



Ada, National College for Digital Skills

Sixth Form Admissions Policy

Version	Purpose / Changes	Author	Date
1	Initial Draft	Jon Mella	01/09/2020
2	Update Policy	Natasha Paramasamy	01/08/2022
3	Updated Policy	Régina Heap	3/11/2023
4	Updated policy	Régina Heap	11/11/2024
5	Updated policy to include Manchester Specific areas	Tina Götschi	01/01/2025
6	Updated policy: changes reflecting new curriculum and new admissions process using applicant portal. Addition of a routine reference request.	Régina Heap	4/08/2025

1. INTRODUCTION

This document sets out Ada, the National College for Digital Skills' policy for admitting students to the Sixth Form and explains the process followed when deciding which applicants are offered a place. It also sets out the circumstances when a decision made under this policy can be reviewed and the process that must be followed.

The College is committed to equal opportunities and will educate students across the full spectrum of academic ability, subject to the admissions criteria.

The College aims to recruit students that broadly reflect the communities it serves and support all its students into the digital sector so that the sector better reflects the diversity of society.

All students have equal access to the curriculum and there is a learning support programme for students with special educational needs.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Age

Students can be admitted to the Sixth Form at 16 or 17 years of age (after KS4/GCSE). Applicants who would be 18 years of age at the start of the Sixth Form academic year cannot be considered for a place. This means under 19 on 31 August in the teaching year when the student commences a study programme¹.

2.2 Eligibility

The college admits students nationally.

An application can be accepted from parents/carers residing overseas for a young person not yet resident in the UK, as long as (i) the young person is an EU National or (ii) the parents/carers intend to relocate and work in the UK. In such circumstances, the College will consider when the young person is expected to be resident in the UK and whether the parent's application to enter the UK has been or will be successful. In order that places offered are not wasted because they cannot be taken up, the College will not make an offer to any student resident overseas unless they have a right of residence in the UK or it is clear beyond reasonable doubt that the parent's application to enter and stay in the UK will be successful. It is the responsibility of the applicant's parent(s) to ensure this is the case.

¹

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision/advice-funding-rules-for-16-to-19-provision-2025-to-2026>

2.3 Accommodation

Ada is a day College. It is not responsible for the supervision of students outside of college hours. It has a national catchment area. Students may live away from home if necessary, but parents/carers must take responsibility for their accommodation being satisfactory, and make sure that the day-to-day support for the student is in place.

2.4 College year

Ada's Sixth form year consists of 3 terms, with 3 half term holidays (Oct, Feb, May/June) and 2 mid term holidays (Dec / Apr) in line with a variety of London or Greater Manchester local authorities for each campus. The College does not give permission for College students to take vacations during term time. Applicants should be available on enrolment day (GCSE results day will be on **Thursday, 20th August 2026**) as well as Induction day (date to be confirmed).

2.5 Communications

All communications with the London Sixth form admissions team should be to and/or include the sixthformadmissions@ada.ac.uk email address.

All communications with the Manchester Sixth form admissions team should be to and/or include the mcrsixthformadmissions@ada.ac.uk email address.

3. ADMISSION CRITERIA

The criteria that must be satisfied before applicants can be enrolled at the College are set out below.

Applicants must:-

- (i) aim for a career in the digital sector or related fields
- (ii) demonstrate (with evidence) an aptitude for and commitment to the digital world and its associated technologies
- (iii) demonstrate, during the application process, a real determination to study, practise and succeed
- (iv) have the stamina and drive for the demanding schedule
- (v) demonstrate to the teachers and practitioners they meet or work with during the application process, that they would benefit from the education that Ada has to offer
- (vi) have achieved the College's GCSE entry requirements:

