



Student Suitability Process - 2022

Principles

- Kingston University involves partner agencies in admissions as recommended by Social Work England in their Education Standards Guidance:
 - *"1.4 It can be beneficial to involve employers in deciding what your requirements for criminal record checks should be, so that successful applicants are less likely to encounter any issues with regard to their criminal record check when they go on placements (as placement providers may run their own checks which may have different requirements to yours) or start practising as a social worker."*
- As part of the collaborative interviewing process, applicants are considered in relation to suitability for the profession. For applicants who have passed the interview process and other selection processes, the submitted Suitability Declarations are then reviewed by the KU SW Admissions Team (Admissions Tutor, Course Leader, Strategic Lead for Placements) who make informed decisions on the appropriateness of accepting such applicants onto the course.
- Suitability issues may relate to prior criminal convictions or cautions, or they may also relate to a disclosure of prior contact/experience with statutory services (themselves or a member of their family).
- In cases of prior contact/personal experience where the candidate is subsequently offered a place on the course and takes up this offer, the University will share relevant information with any agency named in the disclosure where a placement is being considered for this student at that same agency. This will ensure that partner agencies have the capacity to consider the appropriateness of the placement offer and put in place any necessary safeguards for data protection. The information will not be shared with any agency that the student has not had prior contact with as a service-user.
- In cases where the nature and/or significance of the declared suitability issue(s) is open to interpretation, the KU SW Admissions Team can seek an opinion from the partnership advisory group.
- Members of the advisory group represent the partner agencies. They are asked to give their professional opinion as to whether their agency would consider giving a placement to a potential applicant in such a position. They are not being asked to make a decision about an applicant's suitability for social work.

- Individual partner agencies will not later be obligated or expected to offer a particular student a placement on the basis of an opinion provided by their representative during the admissions process.
- The effectiveness of the process is dependent on the most suitable individual within the partner agency being identified as the person responsible for providing their opinion. Therefore, it is imperative that people with relevant knowledge and experience are selected by respective partner agencies to be part of this process.
- All responses and opinions from the advisory group should be shared privately, via email, with the named individual responsible for coordinating the responses from partners (this will be an individual who is independent of the University and their identity will be clearly communicated with partners). This is currently Sharon Evans (Teaching Partnership Practice Consultant). In the absence of Sharon Evans, the deputy coordinator will be Libbi Aldred (Teaching Partnership Project Lead).
- The coordinator is then responsible for providing an overall view to the University on the likelihood of the applicant being able to obtain a placement
- If all partners respond in the negative, or if the response is mixed, the applicant would be advised of this and that placements cannot be guaranteed in order for the applicant to make an informed decision. If the applicant then chooses to take up a place on the course, they will need to indicate in writing that they understand that placements cannot be guaranteed.
- If the responses are all affirmative the University can make their normal offer of a place on the course to the applicant.

'Alternative' qualifying programmes

- Alongside the more traditional qualifying programmes, Kingston University also offers a number of 'alternative' qualifying programmes, for example, the Social Work Integrated Degree Apprenticeship and the Step Up to Social Work Programme.
- An apprentice's suitability in relation to criminal convictions would need to be supported by their current employer. This is unlikely to cause a material issue unless the criminal conviction occurred after their last DBS check, since they will be required to have an up-to-date DBS. The University's practice since the apprenticeship began is to ask applicants to copy their employer into the email when they send their statement.
- A Step Up to Social Work candidate's suitability in relation to criminal convictions would need to be supported by the local authorities (placement providers) within the Step Up Regional Partnership since the nature of the programme means that placements are allocated to a specific authority from the outset.

Process steps

1. Suitability issue is declared as part of university Admissions process
2. KU SW Admissions Team review suitability related documentation and decide if the application is to be rejected outright or if the circumstances require an opinion from the partnership advisory group regarding likelihood of placement offer
3. The University makes the advisory group coordinator of responses aware of the suitability issue, anonymising applicant's personal information, and sharing the applicant's declaration and written reflection
4. The coordinator, within two working days of being alerted to the suitability issue, will send a collective email to the identified individual within each agency to seek a view as to whether the applicant is likely to experience difficulty in obtaining placements. To avoid the risk of respondents mistakenly replying to all parties, inadvertently sharing their view with others, all individuals will be blind copied into the email.
5. The identified individual within each agency should provide their opinion within 5 working days of receiving the suitability issue. **It is vital that this timeframe is adhered to, as in normal circumstances the University aims to provide a response to the applicant within 10 working days.**
6. Any individual can request a further reflection from the applicant if they think this would aid them in forming an opinion about the likelihood of them being offered placements. In this event, the coordinator will request this from the University, and the individual who requested the additional reflection will not be expected to give their opinion until this is received. All other opinions received will be considered in the interim.
7. Once the additional reflection is received, this will be shared with all individuals (without sharing details of who requested the reflection or why). Those who have already responded will be asked to confirm whether or not this has changed their opinion and those who have not responded will be asked to consider both reflections when forming their opinion. A further 5 working days will be granted for all parties to respond to the suitability issue.
8. Once the coordinator has received sufficient responses (responses from 5 partner agencies will be quorate providing these are a mixture of Children & Families and Adults partners), an overall view from the Partnership will be shared by the coordinator with the University.
9. The University will share the view of the Partnership with the applicant and allow the applicant to make an informed decision about whether to continue with the course.

Version No.	Date	Changes	Author
0.1	14.10.21	New draft	Libbi Aldred
0.2	19.10.21	Updates made to reflect meeting held with partners 18.10.21	Libbi Aldred

0.3	21.10.21	Added time frame details	Libbi Aldred
0.4	1.11.21	Added information about non-traditional entry routes	Libbi Aldred
0.5	14.1.22	Included statement about student suitability relating to prior involvement with services	Libbi Aldred
1.0	20.1.22	Approved	Wilson Muleya
1.1	18.02.22	Revised process summary and offer process	David Nilsson
2.0	11.3.22	Approved	Wilson Muleya