# Safer Recruitment Policy

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## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Purpose
3. Scope
4. Policy Objectives
5. Roles and Responsibilities
6. Statutory Responsibilities
7. Pre-recruitment Process
8. Recruitment Process
9. Post-recruitment Process
10. Agency and Third-Party Staff
11. Self-employed Staff
12. Volunteers
13. Recruitment of Apprentices
14. Single Central Record (SCR)
15. Monitoring and Review

## About Us

Access Further Education Ltd ('the College') has subsidiary companies, trading names and trading partnerships through which it operates. The trading names and partnerships might have their own names or brands, but the legal entity for the purpose of this policy is Access Further Education Ltd. Trading subsidiaries, trading names and trading partnerships include Access Creative College ('ACC'), Access Industry ('AI') and Access Sport ('AS'). The dBs Institute (DBS Music UK Holdings and its subsidiaries), whilst a separate legal entity, shares common Directorships with the College.

## 1. Introduction

Access Education Group and the brands within the Group (Access Creative College, Access Sport, dBs Institute and Access Industry) have at their core a commitment to deliver outstanding education and, as such, want to ensure the best people are recruited.

To help achieve our aims and objectives, it is essential that people with the relevant skills, attitude, qualifications and experience are recruited. The prime focus of the College is teaching and learning. Therefore, it is vital that applicants demonstrate a commitment to the provision of high-quality teaching and learning, as well as continuous improvement, to enable students to achieve their potential. We are committed to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, and this commitment is fundamental to the recruitment and selection of applicants.

When making recruitment decisions, the College ensures that children, young people and adults at risk are safeguarded from harm by:

1. Making sure the College's commitment to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk is strongly promoted, in order to deter unsuitable people.
2. Having robust safeguards in place throughout the recruitment process to identify and reject candidates who may be unsuitable to work with children, young people and adults at risk.
3. Taking up references and completing all relevant pre-employment checks to prevent unsuitable people from being appointed.
4. Monitoring new employees during the induction period to observe their behaviours and attitudes and, following induction, implementing an appropriate system of supervision and appraisal.

Relevant legislation and guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 (statutory guidance, in force from 1 September 2026)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended, including by the Crime and Policing Act 2026)
- Education (Health Standards) (England) Regulations 2003
- Education Act 2002
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the Prevent duty)
- Equality Act 2010
- Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- DBS Code of Practice
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (as amended in 2013 and 2020)

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this Safer Recruitment Policy is to set out the recruitment process through which we aim to:

- Recruit and develop outstanding employees.
- Ensure that the recruitment of both permanent and fixed-term staff (including volunteers) is conducted in a fair, effective and efficient manner.
- Ensure that all relevant equalities legislation is adhered to.
- Ensure that staff deal professionally with both external and internal candidates at all stages of the process.

The following principles are encompassed in this policy:

- All applicants will receive fair treatment and a high-quality service.
- The job description and person specification are essential tools and will be used throughout the process.
- Employees will be recruited on the knowledge, experience and skills needed for the job.
- Selection will be carried out by a panel with at least two members.
- Appointment will be based on, as a minimum, a completed application form (with CV), shortlisting and interview, and receipt of right to work documentation and satisfactory references.
- Monitoring and evaluation are essential for assessing the effectiveness of the process.
- Internal opportunities will be advertised with requests for internal expressions of interest. All vacancies are made available to internal applicants, who will also receive feedback on their application from the Hiring Manager.
- All external opportunities will be advertised for a minimum of 7 calendar days.
- The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable adjustments to be made to the recruitment process if an applicant makes the employer aware that they have a disability. This applies to the entire recruitment process, from advertisement to appointment.

The provisions of this policy should be read in conjunction with the policies and procedures on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Safeguarding, Child Protection and Prevent; the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders and the Use of Disclosure Information; Verification of Identity, Right to Work and Disclosure and Barring Service checks; and any additional pre-employment checks and verification requirements. The College will include, where appropriate, those arrangements required by our partner organisations. Applicants will be asked to provide relevant information, documents and forms linked to the candidate assessment process, in line with our General Privacy Notice.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all jobs within the College, regardless of hours or role, excluding applications or CVs received from agency workers or agencies unless they have been specifically commissioned. This policy is in place to promote good practice and to ensure that the recruitment and selection methods used are fair, consistent and in line with relevant legislation.

