Admissions Policy for Validated Taught Programmes

1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the Admissions Policy for Cliff College (hereafter, 'the College'). It describes the principles and processes followed by the College with regard to student recruitment, selection, admissions and widening participation activity.

1.2 The College is committed to equality in education; students are selected on the basis of their individual merits, abilities and aptitudes. We actively encourage applications from students from all groups who are currently under-represented in higher education. Therefore, the College is committed to fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices.

1.3 The College is strongly committed to providing a welcoming, supportive and appropriately challenging environment for students and staff alike. Everything in this policy should be read in the light of this commitment, and the language of terms and conditions should not be taken as reflecting a negative attitude. On the contrary, we are determined to create and develop a safe, nurturing and challenging community for all.

1.4 This policy complies with relevant legislation and with the University of Manchester's Equality and Diversity policy, meets the expectation of the QAA Code of Practice: Chapter B2, and respects the good practice guides published by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).

2 Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this document is to provide policy information to enquirers, applicants, parents and advisors about recruitment, selection and admissions at the College. It is the policy framework for all members of staff who are involved in recruitment, selection and admissions activity.

3 Scope

3.1 The policy applies to the admission of all students to validated taught programmes at the College.

4 Terms and conditions

4.1 The College's published terms and conditions apply to all applications for undergraduate and postgraduate taught study. The College will draw these to the attention of anyone who receives an offer of a place to study at the College. The terms and conditions are fair and transparent, and form a contract between the College and each applicant / enrolled student.

4.2 In all cases, where evidence which is required by the College to inform its decision whether or not to admit an applicant is written in a language other than English, the applicant will be responsible for providing a notarised translation of the same into English, certified as being true to the original, and for arranging the submission of both the original and translated copies to the College.

5 Recruitment and admissions principles and aims

5.1 The College is committed to the five key principles of fair admissions as set out in the Schwartz Report (2004) and accepted across the higher education sector:

- transparency
- minimising barriers to entry
- selecting for merit, potential and diversity
- professionalism
- using assessment methods that are reliable and valid.

5.2 The College recognises that making an application for higher education is an important decision, and it is committed to providing potential applicants with accurate and impartial information and advice from the outset. This will help them to make an informed choice regarding the programmes which best suit their interests and skills. It will enable them to apply to programmes appropriate to their interests, academic qualifications and potential.

5.3 The College aims to increase the diversity of its student population, enriching the educational experience for all. Therefore, we seek in our promotional activities to attract a wide range of applicants from different social, cultural and educational backgrounds who can demonstrate the academic ability and the skills required to succeed in their chosen studies, and who have the potential and motivation to be confident contributors to society and potential leaders in the life of churches and Christian organisations.

5.4 The College aims to eliminate unlawful discrimination on any ground. Therefore, all applications are assessed on their own merits, and according to the agreed academic and non-academic selection criteria applied to each programme.

5.5 The College is also alert to the dangers of extremism in our world, and of the harm that can be done when people with passionate beliefs of different kinds seek to impose those beliefs on others. Our aim is to share our beliefs and values with full respect for others, and with a particular concern for the vulnerable in our society. This approach characterises our ethos, and all students are required to support this ethos.

5.6 For all programmes, the selection process will take into account an applicant's:

- achieved and pending academic qualifications
- proficiency in the English language (see below)
- academic, professional or church references
- stated interest, commitment and motivation for study
- work, or other non-academic experience (where relevant)
- performance at interview (where relevant)
- portfolio, or sample of written work (where relevant)

5.7 Each application will be considered on an individual basis by the Programme Lead and its administrator, working to agreed admissions criteria. All staff with designated recruitment, selection and admissions responsibilities must be familiar with this policy, and the associated procedures relevant to their areas of responsibility.

6 English language proficiency

6.1 All programmes at the College are delivered in the medium of English.

6.2 The College requires successful applicants to demonstrate that their ability to understand and to express themselves in English (reading, writing, speaking and listening) is sufficient to enable them to achieve the full benefit from studying at the College. This will be assessed through the admissions process.

6.3 Currently, the criteria are established as follows:

6.3.1 Home applicants are required to have an appropriate grade/score in an approved examination in English language before they can register on an academic programme. This is normally Level B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), or a Level 3 qualification in the medium of English.

