



WINSTON-SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY

ADMISSION BACKGROUND CHECKS

I. Executive Summary

This policy governs the process for a student whose application information and responses necessitates the completion of a background check and subsequent review by the Office of Admissions review board.

II. Policy Statement

In fulfilling its mission to offer students and employees a safe learning and working environment, Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) requires all admissions applicants answer a series of security questions on their admissions application.

Educational Background Checks

WSSU will perform background checks on either (i) all applicants offered admission, or (ii) all applicants offered admission who indicates their intent to attend, as follows:

- A. The UNC Suspension and Expulsion Data Base
- B. The National Student Clearinghouse
- C. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI)

WSSU may conduct these background checks on an applicant before deciding whether or not to offer the candidate admission.

Criminal Background Checks

WSSU will perform criminal background checks on applicants being considered for admission, applicants admitted, or applicants offered admission who indicated their intent to attend, before the applicant matriculates, if the application and supporting materials contain one or more of the following:

- A. The application together with supporting material contains materially inconsistent answers that have not been satisfactorily explained;
- B. The applicant answers one or more of the six criminal background/ discipline questions affirmatively or submits subsequent information indicating (1) pending criminal charges, (2) acceptance of responsibility for a crime, (3) criminal convictions or (4) school disciplinary action, unless the affirmative answer or supporting material relates to a school disciplinary action that resulted from an offense that is remote in time or was insubstantial;
- C. The application omits one or more answers without an acceptable explanation for the omission;
- D. The application has an unexplained time period since graduation from high school during which the applicant was not, for example, enrolled in higher education, enlisted in the military, or employed fulltime;
or
- E. Any other reason sufficient to WSSU.

Students who give a positive response to one of the security triggers are required to submit a background investigation report by an approved third party vendor and a written letter of explanation describing the circumstances related to the positive responses. All explanations should be submitted to the Office of Admissions within 5 business days of submitting an application.

III. Guidelines

The scope of the criminal background check will depend on the residential history of the applicant:

- A. For current North Carolina residents whose applications and release forms do not disclose more than 6 months out of North Carolina, a North Carolina criminal background check will be conducted.
- B. For nonresidents and North Carolina residents whose applications or release forms disclose significant time outside North Carolina, a residence check will be conducted, and then a criminal background check will be conducted for all appropriate states unless the applicant opts for a national FBI fingerprint check.
- C. For international students, a criminal background check of appropriate scope will be conducted.

If an applicant has a positive criminal or disciplinary record, WSSU will:

- A. Compare the results of the checks to the application and supplemental information supplied by the applicant to determine discrepancies. If there are no discrepancies, if the individual determination has been made that the applicant does not pose a significant threat to campus safety, and if there is no additional information indicating that a decision to admit should be modified, then the applicant may be admitted or a previous decision to admit may stand.
- B. If there are discrepancies, or if there is information indicating that an admission decision should be further examined, WSSU will provide the applicant an opportunity either to demonstrate that the report of criminal, disciplinary or other relevant history was erroneous (e.g., wrong person) or to explain the discrepancy to the Admissions Review Board.
- C. If the report is determined to be accurate and there is a discrepancy between the reported information and the application or supporting material the applicant submitted, or there is additional information that amplifies the application information or otherwise indicates that the admission should be examined further then the applicant's file will be submitted to the Admissions Review Board for further consideration.
 - i. The presumption is that the admission will be denied or withdrawn if the applicant has failed to accurately disclose relevant information in response to a question on the application.
 - ii. If the failure to disclose accurate information does not result in the denial of or withdrawal of the offer of admission, but there is information that draws the decision to admit into question, before the student may matriculate, the institution must make an individual determination as to whether the nature of any crime committed or other behavior disclosed, together with other available information, suggests that the applicant will pose a significant threat to campus safety. If the constituent institution determines that there is a significant threat, the admission must be denied or withdrawn. If not, the student may be admitted in accordance with the normal admission process.

IV. Roles & Responsibilities

Applicant Responsibilities

All applicants must provide responses to all security questions on the WSSU Admissions Application. Admissions will not process applications unless all questions are answered. Answering “yes” to one or more of the security triggers will not necessarily preclude admission; however, failure to provide complete, accurate, and truthful information will be grounds to deny or withdraw an applicant’s admission, or to dismiss a student after enrollment. Applicants have a continuing obligation to update the Office of Admissions if there is a change to their criminal status.

Admissions Review Board

Once all documentation is received, the Office of Admissions may refer an applicant’s file to the WSSU Admissions Review Board (ARB) for further review. The ARB serves as a screening committee for those applicants who have been charged with a felony, have extensive criminal history or have been dismissed for disciplinary reasons from another college or university as noted on their application for admissions. The ARB will make its decision for University admission based on whether the applicant is deemed to be a risk to campus safety. In addition, the impact of the student’s background may be considered in light of academic program requirements, internships, clinical placement, and campus job opportunities. Once a decision is rendered by the review board, the applicant will be notified promptly by a member of the Office of Admissions.

Office of Equal Employment Opportunity/Title IX

If background check yields charges associated with discrimination or harassment for any of the protected classes listed below then the applicants file will be forwarded to the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity/Title IX (EEO) for review before submission to the ARB:

1. Sex discrimination
2. Sexual harassment
3. Sexual violence
4. Stalking
5. Domestic violence
6. Dating violence
7. Gender identity/expression/Pregnancy discrimination
8. Sexual orientation
9. Race
10. Color
11. Ability
12. National origin
13. Age
14. Veteran status
15. Genetic information

EEO will provide a recommendation to the Director of Admissions within 5 business days of receiving the applicant file.

Only admission materials of academically qualified applicants will be reviewed under this policy. Applicants may be conditionally admitted to WSSU pending the outcome of this review, which must be concluded prior to the applicants’ matriculation. Individuals who are admitted within two weeks prior to the beginning of the semester and who are subject to having a criminal background check performed pursuant to this policy may be conditionally admitted and matriculate pending the results of the review.

V. Applicability

This policy is applicable to Winston-Salem State University applicants.

VI. Compliance

Students are responsible for complying with all regulations governing background checks. Failure to provide complete, accurate, and truthful information will be grounds to deny or withdraw an applicant's admission, or to dismiss a student after enrollment.

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Responsible Division: Provost & Vice Chancellor Academic Affairs
Authority: Chancellor
History: Adopted: June 9, 2017