This Safer Recruitment Policy applies to all employees of the College who are responsible for, and involved in, the recruitment and selection of staff.

The document sets out the process for staff to follow in order to comply with legal duties, to ensure the recruitment process is transparent and fair, and to ensure that the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk in the College's care is protected. Everyone within the College community has a responsibility to adhere to it.

## 4. Policy Objectives

We will ensure that the recruitment and selection of staff is carried out in a professional, timely and effective manner, and the People Services Department will monitor the recruitment process.

All candidates will be assessed in a fair, consistent and robust manner, free from discrimination, that supports the principle of open competition, and we will seek to appoint the best person for the job based on individual merit. Candidates, including internal candidates and others personally known to the interview panel, will be assessed in the same way against the requirements of the role.

A predefined job description is prepared for each job, based upon objectively justifiable criteria in terms of the skills, knowledge and abilities required to do the job. Assessment of each applicant for shortlisting and at interview will be undertaken objectively against the predefined criteria in the person specification and must be recorded.

All job applicants are required to complete an online application form alongside their CV and/or cover letter. The College will not employ anyone of compulsory school age, other than current learners engaged as Student Ambassadors and/or Centre Ambassadors. Apprentices must be over compulsory school age before their apprenticeship starts.

All offers of employment are conditional upon the College's recruitment, pre-employment and vetting checks, as outlined in the offer letter.

Sound recording of any meetings or discussions that take place at any stage of this procedure is not permitted unless written consent has been obtained in advance from all parties.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of People Services to:

- Ensure we have effective policies and procedures in place for the recruitment of all staff and volunteers, in accordance with current guidance and legal requirements.
- Monitor the College's compliance with them.

It is the responsibility of staff involved in recruitment to:

- Ensure that we operate safer recruitment procedures and make sure all appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and volunteers who work at the College.
- Monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this document.
- Promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk at every stage of the procedure.

## 6. Statutory Responsibilities

The College will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment, including recruitment and opportunities for selection and promotion. The principles of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and related documents are therefore inherent in this policy.

We are committed to promoting a culture of diversity and inclusion for all our employees and potential employees. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds. In recognition of this commitment, we particularly encourage applications from groups who are currently under-represented, including people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, disabled people, women and those who are neurodivergent.

The recruitment and selection process complies with the Group's Safeguarding, Child Protection and Prevent Policy, which requires that appropriate action is taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children, young people and adults at risk.

As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), the Group complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and undertakes to treat all applicants fairly. Under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, the Group is permitted to ask whether an applicant has any unspent convictions or conditional cautions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and/or whether they have any adult cautions (simple or conditional) or spent convictions that are not protected, as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2020.

The Group is required under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006 to verify that all new employees are legally entitled to work in the UK. All candidates attending an interview will be required to bring proof of their identity and eligibility to work in the UK so that it can be checked before any offer of employment is made.

Information obtained through the recruitment and selection process will be managed in accordance with the Group's Data Protection, Document Retention and Employee Data policies.

Online checks of candidates or staff on social networking sites or through a third party are not permitted, except in exceptional circumstances when an authorised member of staff (e.g. a member of the People Services team or an investigating manager) may be required to carry them out.

## 7. Pre-recruitment Process

Where a vacancy has arisen as a result of a leaver, the role can be submitted to People Services for advertising once appropriate due diligence has been conducted by the Hiring Manager. This includes an assessment of whether a like-for-like replacement is required and/or whether there is an opportunity to fill the role internally. Where the replacement role has fundamental differences from the position being vacated, authorisation from senior leadership is required.

All new or additional posts also require senior leadership and budget-holder authorisation prior to recruiting. It is the responsibility of the Hiring Manager to ensure that this has been obtained before contacting People Services.