- (a) complete 5 or more GCSE qualifications by August of the year of the candidate's enrolment at the College (alternative qualifications may be accepted at the College's discretion).
- (b) achieve an average grade of a 5 or above in their GCSE qualifications by August of the year of the candidate's enrolment at the College, including at least a grade 4 in English Language and Mathematics. Where a grade 4 in either English Language or Mathematics is not achieved, the College may permit a student to complete a resit in order to achieve this.
- (vii) meet the subject specific grade criteria in order to be enrolled on certain courses:
 - (a) T level in Software Development - achieve a grade 5 or above in GCSE Maths and English Language and a grade 6 or above in GCSE Computer science.
 - (b) Mathematics - achieve a grade 7 or above in GCSE Maths
 - (c) Further Mathematics - achieve a grade 8 or above in GCSE Maths
 - (d) Psychology - achieve a grade 5 or above in GCSE Maths and GCSE English Language.
 - (e) Business Studies - achieve a grade 5 or above in GCSE Maths and English Language
 - (f) Computer Science A Level - achieve a grade 6 or above in GCSE Computer Science, or grade 7 or above in GCSE Maths (if no Computer Science GCSE).

The above criteria are referred to in this policy as the Admission Criteria.

4. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

We recommend that all prospective applicants attend an open event and/or read our prospectus before applying for a place. This will enable parents/carers and applicants to understand the way in which the College works and decide whether the College is right for them.

Students or parents/carers may obtain a prospectus in any of the following ways:

- by visiting the College's website at www.ada.ac.uk
- by visiting the Ada Campus and requesting one from reception in either:
 - **London:** 1 Sutherland Street, SW1V 4LD)
 - **Manchester:** 16 Blossom Street, Ancoats, Manchester, M4 5AF
- From one of the many careers fairs that we attend at their college/schools or
- by attending one of our Open Evenings

Application is online through the website, click [here](https://portal.ada.ac.uk/s/sixth-form-application)² for applications in London and Manchester. The deadline for applications will be communicated on the website and we would always encourage interested applicants to complete an application form.

²<https://portal.ada.ac.uk/s/sixth-form-application>

Application forms submitted online will be acknowledged and reviewed on submission. The applicant will then receive an invitation to log on to their personal account on our portal where they will be able to complete their application and schedule an interview on one of our Lift-off days.

Applicants who submit incomplete applications will be sent an email informing them that their application is incomplete and requesting the information that is still required. The application will not be processed until this information is supplied.

Applicants who do not submit a complete application in time to be processed by the deadline may find that all places have been allocated. The application will be placed on a waiting list without being assessed.

If places become available before the start of the academic year, applicants on the waiting list may be invited to continue the process as outlined below.

Applicants who have been home tutored and therefore do not have a school report must provide a report that is, to the best of their knowledge and ability, accurate and reflects their potential GCSE grades. They should also provide the name of the exam board used and the exam centre they are planning to attend.

All applications received by the relevant deadline will be dealt with according to the information provided, and Ada reserves the right to reject or expel any applicant that provides false or misleading information.

It is very important that applicants read the application form carefully to ensure they meet the entry requirements and ensure all information is complete and the relevant documents enclosed to avoid disappointment.

5. HOW APPLICATIONS ARE CONSIDERED

There is a three-stage process that is followed when applications are received by the College.

(i) Preliminary review

At this stage all completed application forms received on time will be processed. Applicants who clearly do not satisfy the Admission Criteria may be told they are unsuccessful at this stage.

(ii) Pre-Lift-off Administration

Once an applicant's eligibility has been ascertained, they will be invited to log into their own individual application portal. Here, they can complete the remaining steps of the application process.

Before Lift-off Day (the interview day), applicants must submit either their latest school report (from the start of Year 11), their predicted grades and Mock exam results (throughout Year 11), or

their final GCSE grades (on or after GCSE results day). They must also provide an attendance record from their current or most recent educational provider. These documents must show evidence of being provided by the educational institution (e.g., printed on headed paper).

Applicants must also provide information related to additional support and welfare needs. This helps us determine if and how we can provide any support needed.

Applicants will be asked to provide details for a referee from their current school. This referee must agree to be contacted and to provide a reference.

