the portfolio / show-reel a candidate:

- may be invited to attend an interview (if submitted in advance);
- in exceptional circumstances may be made an offer without an interview;
- may be rejected if no alternative course is considered suitable by the Associate Dean.

6. Interviews

6.1 Candidates who are selected for interview will normally be offered one opportunity to attend. In certain circumstances it may not be possible to re-schedule an interview and in such circumstances candidates will be advised in advance.

6.2 The Admissions Team will schedule interviews, working closely with the Admissions Tutor for each course. Where appropriate, interviews will be scheduled in accordance with a recommended institution-wide interview timetable.

6.3 Admissions Tutors may choose to conduct individual interviews or group interviews, or use individual interviews to supplement group activities (or vice versa) where relevant.

6.4 Group interviews should be used consistently within courses and those Admissions Tutors using the group interview method are required to notify the Admissions Office at the start of the admissions cycle. Interview candidates must be advised in advance if they are being invited to attend a group interview.

6.5 Admissions Tutors (or their nominated representative) will be accompanied by a nominated Student Ambassador in undertaking interviews. Guidance on those duties will be offered to the relevant students as part of their Student Ambassadors trainings. These students will be able to get involved during the interviewing process by asking the prospective students a set of agreed questions on behalf of the Admissions Tutor, and talk about the student's experience at Ravensbourne. If on occasion, it proves impossible for good reason to have student involvement in the interview process (i.e. during non-term time),then the Admissions Tutor must be accompanied by another member of academic or support staff. This ensures that a range of views and perspectives contribute to the selection process.
The Admissions Tutor and accompanying student shall confer before making a recommendation. However, the final decision will rest with the Admissions Tutor.

6.6 The Admissions Tutor responsible for making a recommendation of an offer of a place must have been briefed in Ravensbourne admissions procedures and equality of opportunities issues.

6.7 The standard Ravensbourne interview documentation, available on the Ravensbourne intranet, must be completed and signed by the Admissions Tutor and where possible by the other panel member. The form should be returned to the Admissions Team within a working day of the interview.

6.8 At interview the panel will evaluate the applicant's suitability for the course of study by identifying potential academic and professional ability in design or communication through generic criteria:

Personal attributes
- shows commitment, enthusiasm and interest in the subject area
- initiative and problem solving
- ability to communicate

Creative process
- can generate ideas and use external sources to develop them
- ability to research an idea and follow it through to a finished product

Study skills
- can understand and organise information clearly
- can investigate and analyse information
- shows reasoning and intellectual curiosity

Professional skills
- has shown they can initiate and deliver projects

- can work in a team and with people with different skills
- has shown confidence with IT

Career aspirations
- understands the relevance of the course to her/his career ambitions
- understands current debates within industry

6.9 Any course specific selection criteria as detailed in the validated programme specification will be identified on Ravensbourne's website.

6.10 Where an applicant in unable to attend an interview, and it is impossible to make a decision about her/his suitability based on the portfolio / show-reel, it is permissible to interview remotely. This may be by means of a telephone call, skype or e-mail communication. In the case of telephone interviews a conference call should be made so as to involve the usual panel of interviewees (where possible) and similarly e-mail communications should be addressed to all members of the panel.

7. Interview arrangements for disabled applicants

7.1 Prior to interview, applicants are able to contact Student Services if any reasonable adjustments are required to the interview process. Student Services will co-ordinate any particular requirements with the Admissions team. Examples of reasonable adjustments might be:

- One to one interview rather than a group interview
- Choice of room
- Extra time for the interview and breaks where appropriate
- Provision of communication support
- Arrangements for companions or support workers to attend interviews with the applicant

7.2 Disabled applicants may also choose to meet with Student Services separately from the academic interview should they wish to discuss in more detail how Ravensbourne will be able to support their particular requirements on course.

8. Offers and the Decision Making Process

8.1 Overall, the decision to recruit a student shall lie with the Registrar, which may be delegated to the Admissions Team.

