



Admissions Policy

Policy number	A1 (formerly Policy 25)
Review schedule	Annual. Sent to Durham each year in August.
Reviewed and approved by the Board	October 2025
Date of next review	April 2026

Introduction

Admission to courses provided by Spiritus College (and progression to further study) is guided by our overall Teaching and Learning Strategy, and in particular by our mission and overall aim:

- Spiritus College's mission is to provide formation for Christian ministry and promote Christian understanding of the world.
- Our overall aim as an institution is to participate in the mission of God by providing the Church in the South West region of England with high-quality theological education, formation and research for those seeking to explore, or deepen their experience of, the Christian faith, along with those preparing for, or already undertaking a public representative ministry in the Church.

Spiritus College is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment that supports all students in achieving their full academic, personal, spiritual, ministerial, and professional potential. This policy sets out:

- Our commitment to widening participation
- Our admissions process
- Provision of necessary academic and pastoral support services

Policy aims

- To promote diversity in terms of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, religion or belief
- To encourage representation of under-represented groups in theological study, including – but not limited to – mature students, students with disabilities, students from ethnic minority groups, and socio-economically disadvantaged students

A1 (formerly Policy 25)

- To provide clear processes for requesting reasonable adjustments of academic support for people with disabilities
- To promote a culture of respect, belonging and mutual understanding
- To ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and related legislative frameworks. The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as any physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The law requires Spiritus College to make appropriate 'reasonable adjustments' including anticipatory adjustments.

Governance

Courses at Spiritus College are validated by Durham University and the National Ministry Team of the Church of England. We are required to follow their guidelines in terms of Admissions. The Spiritus Management Committee makes local and individual decisions.

Widening participation

We are committed to enabling access to theological study across a variety of academic programmes within the South West. We seek to:

- Widen participation by actively encouraging students from under-represented backgrounds, working with our partner dioceses to do so
- Provide transparent information about entry requirements, alternative pathways and introductory courses
- Ensure outreach activities, such as Open Days as well as publicity, reflects the diversity of potential applicants

Admissions process

Decisions about admissions will be made by the Academic Registrar under the guidance of the Spiritus Management Committee.

Those sponsored by the Church of England are recommended to us for training as LLMs (Readers) or Ordinands. LLMs (Readers) usually follow a course leading to a Certificate in Higher Education (120 credits) in Theology, Ministry and Mission, and Ordinands follow a course leading to a Certificate of Higher Education in Christian Ministry and Mission (180 credit) or a Diploma in Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission or a BA in Theology, Ministry and Mission.

Durham University Common Awards entry requirements can be viewed here:

<https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/admissions/entry-requirements/>

A1 (formerly Policy 25)

The standard entry requirement for entry to the Foundation Award and Certificate of Higher Education in Theology, Ministry and Mission, for candidates with little or no relevant work experience who do not already have a university qualification in Theology, Ministry and/or Mission, is one A Level at Grade E or above, or equivalent (e.g. vocational or professional awards).

The standard entry requirement for entry to the Certificate of Higher Education in Christian Ministry and Mission or the Diploma for candidates with little or no employment history, who do not already have a university qualification in Theology, Ministry and/or Mission, is 2 A Levels at Grade E or above, or equivalent (e.g. vocational or professional awards).

The standard entry requirement for entry to the BA for candidates with little or no employment history, who do not already have a university qualification in Theology, Ministry and/or Mission, is 3 A Levels at Grade E or above, or equivalent (e.g. vocational or professional awards).

The standard entry requirement for entry to the MA is an upper-second class honours degree or equivalent in a subject relevant to the proposed course of study. Graduates (classed as first-class or 2:1 honours) in other disciplines with experience of theology or religious studies to at least FHEQ Level 4 (undergraduate Certificate level, awarded with credit or distinction, or with an overall mark of at least 60%) may also be admitted to the programme.

However, especially for mature students, prior professional experience will be taken into account as well as educational qualifications.

Reader trainees will be registered initially for a Certificate unless they have appropriate previous qualifications.

For all programmes, applicants can apply for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), either that which is certificated (APCL) or that based on previous life experience (experiential) (APEL). For mature candidates, relevant work experience may be considered in lieu of formal academic qualification. Such a process is at the discretion of the Management Committee and may include submission of a CV and appropriate references, a conversation by email or telephone, an interview with the Vice-Principal. We may also require the submission of a portfolio of work to demonstrate capability to study at Level 4.

If students are unable to demonstrate that they are capable of study at Level 4, we may recommend that they re-apply for a subsequent year, and that in the meantime undertake an access to higher education course (for example, through a local College of Further Education).

Students who demonstrate satisfactory progress on a lower award may be permitted to transfer to a higher award.

A1 (formerly Policy 25)

Independent Students are very welcome to apply and will follow the Independent Students pathway within the Certificate, Diploma, BA or MA, as appropriate. The minimum requirement to begin a Certificate of Higher Education (120 credits) is one A-level at Grade E or above or equivalent; the minimum requirement to begin a Diploma in Higher Education 2 A-levels at Grade E or above; the minimum requirement to begin a BA is 3 A Levels at Grade E or above. Independent students will be registered initially for a Certificate unless they have appropriate previous qualifications. The minimum for entry to the MA is an upper-second class honours degree or equivalent in a subject relevant to the proposed course of study. Graduates (classed as first-class or 2:1 honours) in other disciplines with experience of theology or religious studies to at least FHEQ Level 4 (undergraduate Certificate level, awarded with credit or distinction, or with an overall mark of at least 60%) may also be admitted to the programme.