In due time, they will be able to use the portal to select the date and time of their Lift-off day and check the status of their application. It is important that the applicant makes a note of their username (email address) and password, and that they do not share these.

On Lift-off Day, where the applicants will have 2 interviews with Ada staff. Lift-off days usually take place on Saturdays, but are also held on weekdays after school.

If a candidate fails to complete the documents requested forms before Lift-off day, they will not be able to take part. In these circumstances, it will be at the College's discretion whether they are invited to a future Lift-off day.

(iii) Lift-off Days

Candidates who meet the Admission Criteria and have submitted the required documentation will participate in a Lift-off Day. This entails two interviews, usually conducted by two different members of staff. One assesses the candidate's interests, aspirations and motivations for studying at Ada. The other is based on a structured assessment task and assesses the candidate's reasoning and problem-solving skills. All applicants must attend a Lift-off day in person and take part in these activities.

Applicants will be sent a reminder of the Lift-off Day and informed of the structure of the day, what they must bring or send. These reminders will be sent via SMS, email and phone calls.

We will endeavour to offer a range of dates and time slots for Lift-off days, and it is their responsibility to let us know, in good time, if they can not attend and the reason for this. They will be able to reschedule a new date and time slot through the student portal.

The decision to offer a place following a Lift-off day will be based on the professional judgement of the staff involved, who will consider: (i) the applicant's performance during the Lift-off process; (ii) the supplied predicted grades, in order to judge the likelihood that the candidate will achieve the GCSE entry requirements; and (iii) the extent to which the applicant satisfies the Admission Criteria.

6. OUTCOME OF APPLICATION

Applicants will be notified of one of the following outcomes to their application by email:-

- (i) an offer of a place (see note (a) below)
- (ii) an offer of a place with special conditions (see note (b) below)
- (iii) a decision not to offer a place

Note (a): Offers of places at Ada are subject to the Key Stage 4 / GCSEs having been completed and the Grade entry requirements met.

Note (b): We understand that medical, psychological, behavioural or emotional problems, or other adverse circumstances, may affect a students' fitness to study and hence their capacity to undertake the course of study offered by the college. If there is doubt as to the student's fitness to study, an offer may be contingent on the results of a further fitness to study assessment with the student services team. The college's student services team will determine the student's ability to meet the reasonable academic requirements of their programme and the reasonable social and behavioural requirements we have without having an unacceptably detrimental impact on the health, safety, welfare and/or educational experience of the student, other students, members of staff or members of the wider community and whether we have the capacity and ability to deliver interventions need to be put in place to support them. This may result in, for instance, the offer requiring a programme of study of 3 years (rather than 2) to accommodate a lighter curriculum load to support the student.

Applicants will receive a decision on their application for a place in Ada's Sixth Form within two weeks of their final Lift-off day. All decisions will be subject to the condition that the applicant achieves the required GCSE grades and overall average.

In all cases the decision of the College is final, subject to the request to review on Permitted Grounds described in the section below.

7. CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN A DECISION CAN BE REVIEWED

If an applicant or parent/guardian is dissatisfied with a decision made under this policy there are certain circumstances where such a decision can be reviewed as set out below.

All applications for reviews must be received at the College within 14 days of notification of the relevant decision.

(i) A decision not to invite an applicant to a Lift-off day following a preliminary review of the application

Applicants not invited to a Lift-off day following a preliminary consideration of their application, because they are considered not to have met the Admission Criteria can request a further review of the decision. This means that the application will be looked at again against the Admission Criteria by a member of the Senior Leadership Team not involved in the original decision.

If successful, the applicant will be invited to participate in a Lift-off day and the application process will continue as set out in this policy.

There is no further right of review or appeal for those applicants who are unsuccessful following a further review of their application.

(ii) A decision not to offer a place at the College following a Lift-off day

An applicant who is invited to a Lift-off day but is then not offered a place at the College may apply for a second attempt Lift-off day.