6.3.2 EU and International applicants who have taken their education entirely in the medium of English, and can demonstrate that they have successfully completed a recognised degree, or have successfully completed the whole of their secondary education up to and including the equivalent of year twelve (including a Level B2 CEFR qualification) in one of the countries on the Home Office's list of recognised countries will be deemed to have an acceptable English language qualification. The Home Office's list of recognised countries is available on the UK Government website.

6.3.3 EU and International undergraduate applicants whose first language is not English are required to have an IELTS grade/score of at least 6.0 in each of the speaking, listening, reading and writing elements before they can register on an academic programme.

6.3.4 EU and International postgraduate applicants for the postgraduate taught programme whose first language is not English are required to have an IELTS grade/score of at least 6.5 overall and 6.5 in writing. The minimum requirement in all other categories is 6.0.

6.3.5 EU and International postgraduate applicants for the postgraduate research programme (PhD / PhD Miss) whose first language is not English are required to have an IELTS grade/score of at least 7.0 overall and 7.0 in each category of writing, reading, listening and speaking.

6.3.5 However, any home applicants who do not hold relevant qualifications may yet be assessed by the College. The College will assess their proficiency in two ways:

- The applicant will be required to attend a face-to-face interview at the College.
- The applicant will be set a book review to submit. (See further below; section 14) Details of this task will be provided to relevant applicants.

6.3.5.1 The criteria against which the College will judge their proficiency are that of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), Level B2 (Upper-Intermediate).

6.4 The College must also ensure that international applicants who need a Tier 4 visa to study with us meet UK Visas and Immigration's current English language requirements.

7 Accreditation of Prior Learning

7.1 The College has the discretion to recognise academic credit gained from other institutions, and/or professional, or other, credit gained from experiential learning. In the

latter case, credit is allocated for evidence of achieving appropriate and assessed learning outcomes relating to the unit(s) concerned, rather than for the experience itself.

7.2 In all such cases, the College may exempt relevant applicants from certain units of study in their chosen programme, if their prior learning is deemed to be of equivalent value and standard.

7.3 Credit for prior academic learning will be accepted only within a maximum of five years from the date it was awarded.

7.4 Credit for prior experiential learning will be accepted only within a maximum of five years from the date of the most recent activity.

7.5 Applicants are strongly advised to discuss their circumstances with the relevant programme admissions staff before submitting an application, since there are strict criteria to be applied to each application.

8 Tier 4 (Student) Visa

8.1 The UK government operates a points-based immigration system for all overseas (non-EU) students. An applicant who is not a British citizen, or a citizen of one of the European Economic Area (EEA) countries, will need a visa to study in the UK. Further details may be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration.

8.2 The College is licensed with the Home Office as a Tier 4 Sponsor. The College aims to provide a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) in good time for the visa application, but in doing so, relies on the applicant taking responsibility for:

- making an early application for admission, including complete details of all previous study and periods of study in the UK
- responding fully, and in good time, to accept the offer
- responding fully to requests for any further information, such as passport and financial details
- providing a current email address to which the CAS will be issued

8.3 The College reserves the right to refuse admission, should an applicant be found not to be in a position to meet all UK visa requirements for the anticipated full duration of his/her programme of study.

8.4 In order to comply with the relevant United Kingdom legislation and immigration regulations, the College will notify the immigration authorities, where relevant, of any non-arrival, or late arrival, of an applicant, and of any subsequent changes to a student's registration status, including non-attendance or withdrawal from the programme prior to the stated completion date of that programme.

8.5 All applicants requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom must not currently be, nor have ever previously been, in the UK for any purpose without valid immigration permissions. If, either during the process of admitting a student or subsequent to that student enrolling upon their programme of study, the College is informed that the applicant/student is (or has previously been) in the UK without such valid permissions, it may be required to inform the immigration authorities and/or withdraw the offer of a place and/or withdraw its sponsorship of the individual's visa.

8.6 The College will, from time to time, review this policy in light of changes to Home Office

immigration policy, in order to remain compliant with its Sponsor duties. This may result in changes, at short notice, to matters such as the evidence required for English language proficiency. Where changes are necessary, due to Home Office changes, the College will endeavour to contact all applicants holding an offer, and on whom the change will impact, within four weeks.