Other experience or qualifications may be considered at the discretion of the Management Committee, under the same process outlined in 4.4.

The application process for all students is via submission of an application form supported by evidence of previous qualifications and/or experience.

Accreditation of prior learning

Students may apply to the Course Board of Examiners in the person of the Academic Registrar for Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), either that which is certificated (APCL) or that based on previous life experience (experiential) (APEL). Applications for APL will be considered for all programmes except the Foundation Award. The contact person for APL issues is the Academic Registrar (academic@spirituscollege.ac.uk). Decisions will normally be made by a sub-committee of the Board of Examiners consisting of the Principal and Academic Registrar. If any request falls outside the normal principles for the award of APL laid down by Durham University, the Course will refer the request to the Chair of the Common Awards Management Board at Durham University for a decision. APL is not granted automatically. Each application is considered on its own merits.

In making decisions about APL applications the Course follows the guidelines of Common Awards: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/admissions/apl/>

The details of how much may be applied for and when can be found here: <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/policies-processes/admissions/apl-detailed-guidance/>

Support for students returning to study or studying for the first time

A1 (formerly Policy 25)

We understand that, for some students, studying at Spiritus College means studying at university level for the first time or returning to academic study after a long break. Below are some of the ways we seek to help the transition to theological study at this level:

- Non-accredited introduction to theological study is possible through our Brilliant Basics courses or by opting to 'sit in' on modules, before formally started an accredited course.
- Resources are available on Moodle around general study skills, time management, approaching different types of assessment, essay writing and referencing.
- All those who are new to study at this level or who have not done so for a long time, are asked to complete a Test Flight Task – a short, written assignment allowing students to try academic writing in a non-pressurised way with feedback from tutors.
- Students who need to improve their digital skills can access courses through www.skillsforcareers.education.gov.uk/pages/skills-for-life/digital-skills.
- Students can take part in an essay writing Zoom session with an experienced tutor at the beginning of the academic year.
- Draft assignments allow for a chance to practice early assessments, submit plans and to receive feedback.
- Possibility of further individual support with experienced tutors.

Inclusion

Students are able to declare disabilities or additional needs on their application form. Spiritus will consider particular provisions which may be needed at any interview for disabled applicants. Spiritus will advise applicants on what support and assessment may be available for them.

Successful acceptance of a student is dependent upon satisfactory compliance with the college's requirements regarding safeguarding as outlined in Spiritus' Safeguarding Policy.

Support for students with Specific Learning Differences (SpLD)

Students may arrive with or without a formal diagnosis of a specific condition. Please let your Personal Tutor and the Academic Registrar know of any challenges you face. The following are some strategies we have previously used to support students with SpLD:

- Induction Day allows time to explore the physical teaching space
- Module documents outline the learning outcomes and scope of the module
- Programmes for Study Weekends are sent out in advance
- Reasonable adjustments for assessments, such as:

A1 (formerly Policy 25)

- Blanket extensions for assignments
- Allowance for known learning disabilities in marking
- Potential for alternative assessments
- Quiet spaces during Study Weekends
- Recording of lectures (where appropriate)
- Material available ahead of lectures (where possible)
- Funding of a formal assessment for dyslexia for Church of England ordinands and Readers/LLMs in training

Support for people with physical disabilities or significant health conditions

Please let your Personal Tutor and the Operations Managers know of any challenges you face.

- We will work with you to make the physical space at Study Weekends as accessible as possible
- We will make resources available in different formats where possible
- We will explore reasonable adjustments for assessments such as:
 - Extensions for assignments
 - Potential for alternative assessments

Pastoral care and support

- We have chaplains present at all Study Weekends, and they are also available via email, Zoom or phone at other times.
- All students are allocated a Personal Tutor, who is the first point of contact for any concern.
- There is also support available for spouses

Financial support

- Fees for LLM/Readers in training and ordinands are paid for by the sponsoring diocese/denomination
- Independent students can apply for a Spiritus College Bursary of up to 20% off course fees for one year.
- Payment plans spreading the cost across the year are available
- Eligible students are encouraged to apply for the Disabled Students Allowance www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa

Complaints and appeals

A complaint is defined as a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or mal-administration in the admissions procedures or policies. If an applicant wishes to raise a complaint, they should do so within 28 days event by email to

A1 (formerly Policy 25)

principal@spirituscollege.ac.uk. The Principal will then explore informal resolution of the complaint and will confirm the outcome to the complainant.

If this has not resolved the issue the applicant may raise a Formal Complaint in writing to the Principal within 28 days of notification of the outcome of the informal process. A written response shall be given to the complaint within 28 days of its receipt. If you are unhappy with the outcome of the formal process you may refer your complaint for review to: Durham University Common Awards common.awards@durham.ac.uk

Appeals, defined as a request by an unsuccessful applicant for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision, will not be considered.

Applicants will not be discriminated against in any further application should they request feedback or make a complaint under these policies and procedures.

Spiritus, in consultation with partner dioceses (where applicable), may close admissions to any programme when it believes it has recruited to its capacity. If further places become available following closure of admissions, Spiritus shall either offer those places to those who had previously applied (ensuring they are all treated fairly) or reopen a fair admissions process.