

Policy and Process Statement for the Admission of Students Under the Age of 18 Years

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Please note that this policy statement sits alongside the University's Safeguarding Policy <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/safeguarding/> and applies to students entering full degree programmes.

This policy statement does not apply to students accessing summer schools, short courses, International English Centre courses or other community education provision. Candidates under the age of 18 for such courses are encouraged to consult with the relevant programme leader prior to making an application. Advice for students applying to the International English Centre is contained in the International English Centre Safeguarding Procedure <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/internationalenglishcentre/safeguarding/IEC-Safeguarding-Procedures.pdf>.

A. Introduction

Aberystwyth University is an adult environment where students are treated as independent and mature individuals. Students at Aberystwyth University are normally aged 18 years or above. However, the University occasionally admits students who are under the age of 18 years at the start of their programme of study. For the majority of students, that status will be for a limited time period, as they will usually turn 18 in the course of their first year.

Applications from individuals who will be under the age of 18 at the point of registration will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and the University may require that admission be subject to the application of specific entry criteria and/or conditions. The signing of Aberystwyth University's *Consent Form for the Admission of Students under the Age of 18 Years* will be required as a condition of any offer of admission of any student under 18.

No applicant under the age of 18 will be admitted by the University until the Consent Form has been signed, returned and a risk assessment commenced (to include accommodation / departmental support / student support).

B. Principles of Consent

The following guidance seeks to ensure that the respective responsibilities of the University and parent/guardian in relation to the applicant are clear.

By signing the Aberystwyth University *Consent Form for the Admission of Students under the Age of 18 Years*, it is deemed by the University that the applicant and their parent/guardian confirm that they have read and understand the following principles:

1. Parental Responsibility

The University is not able to take on the usual rights, responsibilities, and authority that parents have in relation to a child and will not act in *loco parentis* with regard to students who are under the age of 18 years. All students under 18 years must have a parent/guardian in the UK. Those with parents/guardians living outside the UK must have a UK-based guardian appointed for them.

2. Contracts

Those under the age of 18 years are not generally able to enter into legal contracts. Where a contract is required, for example for University tuition fees or accommodation fees, the University requires a parent/guardian to act as guarantor and honour all obligations entered into with the University under contract prior to the student's 18th birthday.

3. Accommodation

Applicants, parents, and legal guardians should recognise that residential accommodation offered by the University is generally intended for the use of adults, and that special arrangements cannot be made for students who are under the age of 18 years. On receipt of an application from a person who is under 18 years of age, a risk assessment will be undertaken by the Residences Manager, to consider all associated risks and mitigation, on a case-by-case basis. This exercise must take place, prior to an offer of residential accommodation being made to a student.

Other students who share accommodation with those under 18 years of age, are not advised of this and the University has no right or ability to undertake UK Disclosure and Barring Service (safeguarding) checks on those who live or study with students who are under 18 years of age.

4. Academic programme content

On receipt of an application from a student who will be under the age of 18 at the point of registration, a risk assessment will be completed by the relevant academic department/s to ascertain the suitability of the proposed programme of study.

Academic programmes are designed, approved and validated to be delivered to students over the age of 18 years. Therefore, it is possible that certain teaching materials may contain content that is 18-rated. If applicants and/or parents /guardians are concerned about the content of academic programmes, they are advised to discuss this with the course Admissions Tutor.

For some programmes, it is a requirement of the relevant professional body that students are aged 18 or above when they enrol. Please consult individual course information pages on the University's website and prospectus, or contact the Undergraduate Admissions Office (ug-admissions@aber.ac.uk) for further information.

Please be aware that University staff (teaching or administrative) will not routinely be DBS checked.

5. Field trips

Certain study programmes involve compulsory and/or optional field trips, excursions, or other periods of study away from the university campus. Risk assessments are carried out before all field trips, and provision will be made for the inclusion of a student under the age of 18 where possible. Participation in some activities may be limited. Unless indicated otherwise, by signing the consent form, parents/guardians give consent for participation in these activities.