# 8. Recruitment Process

## 8.1 Advertising Posts

All vacancies are normally advertised via our recruitment platform, and applications are received through its applicant tracking system. As standard, vacancies are advertised on the following platforms: Totaljobs, Jobsite, CareerBuilder, Indeed, College and partner websites, Find a Job (GOV.UK), LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter). We also use specialist education job boards such as AoC Jobs, FE Week and Edu Jobs to reach a wider audience.

For difficult-to-fill vacancies, additional advertising platforms may be considered, including role-specific platforms or sites supporting specific under-represented groups, in accordance with our policies and strategies for equality, diversity and inclusion. This requires authorisation from the Head of Department/ Centre and the Executive Head of People Services, and the availability of an appropriate recruitment budget.

## 8.2 Application Form

All applicants will complete an electronic application form as part of the application process within the applicant tracking system. This includes:

- Details to fully identify the individual concerned.
- Details of their latest employer and current role, and a full employment history with any gaps explained.
- Confirmation that the individual has the right to work in the UK.

Additional information will also be collected, including the applicant's CV, any cover letter provided and any responses to role-specific selection criteria questions linked to the position.

## 8.3 Job Description and Person Specification

Every vacancy advertised will include an accurate job description that includes:

- The job title.
- The job title of the post that the role reports to.
- The purpose of the role.
- Main duties and responsibilities.
- The salary range.
- The post holder's individual responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk in their care.
- The post holder's individual responsibilities in respect of data protection and information security.

The person specification will set out the knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications relevant to the role, including any essential requirements.

The job description is an essential feature of the advertising and recruitment process. It will be reviewed by the Hiring Manager to ensure it is up to date and verified by a member of the People Services team.

## 8.4 Shortlisting

To support safer recruitment and to ensure fairness in the process, the recruitment panel should take adequate time to properly scrutinise the applications. The panel should:

- For consistency, assess each application against the criteria for the role, including any criteria specific to working with children, using a checklist.
- Consider whether each application is fully completed; if not, it may be returned to the applicant or removed from the process.
- Highlight any gaps (in employment etc.) to be explored further at interview should the candidate be long/shortlisted.
- Look for evidence against the criteria set out in the person specification and job description to support their recruitment decision.
- Normally only shortlist applicants who meet all the essential criteria set out in the person specification. However, where information in an application is unclear or partial, the panel may decide to shortlist and explore the issues further at interview. A note should be added to the record where this decision has been taken.

If more applicants than anticipated meet all the essential criteria for the post, the panel may use any specified desirable criteria to select the final shortlist.

### 8.5 Invitation to Interview

Candidates called to interview will receive:

- Written correspondence confirming details of the interview/assessment and any other selection techniques to be used, and asking whether the College needs to make any reasonable adjustments to facilitate their attendance and participation in the interview and selection process.
- An opportunity to ask any questions prior to the interview.

### 8.6 The Selection Process

Selection techniques will be determined by the nature and duties of the post, but all vacancies will require, as a minimum, an interview of shortlisted candidates. All interview questions asked by the panel, and candidates' responses, will be recorded.

References will be checked to ensure all specific questions have been answered satisfactorily and, where required, the referee will be contacted for clarification to ensure sufficient information is obtained. References will also be compared with the information provided by the applicant in their application and during the interview and selection process. Any discrepancies will be discussed with the individual before the appointment is confirmed.

Scoring, assessment and selection will be carried out objectively, with the highest-scoring candidate being offered the position in the first instance.

Interviews will normally be held in person. Where candidates are living and/or working abroad, or are a long distance from the interview location within the UK and unable to travel, interviews may be held by video call (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or Zoom).

During the interview, the panel will ask candidates to:

- Explain satisfactorily any anomalies or discrepancies in the information available to the panel that have not already been explained on their application form.
- Declare any information that is likely to appear on their DBS certificate that has not already been disclosed on their application form.

- Demonstrate their ability to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and young people. This will include safeguarding and Prevent questions asked by the interview panel, where applicable to the role.