9 Applicants with disabilities and educational support needs

9.1 The College actively welcomes applications from candidates with a disability, or with additional support needs. We work proactively with those responsible for Disabled Students' Allowances and the Student Loans Company in securing and implementing the relevant support required by students.

9.2 All applicants for a programme are assessed against the same entry criteria, and will be subject to the same selection process.

9.3 Any support needs or adjustments which are required for an applicant will be considered separately, after the admissions decision has been taken.

9.4 If there are overriding health and safety concerns, the applicant will be involved in discussions to explore options and, if necessary, to find a suitable alternative programme.

9.5 Applicants with special circumstances that have affected previous study, or are likely to affect academic performance in current study, should provide this information at the point of application. If these circumstances are encountered after the submission of an application, applicants should inform the admissions staff as soon as possible. Special circumstances cannot be considered after an adverse decision has been made where prior notification could have been made. Where special circumstances have already been taken into account, for example by the relevant examination board, we will not be able to make further allowances.

10 Standard undergraduate entry applicants

10.1 The standard entry requirements are a minimum of two 'A' level passes, or equivalent alternative qualifications. The precise entry criteria varies between programmes.

10.2 Applications to the full-time undergraduate degree programme may be made via the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

10.3 All applications received prior to the relevant UCAS deadline will be given full and equal consideration. No preference will be given to applications submitted early. Late applications will be considered at the discretion of the College.

10.4 Applications for part-time undergraduate study are made directly to the College.

10.5 Wherever possible, the College aims to acknowledge receipt of all applications within five to ten working days of the receipt of a completed application.

10.6 The College reserves the right to close entry to any programme that reaches capacity.

11 Standard postgraduate entry applicants

11.1 The standard entry requirement for the taught postgraduate programme is a relevant undergraduate degree at the minimum level of a lower second class honours, or equivalent.

11.2 Applicants to the postgraduate taught degree programme are normally expected to hold an undergraduate degree in a discipline relevant to the subject or nature of the programme, or to be in the final year of such an undergraduate degree programme.

11.3 Applications for postgraduate taught programmes should be submitted directly to the College.
11.4 In some cases, relevant prior experiential learning may be accepted in lieu of formal academic qualifications. Such applicants are strongly advised to discuss their circumstances with the relevant programme admissions staff before submitting an application.

12 Non-standard entry applicants

12.1 Applicants to the College come from diverse educational, professional and personal backgrounds. We recognise that occasionally the standard procedure for assessing applications may not provide the admissions staff with a comprehensive understanding of an applicant's suitability. In such cases, we may ask applicants to provide us with alternative evidence to support their applications.

12.2 If the applicant does not have qualifications that are the equivalent to the standard entry criteria, and does not have a sufficient level of relevant experience to be considered for APEL, then the Programme Lead will set a piece of work in order to assess whether the applicant is capable of studying at the chosen academic level.

12.3 For an undergraduate programme, the applicant will be required to submit a book review of 750 to 1,000 words. The book to be reviewed will be selected by the applicant from the reading list sent to them by the administrator for the programme for which they have applied. A copy of the assessment criteria will also be sent to the applicant.

12.4 For the postgraduate taught programme, the applicant will be required to submit a reflective piece about their previous ministry experience and a short essay-type discussion of a key issue that they have become aware of in their ministry experience. A copy of the assessment criteria will also be sent to the applicant.

12.5 The Programme Lead will set a deadline, and will assess the work according to the relevant criteria. If the applicant is unable to submit the work before the deadline set by the Programme Lead, and has not contacted the College to explain why, then they will not be offered a place on the programme. If they are unable to submit, but have informed the College as to why, the Programme Lead may rearrange the deadline.

12.6 If the work is considered to be original and of a sufficient standard, the applicant will be informed that they have been offered a place on the programme, subject to suitable references.

13 Tuition fees and funding

13.1 There is an expectation that students will have sufficient funds to pay tuition and accommodation fees and other costs during their period of study, and applicants are required to give details of their funding arrangements at the point of application.