It is important that applicants applying for a second attempt Lift-off day provide reasons why they consider that they should be given a second attempt. They should also refer to the Admission Criteria and demonstrate how such criteria is satisfied.

A second attempt Lift-off day is not automatically granted. The College will review carefully the reasons given for requesting a second attempt Lift-off day and will refer again to the extent to which the applicant satisfies the Admission Criteria.

Applicants who are unsuccessful in seeking a second attempt Lift-off day can be provided with written feedback relating to their first Lift-off day. There is no further right of appeal in these circumstances.

Applicants who are successful in seeking a second attempt on Lift-off day will be invited to the College and their application will be considered.

The decision to offer a place following a Lift-off day will be based on the professional judgement of the staff involved, who will consider: (i) the applicant's performance during the Lift-off day; (ii) the supplied predicted grades, in order to judge the likelihood that the candidate will achieve the College's grade requirements; and (iii) the extent to which the applicant satisfies the Admission Criteria.

The date given for a second attempt Lift-off day cannot be changed unless it is for a previously arranged hospital appointment or public exam.

(iii) A decision not to offer a place at the College following a second attempt Interview or a decision to offer a place with special conditions:

If, following a second attempt Lift-off day, an applicant is not offered a place they can request that the decision be reviewed, **but only if it can be shown that the College has failed to follow this admission policy**. This is referred to below as "Permitted Grounds".

A request for a review under this category should be made in writing to the Principal.

It is important that the letter requesting a review must state clearly the grounds for seeking a review, specifying clearly how it is believed that the College has not followed this policy on admissions.

Following receipt of the email requesting an appeal, it will be forwarded to the Principal (or other member of the Senior Leadership team nominated by the Principal) for consideration and to confirm that the request for a review has been made on Permitted Grounds.

If the request has not, in the reasonable opinion of the Principal (or other member of the Senior Leadership team nominated by the Principal) been made on Permitted Grounds, the request will be refused at that point. There will be no further consideration of the matter and no further right of review.

If it has been made on Permitted Grounds, it will be considered and the outcome will be one of:

- upholding the original decision;
- referring to the application for admission back to the College to be considered afresh.

The decision of the Principal (or other member of the Senior Leadership team nominated by the Principal), is final, will be communicated in writing and there will be no further right of appeal.

8. POST-OFFER PROCESS

Offer-holders must complete a pre-enrolment form to secure their place. This form will be posted in the application portal, and offer-holders will have two weeks to complete it from the date it is made available. The College reserves the right to withdraw a candidate's offer should they fail to return the form in time.

(i) GCSE Results day and enrolment

Once the candidate has received their GCSE results in August 2026, they will be invited to enrol at the College (provided they have met the GCSE entry requirements). As part of the enrolment process, the candidate's grades will be reviewed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This staff member's professional judgement will be used to determine whether the candidate has met the GCSE grade requirements for their offer and, if they have, which curriculum pathway the candidate will study. Where a candidate's GCSE attainment is judged as sufficient to study their first choice curriculum pathway, the College will endeavour to enrol the candidate onto this pathway. If a candidate's GCSE attainment is judged as insufficient to study their first choice curriculum pathway, the College will enrol the candidate onto an alternative pathway that they meet the grade requirements for.

If a candidate does not achieve the GCSE entry requirements, they may still be invited to enrol at the College's discretion. If this is the case, their curriculum pathway will be determined by the same grade review process outlined above.

In the event that the College is oversubscribed (i.e. more students attempt to enrol than the maximum capacity of the year group), a prioritisation process will be used. Spaces will be allocated to those on a priority list consisting of candidates who returned their pre-enrolment forms the

earliest and/or engaged the most frequently with offer-holder events and activities run by the College. Any remaining candidates will be placed on a waiting list and invited to enrol should any spaces become available in the weeks following enrolment.

9. AMENDMENTS

The College reserves the right to amend the admissions policy at any time without notice to the applicant.