All candidates will be asked a range of standardised, role-specific interview questions and assessment tasks. In addition, candidates may be asked individual questions about gaps in their employment history and/or any relevant criminal history disclosed that requires clarification.

### 8.7 Pre-employment Checks

Successful candidates will receive a conditional offer of employment that is subject to the following conditions and checks:

- References: At least two references covering employment, education or activities for the previous 3 years. We prefer one referee to be the current or most recent employer. Where this is a first job, references from volunteer managers, college/university lecturers or school headteachers can be accepted.
- Proof of qualifications: Specifically those relevant to the role and, where applicable, the highest-level teaching qualification.
- Identity and right to work: Identity and the right to work in the UK will be verified before employment starts, in line with current Home Office guidance. British and Irish citizens may provide an original passport (current or expired), or a UK birth or adoption certificate together with an official document showing their name and permanent National Insurance number (e.g. a P45, P60, National Insurance card or HMRC letter). Candidates with an eVisa or EU Settlement Scheme status must provide a share code so that an online check can be completed using the Home Office service. Further details on acceptable documents can be found at Prove your right to work to an employer.
- DBS: All staff are required to undergo a DBS check at the level appropriate to their role; roles in regulated activity require an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list information. An existing DBS certificate will only be accepted where the applicant is subscribed to the DBS Update Service and a status check confirms there is no new information. In exceptional circumstances, an individual may start work before their enhanced DBS certificate is received, provided a separate barred list check has been completed (where the role is in regulated activity), a risk assessment has been approved by People Services and appropriate supervision is in place. Employment remains conditional on a satisfactory DBS certificate; if the certificate reveals information that makes the individual unsuitable for the role, the offer may be withdrawn and employment ended.
- Overseas checks: Candidates who have lived or worked outside the UK will be subject to additional checks as appropriate, such as a criminal records check from the relevant country or a letter of professional standing from the relevant regulator.
- Fitness to work: Following a conditional offer, candidates will complete a health questionnaire so that the College can be satisfied they have the appropriate level of physical and mental fitness for the role. Any reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with the Equality Act 2010.

### 8.8 References

The purpose of seeking references is to obtain objective and factual information to support appointment decisions. References will always be sought and obtained directly from the referee, preferably from a senior person with appropriate authority, not just a colleague.

References will be requested at the conditional offer stage, with candidates required to complete a Google Form giving referee details. Open references and testimonials will not be relied upon. References will only

be accepted from legitimate (verifiable) email addresses. References will be scrutinised, and any concerns will be resolved satisfactorily before the appointment is confirmed.

Where it is not possible to obtain two employment references, the recruitment team will seek to obtain one employment reference and may seek an additional personal reference.

All referees will be asked specific questions about:

- The candidate's suitability for working with children and young people.
- Any issues, concerns or substantiated allegations that relate to the safeguarding of children and young people.
- Any disciplinary procedures the candidate has been subject to involving the safety and welfare of children, including any in which the sanction has expired.

## 9. Post-recruitment Process

### 9.1 Induction

All staff and volunteers who are new to the College will receive information on the relevant child protection policy and procedures, safeguarding policies, whistleblowing policy, data protection and guidance on safe working practices as part of their induction. All policies are available via our Policy Portal.

All new staff will complete mandatory training in relation to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).
- Child Protection in Education / Safeguarding Young People and Adults.
- The Prevent duty.
- The Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Equality and Diversity.

Additional training will also be provided on our systems (Moodle, HRIS, Guru and MyConcern), as well as a number of mandatory e-learning modules on health and safety and safe working. An additional induction and mentoring process will be put in place for new teachers to help them understand the broader requirements of the role.

All new staff will undergo a period of monitoring as part of their probationary period and will:

- Meet regularly with their induction manager.
- Meet regularly with their line manager.
- Attend any appropriate training.

### 9.2 Initial Teacher Training

We pride ourselves on employing teachers with relevant and current industry knowledge and experience. Where unqualified teaching staff are employed, we are committed to ensuring they receive suitable mentoring and are enrolled on teacher training with a recognised provider.

