

College policy for students under the age of 18

Background

1. This document follows the policy regarding the admission of students under 18 approved by the Senior Tutors' Committee on 20 February 2026¹.
2. Applicants who will be under the age of 18 at the time of admission are subject to specific safeguarding and welfare considerations. The College is not a child-specific residential environment and does not act *in loco parentis*. As such the College does not routinely admit students under the age of 18. The following guidance and risk assessment enables the College to consider exceptional cases.
3. The College recognises that the Equality Act 2010 requires the College to ensure that it does not unlawfully discriminate against individuals on the basis of age, including individuals who are under 18 years. The College also acknowledges that under UK law, anyone under the age of 18 years living in England is legally a child and may therefore have additional needs in relation to their support and welfare even if this period is relatively brief. This Policy is intended to ensure that any difference in treatment on the basis of age is objectively justified.
4. The Dean or their nominee is responsible for ensuring the appropriate procedure is followed in full, by delegating the tasks specified in the procedures to appropriate staff.

Suitability for admission

5. The following points will be considered when deciding whether to admit a student under 18:
 - a. **The course of study must be suitable.** The most recent views from Departments and Faculties, on whether they should be consulted with concerning the admission of students under 18, [have been collated into a table](#). After consulting this table, the College should reach out as appropriate to the relevant Department or Faculty before considering the application further, and confirm arrangements after the applicant has met their offer. In particular, it should be confirmed which supervisors will require DBS checks (see paragraph 11).
 - b. **International applicants must be 16 or over**, to apply for a student visa.
 - c. **An individual safeguarding consideration report should be prepared**, using the College's risk assessment for individuals under the age of 18 (see [Appendix 1](#)).
6. The individual safeguarding consideration report will identify which risks are material in the particular case, and identify appropriate additional safeguards that the College will need to make to ensure that it meets its legal obligations to the student and to staff².
7. The Dean and Bursar will receive the safeguarding report and consider the individual circumstances of the applicant in light of the Policy and will determine, in consultation with other key colleagues and if necessary taking legal advice, whether:

¹ www.seniortutors.admin.cam.ac.uk/specific-student-types/students-under-18

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dbs-checking-service-guidance--2>

- i. any of the stated special arrangements are objectively justified to support the student and safeguard their welfare while studying at the College;
 - ii. whether any further special arrangements need to be included; and
 - iii. consider whether it is feasible and reasonable for the College to make those arrangements.
8. Examples of special arrangements may include:
 - a. Meeting face to face or conducting a telephone interview with the applicant and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss relevant issues and ensure they are fully aware of the predominately adult nature of the College environment;
 - b. Whether a review of the specific circumstances is needed and when (noting that a review should take place on or near the student's 18th birthday);
 - c. Supplementary tutorial or pastoral support;
 - d. Guardianship or chaperoning;
 - e. Deferring the entry date such that the student becomes an adult before matriculation;
 - f. Declining to offer the student residential accommodation or requiring them to live in certain parts of the College's residential accommodation;
 - g. Conditions over the residence and proximity of their parent(s)/guardian(s);
 - h. Specific clarity over the Colleges' emergency contact policy and whether different criteria apply in this specific case; and
 - i. Any other arrangements as are deemed reasonable and necessary to safeguard the welfare of the student.
9. The College reserves the right, where appropriate additional arrangements and safeguards cannot, reasonably, be put in place, to reject the application, or place further conditions that must be fulfilled before the student can matriculate where such action is objectively justified.

DBS checks

10. In general, College or University staff are not required to obtain DBS checks as the teaching or care of a student under 18 alongside adults in a university setting is merely incidental to the teaching and care of adults. This is supported by [Home Office guidance](#) provided when the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 came into force.
11. The Tutor and supervisors of a student under 18, however, are roles where an adult can develop a relationship of trust and mentorship with a child via regular unsupervised access. It is therefore necessary for identified College staff (see paragraph 13) to have passed a DBS check, and for any supervisors to pass a DBS check unless they strictly teach in groups of three or more students of which only one is a student under 18.

Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement

12. Where approval to make an offer is confirmed, the Dean will send a letter to the student enclosing a form of consent (the 'Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement' – see Appendix 2) for the signature of the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the applicant, together with a copy of this Policy. The letter containing the offer of admission will make it clear that any such offer is conditional upon the Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement being signed and returned to the Deanery. The Deanery will monitor such forms and will only confirm the offer of admission once it has been signed and returned.

Tutorial Responsibilities

13. The College will:
 - a. identify one or more named members of academic staff who will provide pastoral support for each student under 18 years (e.g. the Tutor);
 - b. ensure that students under 18 years meet with their Tutor regularly in term time, and one meeting on or soon before the student's 18th birthday;
 - c. where required by law or guidance, ensure that the Tutor has undergone and passed DBS checks at the appropriate level (this may be arranged through the HR Manager); and
 - d. ensure that the Tutor has undertaken safeguarding training as determined appropriate by the College's Safeguarding Officer.
14. In rare instances, consent for emergency medical treatment may be required before parent(s)/guardian(s) can be contacted. The College therefore requires parent(s) to give their consent that, in the case of such an emergency, the Tutor has permission to act on medical/police advice and do what is in the best interests of the student. By signing the "Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement", the parent(s) indicate their consent for the College to act in this way. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible for ensuring that the College has been informed of any special needs or requirements.

Parental Responsibilities

15. The College does not have parental responsibility in relation to any child students, and it will not act *in loco parentis* in relation to students who are under the age of 18 years. The College recognises that its obligations towards students aged under 18 require additional measures to be put into place but for the avoidance of doubt they do not amount to parental responsibility. It is a condition of admission to the College that the parent(s)/ guardian(s) or other person with parental responsibility of any student who is under the age of 18 years at the start of their course confirms, prior to their admission, by signing and returning the Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement, their acceptance of the arrangements set out in this document and any accompanying documentation.
16. If the parent(s) of a student aged under 18 years is/are not resident in the United Kingdom (UK), it will be necessary for them to appoint a guardian normally residing in the UK and to provide details for this person and their informed consent to their acting in this capacity. Being a guardian involves carrying out the tasks and responsibilities of the parent(s) as delegated by the child's parents. It is a private arrangement between the parent(s) and the guardian. The College is unable to assist parents in finding a suitable guardian, but in the case of difficulty in this regard, a list of accredited agencies may be obtained from [the Association of Educational Guardians for International Students \(AEGIS\)](#).

17. As a student who is under the age of 18 years may not be able to enter into legal contracts, the College requires a student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to honour all obligations under any contracts with the College that the student enters into prior to their 18th birthday. By signing the Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement, the parent(s)/guardian(s) agree to this.
18. It is the College's usual policy that it communicates with students and not with parent(s)/guardian(s) and this approach will also apply to students who are under the age of 18 years.
19. Personal data of students under the age of 18 years must be processed, and may only be shared, in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and the Data Protection Act 2018. This means that the sharing of information about them with their parent(s)/guardian(s) may require the specific written consent of the student. Any sharing of information about a student with any parent(s)/guardian(s) will be considered on a case-by-case basis and agreed prior to the matriculation of the student. These data-sharing arrangements would expire when the student's reaches 18 years of age.

Child protection

20. As a matter of UK law in England, a person under the age of 18 years is a child. The College has a responsibility to protect those under the age of 18 years from abuse and will report any suspicions or allegations of abuse of children to the Safeguarding Lead or their nominee, who will contact the appropriate authorities.
21. The College maintains a Safeguarding Policy defining which members of staff require DBS clearance and at which level. The Dean and Bursar are responsible for ensuring that appropriate clearance is in place in respect of academic and non-academic College staff working with students.
22. It is noted that under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust (which may include members of College staff) to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18 years.

Tutorial Office

23. The College provides an extensive range of services to its students regardless of age. The College does not normally provide any specific support services or facilities solely for students under the age of 18 years.
24. Like most universities, the College and University operate extended teaching hours, so lectures and contact time with Tutors, supervisors etc. could extend past 7pm. The College cannot undertake to accompany, organise or monitor any student who is under the age of 18 years regarding travel arrangements to or from academic or other commitments at any time, including evenings.