8.2 Admissions Tutors are not normally permitted to make offers at interview.

8.3 The Admissions Tutor will provide an evaluation of the candidate's portfolio or show-reel and performance at interview. The outcome of these will be combined with the results of the initial screening. The overall result will determine whether or not an offer may be made to a candidate or whether the candidate should be rejected.

8.4 Offers will be made within three working days of the offer being received by the Admissions team; if the decision is to reject, this decision will be reviewed by an Associate Dean.

8.5 Offers will be made on the basis of performance within the remaining field of eligible candidates in relation to places available. At this point, successful candidates will be made an offer which will be either conditional or unconditional. Unsuccessful candidates will be notified.

8.6 Applicants who apply directly to Ravensbourne will normally be informed by letter from the Admissions Team advising them of one of the following:

- a conditional offer of a place on a specified course and the conditions of that offer;
- an unconditional offer of a place on a specified course;
- a recommendation of an alternative course;
- a rejection

8.7 Applicants who apply through UCAS will receive an outcome via UCAS, advising them of one of the following:

- a conditional offer of a place on a specified course and the conditions of that offer;
- an unconditional offer of a place on a specified course;
- a recommendation of an alternative course;
- a rejection.

8.8 Where the decision of the Admissions Tutor is to reject a candidate after interview, this decision has to be verified by the Associate Dean.

9. Irregularities and fraudulent applications

9.1 Where the UCAS similarity detection service notifies Ravensbourne about an applicant the Admissions Officer will contact the candidate to allow her/him the opportunity to submit an alternative personal statement. If no alternative statement is received by a specified deadline, the candidate will be deemed to have withdrawn their application.

9.2 Applicants who are found to have falsified any part of their application or submit a fraudulent application will automatically have any offer of a place withdrawn.

10. Responsibilities within the Admissions Process

10.1 Responsibility for setting targets for admission to the institution overall and approving the target number of places available for each course shall lie with the Planning Team. Senior management responsibility for overseeing the admissions policy, administration of the recruitment process and ensuring that Ravensbourne's targets are met overall shall rest with the Director of Academic Services and with the Registrar for the operational implementation of Ravensbourne processes and procedures.

10.2. The Deans and Associate Deans shall be responsible for consulting Course Leaders on the balance of targets within their respective academic areas and the factors influencing them through meetings supported as necessary by the Registrar or an Admissions Officer and/or the Director of Academic Services when necessary.

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10.3 The Associate Dean for each area will identify the academic member of staff responsible for admissions in each course. This will normally be the remit of the Course Leader, who may in turn involve other members of academic staff.

10.4 Admissions Tutors are responsible for complying with Ravensbourne Admissions Policy and Processes, understanding their course targets and for ensuring progress against these targets. The Director of Academic Services and Registrar will be responsible for ensuring that academic staff and their line managers are fully aware of their course performance during the recruitment process and for reporting on progress to Management Committee.

10.5 The Admissions Tutor is responsible for agreeing the structure of the interview experience with the Admissions Team, the duration of interviews, format of interviews, such as group or individual.

10.6 The Admissions Tutor is also responsible for identifying staff who will be available to undertake interviews on specific dates within the Ravensbourne recommended interview timetable and for ensuring that those on the interview panel are appropriately briefed in Ravensbourne's admissions processes. Interviews will not normally be cancelled and if the Admissions Tutor is unable to attend the agreed interview schedule s/he is responsible for identifying an alternative Admissions Tutor who is able to conduct the interviews appropriately.

10.7 The Associate Dean FE will be responsible for admitting students progressing from a Further Education course offered at Ravensbourne, to a Ravensbourne Higher Education course, in accordance with the agreed entry requirements:
- achieve a pass grade on the current FE course;
- achieve 80% attendance
- receive a good reference from the tutor

10.8 The Ravensbourne Progression Manager will be responsible for making decisions as to which Widening Participation students will be eligible to be offered a place on a Further and Higher Education courses at Ravensbourne. The threshold standards and procedures applied in year for this process are subject to consultation with the HE Associate Deans.