13.2 Further information is to be found in the *Terms & Conditions for Admission* document and the *Student Financial Agreement*. Both of these documents will be sent to applicants, along with the other information provided.

14 Disclosure of criminal convictions

14.1 The College has a responsibility to ensure the safety of its student and staff community, and also of other people with whom students interact as part of their programme of study. In accordance with this responsibility it reserves the right to deny admission to applicants whose prior (unspent) criminal conviction(s) suggest that they might pose a danger to the community. The application process requires applicants to disclose relevant unspent criminal convictions.
14.2 For certain programmes involving interaction with children and/or vulnerable adults, applicants must provide a satisfactory Disclosures and Barring Service enhanced disclosure before being permitted to commence such a programme of study. Applicants will be advised if these or any other conditions apply in the recruitment information relating to the programme.

14.3 Applications from applicants with declared criminal convictions will be assessed in the first instance on the basis of standard academic and non-academic selection criteria. If it is recommended that an offer be made, further investigation of the relevance of the criminal conviction(s) will be carried-out before the final decision is made.

15 Offers made

15.1 Admission is subject to the availability of places.

15.2 All applicants who are offered a place to study at the College will receive an offer letter, in a timely manner, detailing the terms and conditions of the offer. Any conditions attached to an offer of a place will be clear and specific. This will include details of any individual requirements that need to be fulfilled before an applicant can be enrolled on the programme.

15.3 Offer letters will normally be sent out by email, but will be sent by post, if necessary.

15.4 Applicants who are offered a place on a programme of study will be informed as to how they should accept or decline the offer, and by when.

15.5 Applicants made a conditional offer may not enrol with the College, nor embark upon their programme of study, nor commence any research in connection with their programme of study, until all conditions have been satisfied in full, and the applicant is in receipt of an unconditional offer, and not until the stated commencement date of the programme of study.

15.6 Conditional offer holders are responsible for providing evidence that they have met the terms and conditions of their offer.

15.7 An offer is not a guarantee of funding.

15.8 In some cases, where the College is unable to make an offer for an applicant's programme choice, an offer for an alternative programme may be made. Such offers may be made where it is determined that the applicant would be better suited to the alternative programme, or where the applicant has already covered some of the content of the programme to which she/he originally applied.

15.9 Applicants in possession of an offer of a place may request that it be deferred to the next intake. Such requests should be submitted in writing to the relevant Programme Lead and the Academic Registrar. No guarantee is made that such a request will be approved, though consent will normally be given where the applicant presents compelling evidence in support of his/her request.

> 15.9.1 Since IELTS results, for example, are only valid for two years, applicants who defer, and who are also required to present English Language qualifications, should

ensure that the test results will be valid on the date of deferred registration.

15.10 The College reserves the right to reject an applicant, or to withdraw any offer made, based on an applicant's behaviour during any part of the application process, if such behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable in accordance with the College's *Dignity at Work and Study Policy* or any other relevant policy of the College, or the College's *Ethos and Charisms* policy statement.

15.11 Applicants who are unsuccessful may apply again in a subsequent year. Applications will be considered against the standard programme entry criteria for that year of entry. The new application should demonstrate an improvement from the previous application. We may draw upon all information from previous applications when assessing suitability for a programme.

15.12 Applicants need to be aware that the College will only accept those who will be 18 years of age, or over, at the point of enrolment.

16 Fraud and plagiarism

16.1 The College expects that applicants will have provided full, honest, and accurate information on their application form, and in all subsequent communications. Where the College has reason to suspect that this may not be the case, it reserves the right to investigate the matter fully.

16.2 Although scanned copies of documents may be accepted during the admissions process, original documents can be requested at any stage. Decision makers are experienced in detecting and dealing with fraudulent documents. Programme administrators will ask to see original documents at registration, for confirmation purposes.

16.3 The College will not admit applicants on the strength of information considered to be either fraudulent or plagiarised. Where an applicant is suspected of having provided a fraudulent or plagiarised element of their application, the application will be assessed in the first instance on the basis of standard academic and non-academic selection criteria. If it is recommended that an offer be made, an investigation of the fraud or plagiarism will be carried-out before the final decision is made.