6. Work Placements

Anyone undertaking a work placement is regarded in health and safety law as an employee. Therefore, students on work experience must be provided with the same level of health, safety and welfare protection given to other employees (for University Health and Safety Procedures and Practices see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/proc-prac/>). The work placement co-ordinator for the relevant academic department will inform the supervisor of any student under 18, and ensure that they have in place appropriate insurance and health and safety procedures, and that they are aware of the additional responsibilities of employing young people, including any DBS requirements.

As with all students on placements, but of particular importance with students under 18, there should be suitable arrangements for maintaining contact between the student and their Department / tutors.

7. Pastoral Care

The usual personal and academic support arrangements will apply to students who are under the age of 18 years and includes the allocation of a specific personal tutor. It will be the responsibility of the Head of the relevant academic department to monitor that the personal tutor arrangement is working effectively.

8. Provision of IT services

Aberystwyth University offers e-mail and unsupervised internet services for all its students. As a condition of registering for access to IT services provided by Aberystwyth University, students are expected to act in an adult and responsible manner, and are required to accept and abide by the Information Services regulations, policies and guidelines (see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/regulations/>). Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

9. Child Protection

According to law, any person under the age of 18 years old is a child. The University has a responsibility to protect those under the age of 18 years from abuse and has a Safeguarding Vulnerable Individuals Policy. The University is obliged to report any suspicions or allegations of abuse to children to the appropriate Children's Social Care Services, and any such suspicions or allegations will be reported to the Head of Student Support and Careers Services as the University's Designated Reporting Officer (DRO) person, or their nominee, who will contact the relevant authorities.

10. Relationships with Members of Staff in Position of Trust

Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18 years, even if the relationship is consensual.

11. Holding Office / Positions of Responsibility

All students have the opportunity to join University or Students' Union clubs and societies. However, certain restrictions apply:

Those under the age of 18 are not permitted to hold office or positions of responsibility within these clubs and societies, such as sabbatical officer or act as a student trustee.

Participation and/or membership of student clubs and societies may need to be limited for those under 18 years old, or example events involving alcohol. Student society/club risk assessments will record if a member is under 18, with a key aspect linking to trip risk assessments.

12. Sale of Alcohol, Tobacco and other age-restricted goods and services

It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 years to purchase or to be sold alcohol or tobacco products, and it is an offence to purchase these on behalf of someone under the age of 18, whether this is for consumption in a licenced premises or publicly elsewhere. Aberystwyth University takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the law is upheld in relation to licenced premises under the University's control but cannot undertake to supervise individual students.

Age restrictions are also in place for the purchase of a number of other goods and services including:

- Solvents
- Gas lighter refills
- Fireworks
- Knives, blades and axes
- Some videos, DVDs and computer games
- Entry to venues in which films with an 18 certificate are being shown

An up-to-date list can be found on the PASS website: <http://www.pass-scheme.org.uk/age-charts/>

13. Parental involvement

The University's policy is that it deals with students and not with parents or guardians. This approach will apply equally to students who are under the age of 18. Therefore, the University will correspond with students, and not with parents or guardians, unless the University receives express written permission from the student, or there is a medical, criminal or similar emergency. This does not apply to contractual matters relating to accommodation fees and tuition fees, whereby the parent/legal guardian will be required to act as guarantor until the student is 18 years old (see section 2).

14. Data Protection and disclosure of personal information

As noted above, it is the University's usual policy to deal directly with all students, regardless of their age, and with not their parents. In accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, although those under the age of 18 are regarded as children under UK law, they still have the legal right for information about them not to be disclosed without their explicit consent. This means that the University is not able to give information to parents regarding a student's progress, results or any other personal circumstances unless the student has given specific consent.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the University reserves the right to contact the parents/guardians of a student under the age of 18 in relation to safeguarding issues, where the priority is the safety of the individual who may be at risk. There may be occasions where a safeguarding issue is reported without obtaining the under 18's consent.

In addition, if a student fails to pay any sums agreed on contract (such as tuition fees) it may become necessary to disclose this to a parent / guardian who is acting as guarantor, and possibly to a debt collection agency.

15. Notification

The Head of the relevant academic department/s, Head of Student Support and Careers Services and Head of Estates, Facilities and Residences, or their nominees, will be notified by Academic Registry, prior to registration, of any student who will be under the age of 18 on entry to the University, in order that the academic department/professional service may undertake a risk assessment to ensure that appropriate safeguarding is in place for the individual student. Other teaching and professional services staff will not routinely be made aware of a student's age.