11. Code of Conduct

11.1 Admissions Staff are expected to support candidates positively in all communications and facilitate a positive experience for candidates at interview.

11.2 Equally, applicants are expected to behave courteously at all times towards Ravensbourne staff and students. Any applicant whose conduct is deemed by Ravensbourne as offensive or threatening may have her/his offer a place removed.

12. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

12.1 Where a candidate wishes to apply for some exemption from assessment, such as a transfer from another college or from employment, s/he must apply for the accreditation of prior learning. RPL is the system whereby Ravensbourne will award academic credit for previous equivalent learning (certificated or experiential).

12.1.1 Certified learning is learning for which a candidate has received a formal qualification, such as a certificate or diploma, or has achieved individual credits awarded by a higher education institution.

12.1.2 Experiential learning is learning for which a candidate has not received any formal qualification or credit and may include learning gained from work experience or as part of a training course.

12.2 RPL may be awarded in the following ways:

12.2.1 to gain entry to Ravensbourne with Advanced Standing (for example direct entry in to level 2 of a course).

12.2.2 to award credit for experiential learning undertaken during the student's course of studies, for example through a work placement. This must normally be approved by the course leader in advance of the work placement.

12.3 Candidates must be able to satisfy both the general level and course specific requirements of that programme of study. There is no automatic right to the accreditation of prior learning.

12.4 RPL credit must be approved before enrolment on the course.

12.5 Where an applicant has worked for some time and gained relevant experience, it may be possible gain entry to courses without the academic qualifications for entry as identified in the Course Document. The Admissions Tutor may take account of other forms of evidence of the applicant's suitability for the course and their achievement of skills as appropriate. This evidence must be identified on the Record of Interview Form and by completing an RPL form.

12.6 The Admissions Tutor is responsible for completing the RPL form.

13.   Applications from international candidates

13.1 Recruitment of international students will be carried out in accordance with Ravensbourne's Admissions Policy.

13.2 The offer of a place implies that Ravensbourne is confident that the student is capable of successfully completing the specific course of study.

13.3 Any offer of a place may therefore only be made once the Admissions Officer has verified that s/he is confident that applicant has satisfied or will satisfy prior to commencing the course, Ravensbourne's minimum entry qualifications for the course to which the applicant is applying. This will include evidence of the appropriate level of attainment of English language for the course.

13.4 A Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) will only be issued to students who have firmly accepted the offer of an unconditional place and the student has demonstrated to the satisfaction of Ravensbourne's International Office that all UKVI's requirements for the issue of a Tier 4 student Visa have been met no earlier than six months in advance of the commencement of the course.

13.5 An international student will only be registered on the course of study if s/he holds a valid Tier 4 visa for the duration of the course.

14. English as a Second Language

14.1 Ravensbourne welcomes applications and wishes to accommodate applicants from within and outside the EU as well as international applicants. In the case of applicants for whom English is a second language, the Admissions Tutor must assure themselves of the applicant's ability in conversational English through the interview itself, even where that is by telephone or e-mail. All candidates are required to provide certificated evidence of the relevant level of language attainment for the programme. Nevertheless, both tutors and students should be aware that UKVI may refuse a visa or entry to the country if they are unconvinced that the student's language ability matches their certification.

14.2 Applicants will be expected to participate in discussions with other applicants and take part in presentations as well as follow lectures from the beginning of the course.

14.3 Where an applicant's first language is not English, proof of competence in English will be required. For undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, this will normally take the form of an approved English language test at B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference. Individual programmes may have higher language requirements. Ravensbourne's international department will advise applicants on the language requirements for particular programmes.

14.4 Any test for proficiency in English must have been achieved within 18 months preceding the date of entry. Applicants will be expected to participate in discussions with other applicants and take part in presentations as well as follow lectures from the beginning of the course. UKVI will not issue a visa if a language proficiency certificate is out of date.

15. Equality of Opportunities

15.1 Ravensbourne positively encourages applications from candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds, experience and ages, including those with disabilities.

15.2 In line with government legislation, Ravensbourne has an Equal Opportunities Policy, to ensure that applicants participate in a fair and equal process for selection, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, age, disability, religious beliefs or socio-economic background.