Accommodation

25. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should recognise that residential accommodation offered by the College is generally intended for the use of adults and no special arrangements are put in place for students who are under the age of 18 years. The Risk Assessment may result in the College not offering independent accommodation to the student.
26. The student under the age of 18 years must live on the College Main Site (as defined by the College) until the age of 18 years.

Notification of age

27. It is the responsibility of the applicant to declare truthfully to the College their correct date of birth. Appropriate academic and non-academic staff members of the College will be notified of any student who will be under the age of 18 years at the start of the academic year.

Field Trips and study materials

28. Programmes may involve compulsory or optional field trips, excursions or other periods of study away from the College and University. Programmes may also require a student to view films or videos as part of their studies. The College will liaise with the Department concerned to determine what activities and media are suitable for the student.

Alcohol

29. It is illegal for alcohol to be sold to or bought by students who are under the age of 18 years. The College will take reasonable steps to seek to ensure that the law is not broken in relation to licensed premises under the College's control, by sharing the Student's name, date of birth, and photo with bar staff. The College cannot undertake to chaperone or supervise individually any student.

Provision of IT Services

30. The College offers email and unregulated internet services for all its students. These services are provided on an unsupervised basis. Students are expected to act in a responsible manner when using these facilities and are required to abide by the relevant College Regulations. Students under the age of 18 years must not attempt to access internet sites inappropriate to their age.

Emergency Contact

31. The College has a duty of care towards all its students and staff. In the case of students who are under the age of 18 years, this duty is enhanced, as such students are considered to be children in terms of UK law.
32. In order to ensure that its duty of care towards such students is properly fulfilled, the College recognises the importance of collecting and maintaining emergency contact information. A student under the age of 18 years will not be permitted to matriculate unless next of kin and emergency contact details are provided in the Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement. Parent(s)/guardian(s) must immediately inform the College if there are any changes to the emergency contact details provided in the Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement up until the time that the student reaches their 18th birthday.

Holding Office

33. Students who are under the age of 18 years are encouraged to join College or Student Union societies but are not able to hold office until after their 18th birthday (this is because Officers can carry legal responsibilities). Their participation in certain activities may be limited.

Policy documents

Other College Policy documents relevant for this Policy:

- a. Safeguarding Policy
- b. Data Protection Policy

Last reviewed: 8 April 2026

Safeguarding consideration report for the admission of a student under the age of 18

Applicant name:

Applicant date of birth:

The College should follow its standard safeguarding risk assessment, which will cover most aspects of supporting a student under the age of 18. The following table should be completed to determine whether there are any additional actions necessary to support a student under the age of 18, beyond the College's standard safeguarding risk assessment.

Risk	Is likelihood of risk higher than in risk assessment? (Y/N)	Are existing mitigations sufficient? (Y/N)	Additional mitigations to be put in place
Identification of welfare concerns in a timely manner			Policy explicitly requires regular meetings between student and Tutor.
Medical emergency			The Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement gives consent for the Tutor to act on medical advice and do what is in the best interests of the student.
Unsupervised or inappropriate one-to-one contact			Safeguarding risk does not arise from one-to-one contact <i>per se</i> , but from a lack of transparency, appropriate boundaries, or accountability. Where one-to-one meetings with under-18 students are required, they should take place in suitable settings and in accordance with safeguarding guidance.
Unsuitable residential environment for the student, given their age			Policy expects the student to reside in College only, however this will depend on College accommodation and whether the parent/legal guardian will be living with the student.
Alcohol access in licensed or social settings			The Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement confirms that the student will be responsible for their own behaviour, but a reasonable step would be to provide Bar staff with a photo, name, and date of birth of the student to deny service. The sharing of this personal data with bar staff is allowed under GDPR due to the College's legal obligation.
Data protection and privacy intrusion			See above. No other College staff should require personal data of the student beyond normal processes.
Misunderstanding of the role and responsibilities of the			The Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement confirms that the student will be responsible for their own behaviour, and under what circumstances they