16. Emergency contacts

The University requires the contact details for two emergency contacts who can be reached in an emergency situation 24 hours a day for all students under the age of 18 years. At least one of these must be a parent or guardian who is UK-based.

17. Non-UK students under the age of 18

The University requires all students under the age of 18 to have a parent or guardian to be based in the UK. Where parents/guardians live outside the UK, a suitable guardian in the UK must be appointed. The appointed guardian must be over the age of 18 and may be a member of the extended family, or a family friend. Alternatively, a list of accredited agencies is available from The Association of Educational Guardians for International Studies (AEGIS).

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years old who require a Tier 4 (General) Student visa must provide written consent from their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to live and travel independently to undertake their proposed studies. A translated copy of the applicant's birth certificate, or other documentation proving their relationship to the parent, must be submitted with the consent form.

C. Procedure for the Admission of Students Under the Age of 18 Years

- i. A student application is received, and an applicant is identified as being under the age of 18 at the point of the proposed registration date.
- ii. An initial course suitability risk assessment is undertaken by the relevant academic department/s. Undergraduate Admissions will liaise with the Safeguarding Officer in the relevant academic department/s to complete this risk assessment, which will be held by Academic Registry.
- iii. The completed course suitability risk assessment will be considered by the Head of Student Support and Careers Services, the Head of the relevant academic department/s and the Deputy Registrar (Admissions) or their nominees.
- iv. Where an applicant will be under the age of 16 on the commencement date, the decision following the initial course suitability risk assessment procedure must be approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience.
- v. If the outcome of the course suitability risk assessment is satisfactory, the student application will be considered on academic grounds. Any offer made will include details of any adjustments/control measures identified by the risk assessment, along with the requirement to complete and sign the consent form prior to registration.
- vi. In exceptional cases, if the course suitability risk assessment process identifies that necessary safeguarding adjustments cannot reasonably be made, the application for study will be unsuccessful and the applicant will be notified accordingly.
- vii. Where an offer is made and an applicant under the age of 18 selects Aberystwyth University as their firm or insurance choice:
 - The *Consent Form for the Admission of Students under the Age of 18 Years* will be issued by Undergraduate Admissions Office, and must be signed and returned before the student will be permitted to register.
 - The Head of the relevant academic department/s, Head of Student Support and Careers Services and Head of Estates, Facilities and Residences, or their nominees, will be notified by Academic Registry of any student who will be under the age of 18 on entry to the University, in order that the academic department/professional service may undertake an individual student risk assessment to ensure that appropriate safeguarding is in place.
- viii. Following confirmation:
 - Undergraduate Admissions Office to check that the *Consent Form for the Admission of Students under the Age of 18 Years* has been signed and returned. This will be held by Academic Registry until the student reaches the age of 18.
 - The individual student risk assessment process will be finalised by the Head of the relevant academic department/s, or their nominee, with liaison with professional services as appropriate. This will be individual to each applicant/student and may include, for example, matters relating to content and delivery of the programme, study arrangements, pastoral care, personal tutoring, as well as personal circumstances individual to the student, for example disability/health issues. The individual student risk assessment will be held by Academic Registry until the student reaches the age of 18.
 - A separate accommodation risk assessment will be finalised by Estates, Facilities and Residences for any student under the age of 18 who proposes to live in University managed

accommodation. The accommodation risk assessment will be held by Estates, Facilities and Residences until the student reaches the age of 18.

- Any control measures put in place will cease to apply when the student reaches 18 years.

- ix. Where a student is studying with the International English Centre at the point of making their undergraduate application and will reach their 18th birthday within 1 month of the start date of their degree, the IEC Parental Consent form will be accepted, the IEC will submit the risk assessment and the student will retain access to all IEC support including the 24-hour emergency phone and regular IEC under-18s tutorials until their 18th birthday.

D. Other Related Policies

Safeguarding Vulnerable Individuals :

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/humanresources/aberpoliciesprocedures/Safeguarding---English.pdf>