15.3 Focused staff development will continue to ensure that all those involved in admissions are competent to address equal opportunities issues. In the case of interviewing staff, this will include development to enable staff to make

complex judgements, when applicants with a variety of capabilities come from a diverse range of backgrounds.

15.4　Through implementation of these policies, Ravensbourne will ensure that selection at interview is restricted to the academic ability to succeed on the course.

16.　Criminal Convictions

16.1　A criminal conviction will not necessarily bar entry on to a course. However, Ravensbourne has a duty of care to its staff and students and, for crimes of a serious nature where the applicant might pose a threat, Ravensbourne reserves the right to deny the applicant admission to the course.

16.2　Ravensbourne requires all applicants who apply either via UCAS or directly to Ravensbourne to declare on their application form any previous criminal convictions and may withdraw an offer from an applicant who fails to do so.

16.3　An applicant who declares a criminal conviction on their application form will be required to submit further details about that conviction. The Admissions Team will send the applicant a form in which the applicant will be asked to provide details about the nature of the offence, the sentence and the date of conviction.

16.4　Once the form has been returned, the Registrar will convene a panel to consider the information provided by the applicant. The panel will comprise the Director of Academic Services, the Admissions Tutor and a representative from Student Services.

16.5　The panel will consider the nature of the offence, the date it occurred and if this is a repeat offence. The panel may additionally request recent Probation Service reports.

16.6　Where the panel decides to reject an application on the basis of their conviction, the applicant will be formally notified with the reason for that decision.

17.　Confidentiality

17.1　All information about a candidate's application, including the outcome of the application, is confidential and will not be released to any unauthorised third party, including parents or teachers. The applicant must provide express written permission for her/his details to be released to a third party.

17.2　If a student chooses to disclose a disability at any stage of the admissions process, the information will remain confidential and will only be shared with relevant admissions staff with the individuals consent.

18.　Changes to Courses

18.1　From time to time, Ravensbourne may need to significantly change a course or programme between when a candidate applies for a programme and their enrolment (for instance as a result of revalidation). Changes might include a change of name for the course.

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18.2 Discontinuation of a course will occur if the course fails to recruit sufficient candidates to a course. Ravensbourne will attempt to avoid the withdrawal of a course after offers have been made, but if necessary will assist applicants in alternative choices. Whenever possible, an applicant to a discontinued course will be contacted and offered the opportunity to apply to an alternative course at Ravensbourne.

18.3 The prospectus states that Ravensbourne makes no guarantee of the availability of a course. It also states that Ravensbourne has the right to make changes to the course because of funding, staffing or any other reasonable cause and will give reasonable notice of any change.

18.4 Where a course is discontinued, despite having been included in the prospectus, website or UCAS material, Ravensbourne will update any supplementary materials to reflect the change. Applicants will be fully informed of any changes as they occur, and advised of the options available to them.

19. Feedback, Appeals and Complaints

19.1 Applicants who are unsuccessful in their application should formally a request in writing feedback from the Registrar, in liaison with the relevant Admissions Tutor. Applicants will normally receive feedback within 15 working days of the original request however if there is likely to be a delay in the process applicants will be informed of this.

19.2 Feedback will not be given to third parties, including parents or school tutors, unless the candidate has provided express written permission to release this information.

19.3 There is no recourse to an appeal against an admissions decision, however should an applicant have a complaint regarding the Ravensbourne Admissions Policy s/he should approach the Admissions Team who will seek to resolve a complaint informally in the first instance. If it is impossible to resolve the complaint informally, the candidate will be referred to Ravensbourne's student complaints procedure, for a formal review.

20. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

20.1 Applicant and enrolment statistics will be monitored annually in relation to gender, ethnicity, age and disability for each course. This review will form part of the Annual Course Monitoring process and will be reported to Diversity Committee, and to the Academic Board.

20.2 The admissions policy and selection criteria may be reviewed annually to ensure that individuals are selected and treated solely on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities.

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