Wherever possible, we will seek to ensure that teaching staff hold relevant teaching qualifications on appointment, particularly in senior roles, but we reserve the right to appoint appropriately skilled vocational practitioners subject to their commitment to undertake relevant initial teacher training.

## 10. Agency and Third-Party Staff

We will ensure agencies adopt the same robust recruitment and vetting procedures, to minimise the risk of employing people who may abuse their position of trust or who are otherwise unsuited to such work. We must obtain written confirmation from any agency, third-party organisation or contractor that all relevant safeguarding and pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed. Any information disclosed as part of the DBS checks will be treated confidentially.

In relation to an enhanced DBS certificate, the written confirmation must confirm that a certificate has been obtained by the employer (e.g. the agency or contractor firm). Where a position requires a barred list check (because the individual will be engaged in regulated activity), this must also be included in the confirmation. All of the above checks must be confirmed in writing to the College before the individual arrives on site to work.

We will carry out identity checks when the individual arrives at the College to ensure the person presenting is the same person for whom the checks have been confirmed. This will involve checking the individual's photographic identification, such as a photocard driving licence, passport or company photo ID card. Colleges and centres must notify their People Services Manager immediately if there are any safeguarding issues with agency staff.

## 11. Self-employed Staff

Where an individual is required to work at the College and has self-employed status, relevant checks must be completed before they provide their services. This includes identity checks and confirming they have the right to work in the UK.

If they will be engaged in regulated activity, the College must obtain an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list information for the individual (via an umbrella body if required), as self-employed individuals are not able to apply directly to the DBS for a standard or enhanced check. Where they will not be in regulated activity but will have contact with children, young people or adults at risk, a risk assessment will be used to decide the appropriate level of check. The College recognises that the certificate is issued to the individual and could be presented to other organisations.

## 12. Volunteers

We will require all necessary checks, including DBS requirements, to be satisfactorily completed for volunteers. DBS checks for volunteers are free of charge, provided the individual meets the DBS definition of a volunteer: they must not benefit directly from the position, receive any payment for the role (except approved expenses), be on a work placement, be on a course that requires them to carry out the role, or be in a trainee position that will lead to a full-time role or qualification.

A volunteer must provide the same identity documents as employees.

Since 1 September 2026, following the Crime and Policing Act 2026 and KCSIE 2026, the supervision exemption no longer applies. A volunteer who teaches, trains, instructs, cares for or supervises children on more than three days in any 30-day period, or overnight, is in regulated activity whether or not they are supervised. Providing personal care to children is regulated activity even on a one-off basis. These volunteers must have an enhanced DBS certificate with children’s barred list information, and the barred list check must be completed before they start.

Where volunteers are not engaged in regulated activity (for example, they help less often than the threshold above), a risk assessment should be completed to decide whether to obtain an enhanced DBS certificate without barred list information or a basic DBS certificate.

Volunteers who have not been checked against the relevant barred list will not be permitted to undertake regulated activity. It is a criminal offence for a barred person to work or volunteer in regulated activity, and for an organisation to knowingly allow them to do so. More information on volunteer DBS checks can be found on the GOV.UK website.

## 13. Recruitment of Apprentices

Apprentices will be appointed in the same way as other employees with regard to appropriate pre-employment checks and verification. Most apprentices are normally engaged in non-regulated activity, so the checks appropriate to their role will be carried out. Where apprentices are engaged in regulated activity, they will undergo the same full checks as all other employees.

## 14. Single Central Record (SCR)

The College uses a Google Sheet template, extracted from our Select HR system, which records the information required by KCSIE, including each pre-appointment check carried out, the date it was completed and who completed it. Each employee's record within the Select HR system holds the relevant details and documentary evidence obtained throughout the recruitment process.

## 15. Monitoring and Review

Through monitoring and review, we are committed to:

- Ensuring the consistency of our recruitment practices and adherence to legislation.
- Maintaining individual records in line with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, and treating them as confidential.
- Developing and improving our practices. This policy will therefore be reviewed regularly.