

Access and Participation Statement

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Introduction

Sarum College, founded in its current form in 1995, has an established reputation as Higher Education provider with the University of Durham Common Awards and University of Winchester as validating partners. It specialises in HE Christian theology and formation training for accredited Christian ministry and ordination, and hence caters for a niche market. See our website (www.sarum.ac.uk) for our academic offering.

We are committed to helping students to succeed in their chosen course of study, providing appropriate support, to ensure higher education acts as a gateway to employment, personal development, and further opportunities for study. Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures are transparent, reliable, and inclusive, adhering to principles of fair admission at each stage of the process.

This statement applies to all programmes of study at Sarum College that lead to awards from its validating universities. The content follows the recommendations and guidance contained in the Regulatory Notice 1 Access and participation plan guidance for 2019-20 provided by the OfS and can be accessed at:

https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1100/ofs2018_05.pdf

This Statement will be shared with our students and is available on our website at www.sarum.ac.uk/policies. Student feedback will be considered when the Statement is next revised/updated. Overall monitoring and evaluation of this Statement will be undertaken by the Director of Academic Development and reported to the Board of Studies.

Access

Sarum College operates a transparent admissions process, with an emphasis on individual student needs and circumstances. We offer a number of programmes, which serves to increase the opportunities available for those seeking to participate in Higher Education and attract students from diverse backgrounds.

- Entry requirements for each programme are clearly stated, and every applicant is considered on an individual basis.
- In the case for Ministerial Formation Training at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels via University of Durham's Common Awards, students are referred to us by the local denominational body for whom they will be training to be ordained for Christian ministry. In these cases, fees for study are paid by the sending organisation (e.g. Diocese of Salisbury, Diocese of Bath and Wells, etc.).
- In the event of a student wishing to undertake Ministerial Formation Training either on an undergraduate or postgraduate level on an independent basis, students are supported through an application process which is transparent and oriented toward their individual needs and circumstances. Grants are sometimes provided for tuition fees by their

denominational body, though measures are in place to support a student in pursuing options related to self-funding if required.

- The College is committed to recruiting high-quality students by identifying merit and potential, and ensuring that its admissions process is fair and transparent to all, regardless of background. We value a rich diversity of students, and through our admissions policies and procedures assess applicants consistently, transparently, fairly and equally without discrimination.
- Every applicant is considered based on their individual needs and circumstances. At interview, each applicant is given opportunity to discuss any questions they have about studying, finances, and support from family, community, and/or peers.
- Every applicant has the opportunity to attend an Open Day at the college or shorter online Taster Sessions where they meet with students and staff and gain insight into the shape of the college experience. Open Days and Taster Sessions are offered at various times to maximise accessibility for those considering the college.
- We offer short access courses that act as an entry point to higher education. These courses enable a student to enjoy high quality teaching that has the proven potential to lead towards higher education.¹ These courses act as an access point for those from disenfranchised backgrounds, those who are more mature in age, and from under-represented groups.² Many students' first contact with Sarum College is through interest in these access courses, and through encouragement, commitment and aptitude many continue into formal higher education studies.
- For each applicant, it is ascertained whether potential for a particular programme might be demonstrated in ways beyond specific academic measure, which can include prior study in a different discipline, work or life experience. At both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and where appropriate, a student can enter studies at Certificate (CertHE or PGCert) or Diploma (DipHE or PGDip) level and then transition to a full course (Bachelor or Masters, depending on level) following assessment of progress.³
- For the Winchester postgraduate programmes, there is significant flexibility in how a student might wish to progress their studies both in terms of interests and timing. Programme leaders support applicants in designing their own bespoke learning pathway by choosing optional modules and credit levels that suit their needs and interests.

¹ *Exploring Theology* and the opportunity to attend a wide variety of courses offered as part of the Sarum College Short Course programme as well as to audit modules offered in degree programmes to get a taste for what higher education at Sarum College looks and feels like.

² Student numbers on the *Exploring Theology* course in 2020-2021 in relation to disenfranchised and/or under-represented groups are as follows: Mature (over 45 years old) students represent approximately 85%; BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) students account for 5%; students with declared disabilities account for 10%. *Exploring Theology* has been successful since it began two years ago in nurturing capacity for further study at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at Sarum College.

³ This route for progression is a clearly defined route with multiple entry and off-points in both the Durham Common Awards and Winchester validated programmes. Alongside provided pastoral support, this encourages prospective students who may have lower expectations of success or progression. This enables the participation of those otherwise disenfranchised or precluded from pursuing Higher Education.

- Academic staff regularly speak at external events encouraging those who are considering studying theology at higher education level.
- Sarum College offers regular public events open to all at higher education level. These events offer insight and a chance for prospective students to experience the College teaching environment.

Participation

It is a priority for Sarum College to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups can not only access but also succeed in higher education.

- At the point of commencement of study each student is invited to an induction day and sessions are provided to help integrate them into full participation of the college life. Every student is allocated a tutor, who will journey with them for the duration of their studies to assist in participation and provide support.
- Sarum College has appointed a Disability Support Officer, as well as a Director of Academic Development and Director of Studies within the Formation programme who work together to ensure implementation of Sarum's Accessible Learning Policy and Disability Policies towards greater access and participation.
- An academic development programme for all students is offered with workshops and advice.⁴ Academic Development is about providing support and encouragement as well as enabling students to develop the necessary skills to get the most out of their studies. Sarum is committed to the idea that academic development is for everyone.
- Sarum College is committed to making reasonable adjustments, enabling students to participate fully in the learning experience.
- Sarum College attracts students who have specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, or ADHD, and has both accessible learning and disability policies in place⁵ to ensure student needs are identified early (including questions at the application and student contract stages) in order to ensure that necessary support is put into place as soon as possible.⁶ Sarum College also provides support in helping students complete their funding applications where applicable.
- Sarum College has a regular Learning and Teaching Forum throughout the year wherein teaching and administrative staff work to gain continuing education and/or discuss issues that affect student participation. Topics addressed include addressing training to spot and support those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, mental health

⁴ Including essay writing seminars, dissertation advice, how to theologically reflect on experience, time management & organisation.

⁵ See the Sarum Accessible Learning Policy and Disability Policy.

⁶ Of the currently enrolled student body in formal academic programmes, approximately 15% have disability support plans in place.

first aid, addressing racism and discrimination, and implementing holistic early intervention strategies for students who are in need for additional support.

- Sarum College has a commitment to student pastoral support through programme leaders and appointed chaplains for each programme. This serves all students irrespective of background.
- Sarum College facilities are fully accessible to students with physical and other disabilities. Lifts and disability access ramps are available where needed, and dedicated accessible facilities.

Document Information

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