16.3.1 The College reserves the right to reject or cancel an application under these circumstances.

16.4 The College may terminate a student's registration if he/she is found at a later stage to have submitted a fraudulent or plagiarised element of their application to the College.

17 Feedback

17.1 Unsuccessful applicants can reasonably expect to receive feedback on their application, on request. The College is committed to providing applicants with appropriate feedback, within resource constraints, within five to ten working days of receiving the request. Such requests should be directed to the relevant Programme Lead.

17.2 Requests for feedback must be submitted directly by the applicant. Requests for feedback from third parties on the behalf an applicant are not permitted.

17.3 Whilst the College aims to provide informative feedback that is helpful to applicants, it may not always be possible to provide highly specific or tailored advice.

17.4 The College is only able to give feedback to a third party (e.g. a parent, guardian, advisor or agent) with the explicit, written consent of the applicant.

18 Data Protection

18.1 The College complies with the provisions of the United Kingdom's Data Protection Act, 1998. The Act requires that personal data are only shared as necessary for the maintenance of required records, and that all information held is accurate and has been processed fairly and lawfully. The Act gives applicants the right to check the information held, and to correct it, if necessary.

18.2 The College will not disclose to any third party any details regarding an individual's application, without the applicant's explicit, written permission to do so. This policy of non-disclosure includes family members of the applicant.

18.3 However, the Data Protection Act, 1998 requires the College to release certain information to appropriate UK authorities (e.g. the police), upon request, in order to assist those authorities with the prevention and detection of fraud or other crimes. The College will release the requested information upon receipt of an official request from appropriate UK authorities.

18.4 Anonymised and aggregated applicant data are analysed internally by the College, for the purpose of institutional and statutory monitoring and development planning, in order to ensure that our processes are fair and effective, and our programmes best reflect applicant need.

18.5 The College is also subject to legal requirements to provide information, including some student personal data, to BIS and HEFCE who require it to carry out their public functions. It does this via the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA). HESA is the official source of data about UK universities, higher education colleges and alternative HE providers. Full details about the organisations with whom data collected by HESA is shared and the purposes for which it is processed are available from HESA.

19 Changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks

19.1 In the interests of fairness and transparency, the College aims to eliminate making changes to its admissions policy and procedures mid-cycle. However, it may be the case that external agencies (including those of the United Kingdom Government) amend or update their own regulations or guidance. Where it is required to do so, the College will comply with such changes, and reserves the right to vary its admissions policy and/or procedures accordingly.

19.2 In such cases, the College will explain to potential applicants the change it is making, the context of the change, and how the change is likely to affect applicants.

20 Complaints and appeals

20.1 Should an applicant wish to raise concern about or question the College's decision, or the way in which an application has been handled, the College's *Appeals and Complaints Procedure for Applicants* should be followed.

20.2 Applicants do not have the right to appeal against the actual academic or professional judgement made in respect of their application.

21 Staff training

21.1 The College will take advantage of all relevant external training opportunities in the area of recruitment, selection and admissions. The Academic Dean has been given a watching brief on relevant websites (e.g. QAA, HEFCE, SPA, OIA) to identify appropriate training opportunities, and to ascertain when, in light of any developments in the sector, further updating and/or training is particularly advisable.
21.2 Whatever particular events may be identified, each member of staff involved in recruitment, selection and admissions will participate personally in an external training event in this area at least once every two years.

21.3 In addition, all new staff who become involved in recruitment, selection and admissions will also receive immediate, initial in-house training from the relevant Programme Lead and programme administrator.

22 Monitoring and review

22.1 This policy will be reviewed annually, in September, by the Academic Dean, who will report to the Academic Board. The policy will be revised in light of any relevant changes in legislation and/or College regulations and strategic objectives.

23 US Student Entry

23.1 Students applying from the United States will be required to demonstrate they are above the compulsory age of school attendance in their home jurisdiction.

23.2 Students applying from the United States must demonstrate the successful completion of a High School Diploma or its legal equivalent.

23.3 Students applying from the United States must achieve a minimum of 2.7 GPA on their High School Diploma or its legal equivalent.

23.4 Students applying from the United States under the Mature Student Provision do not satisfy eligibility under the William D. Ford Federal Student Loan Program.