Risk	Is likelihood of risk higher than in risk assessment? (Y/N)	Are existing mitigations sufficient? (Y/N)	Additional mitigations to be put in place
College by the student and/or their parent(s)/guardian(s)			will be contacted. The policy states that the Tutor will meet student on or soon before their 18 th birthday, to confirm that the policy and Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement is no longer in effect.
Academic content inappropriate for the student, given their age and course of study			<p>The Department will be contacted to discuss the suitability of making an offer to the student, and confirm mitigations if the student meets their offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance discussion with student (and, where appropriate, parent/guardian) to explain the nature of course content, including topics that may involve mature themes, graphic material, or sensitive discussion, and to confirm informed consent to proceed. • Clear signposting of forthcoming sensitive material where this is already standard academic practice (e.g. reading lists, lecture outlines), without altering the content or delivery. • Access to alternative reading or support materials where pedagogically acceptable, without exempting the student from core academic requirements. • Explicit confirmation that academic standards and assessment requirements are unchanged, and that no special dispensation will be made on the basis of age alone.
Inappropriate levels of supervision on field trips or external academic activity, given the age of the student			Dependant on the programme the student is applying for.
Safeguarding incident or allegation			

Parental/Legal Guardian Agreement

Applicant Name:

Applicant Date of Birth:

Applicant Reference Number:

This form is to be completed by the one or more of the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of the above applicant.

Please complete all sections of this agreement (the 'Agreement').

If the applicant named above (the 'Student') takes up a place at Darwin College (the 'College') to study at the University of Cambridge (the 'University') in October [YEAR], then I, the undersigned parent or legal guardian:

1. Understand and accept the information provided in the College's Policy for Students Under the Age of 18 Years.
2. Shall endeavour to support the Student adhering to the College's and University's Regulations, which they are subject to.
3. Consent to the Student undertaking the programme of study and participating in such extracurricular activities as the Student shall determine.
4. Understand that information about students, including those under the age of 18, can only be shared with any person, including their parent(s) or guardian(s), in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, including the UK General Data Protection Regulation, and the Data Protection Act 2018. The College has a legal obligation to share the Student's name, date of birth, and a photo with Bar staff.
5. Accept liability for any debts incurred by the Student to the College and/or the University (but on the Student attaining the age of 18, liability shall cease to have effect in respect of any debts incurred from that date).
6. Confirm their understanding that the College cannot and will not act *in loco parentis*. As such, the Student is responsible for their own behaviour including:
 - a. not drinking alcohol in licensed premises (such as the College bar or Hall) unless accompanied by someone over 18, and not asking an adult to buy or to try to buy alcohol on the Student's behalf;
 - b. not attempting to access internet sites inappropriate for the Student's age when using the Colleges' unregulated internet services and library resources;
7. Understand that this agreement shall remain in force until the eighteenth birthday of the Student.
8. Confirm that the person named below, who is normally resident in the United Kingdom, may be contacted in the following circumstances:
 - a. In an emergency (e.g. if the Student is admitted to hospital).
 - b. If the Student does not adhere to the College's and University's Regulations, or the College's Policy for Students Under the Age of 18 Years.
 - c. If the Student regularly does not attend their programme's teaching.

- d. If there is a cause for concern as to the Student completing the programme of study.
- e. Any other reason as deemed necessary by the Dean.

- 9. Give my consent that the Student's Tutor has my permission to act on medical / police advice and do what is in the best interests of the Student, if emergency medical treatment is required before I can be contacted. I understand that I am responsible for ensuring that the College has been informed of any special needs or requirements.

Contact Details for UK Based Guardian

Full Name:

Address:

Contact telephone numbers (daytime):
(evening):
(mobile):

E-mail:

Relationship to Applicant:

Evidence of Relationship to Applicant (copy enclosed) (if contact is not signatory).

Signature of parent or legal guardian

Signature:

Full Name:

Address:

Contact telephone numbers (daytime):
(evening):
(mobile):

E-mail:

Relationship to Applicant:

Evidence of Relationship to Applicant (copy enclosed)

Date:

Signature of student

I the undersigned confirm that I have seen and understand the contents of this Agreement.

Signature:

Full Name:

Please return this form to the Dean at djn33@cam.ac.uk