

## **Admissions Principles and Procedures for Undergraduate Courses**

### **1 1. Aims**

1.1 The University of Bristol aims to:

- maintain the high academic standards for which it is known;
- create a student body that is balanced and diverse in terms of background and experience, with all the educational and cultural benefits that this brings;
- recruit students who will engage with and contribute to the intellectual and cultural vitality of the University community

1.2 The University will achieve these aims by:

- encouraging applications from all those with the motivation and academic ability to thrive at Bristol, whatever their background;
- assessing each application carefully and fairly;
- offering places to suitably qualified applicants who have the potential to do well at Bristol.

1.3 To ensure consistency and fairness, the general principles and procedures set out in this document will be followed by all those involved in the admissions process.

1.4 The University is committed to creating a diverse learning environment where all students are valued for their individual differences and contribution, with equal opportunities for all irrespective of age, disability, race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation. All applicants are considered on an equal basis in line with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.

1.5 The University will review its Admissions Principles and Procedures annually in the light of experience, research, relevant legislation and best practice (e.g. the Quality Assurance Agency, Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, UCAS).

### **2 Transparency and Consistency**

2.1 All data requested and held by the University through the application process will be processed in line with the University's Student Fair Processing Notice, and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

2.2 The University will only correspond about an application or decision with the applicant, unless the applicant has given express consent to the University to correspond with a nominated contact (family member, agent, representative).

- 2.3 The University will publish a course profile for each course both in the University's own publications, online course finder and through UCAS. This will include key information about the course, the typical offer, additional entry requirements, application process and deadlines. This information will be published early in the year in which the application cycle begins and will be finalised by 1 August for entry the following September.
- 2.4 The University will publish the Admissions Policies and Procedures and the course specific Admissions Statements by 1 August each year for entry the following September.
- 2.5 Each Admissions Statement will explain the selection criteria and procedures for that course, including information on how applications will be considered. This will include:
- specific criteria against which the applicants will be assessed by the Admissions Team;
  - an indication of how different components of the application will be weighted;
  - the process for considering applications, including any additional assessment requirements such as interviews, tests or written work.
- 2.6 All decisions on applications are made subject to strict quality assurance procedures, which will include the following:
- regular consultation with School Admissions and Recruitment Officers to ensure compliance with selection criteria;
  - routine spot checks to ensure assessment consistency and compliance with legal and policy requirements;
  - regular reviews of selection criteria and outcomes;
  - monitoring of turnaround times to ensure that applications are assessed in a reasonable timeframe.
- 2.7 The University will make every effort to run courses advertised in the current admissions cycle. However, if it is necessary to change or discontinue a course, the University will contact applicants in a timely manner and offer alternative options, e.g. consideration for another course.

### **3 How we assess an application**

- 3.1 For many courses at the University, the number of applications from eligible applicants by far exceeds the number of offers that can be made. The number of offers available may be specific to the year of entry and the fee status of applicants. The selection criteria are put in place to select which applicants receive an offer; these criteria will support the University's Admissions Aims (see section 1), be in accordance with the principles and procedures in this document and reflect what is set out in the relevant course Admissions Statement.
- 3.2 Actual and/or predicted performance in public examinations is a key indicator of academic potential for degree-level study. The Admissions Office sets equivalencies to assess applicants applying with vocational and international qualifications in a fair and consistent manner for all courses. Equivalencies for many qualifications are published online and where this is not published, advice can be requested from the Admissions Team.
- 3.3 The Admissions Team may request further information from applicants regarding qualifications studied or predicted grades. Failure to provide this within a specified timescale may result in the

application being made unsuccessful.

- 3.4 Applications will normally be assessed on the basis of three eligible A-levels and eight GCSEs, or equivalent qualifications, as the University recognises that not all applicants will have had access to opportunities to take additional qualifications. The University does not consider performance in A-level General Studies, Critical Thinking, or similar qualifications, in the admissions process. If a course discounts achievement in a specific subject or a particular combination of subjects, or wishes to weight subjects differentially, this will be declared in their Admissions Statement.
- 3.5 A course's typical offer and additional requirement criteria may include minimum overall grades and specified attainment in a particular subject at A-level and GCSE level, or in an equivalent qualification. If a course will consider making an aspirational offer to applicants with predicted grades lower than the typical offer, this will be in the course Admissions Statement. Meeting these minimum requirements does not guarantee an offer.
- 3.6 The personal statement and reference provide important supplementary indications of ability, motivation and potential. The Admissions Statement for each course will set out how the personal statement and reference are considered in assessing an application, and which criteria they are assessed against.
- 3.7 Interviews may be required as part of the application process for particular courses. If interviews are required before any offer can be made for a particular course, this will be clearly stated in the Admissions Statement. Interviews may also be considered for other courses where it is not possible to make a decision based on the information in the application, for example if there has been a gap in education or non-standard qualifications have been taken. Any interviews will be conducted by at least two people, including a member of University staff who has undertaken training on fair and effective recruitment. Interview candidates will be advised of the criteria for measuring performance at interview and a record of the interview will be taken and submitted to the Admissions Team.
- 3.8 Supplementary written work may be required as part of the application process for particular courses. If this is the case for all applications to a particular course, this will be clearly stated in the Admissions Statement. Clear guidance on what is required, any deadlines and how work will be assessed will be provided. In certain circumstances, the University may invite an applicant to submit additional written information, eg an alternate personal statement. Additional information provided which has not been requested will not be considered.
- 3.9 Admissions tests (eg LNAT, UCAT) may be required as part of the application process for particular courses. If all applicants must complete a test before their application can be considered, this will be made clear in the Admissions Statement, including how the test result will contribute to the overall assessment. Other applicants may also be offered the opportunity to take an admissions test where it has not been possible to make a decision based on the information in the application, for example if there has been a gap in education or non-standard qualifications have been taken.
- 3.10 Where interviews, supplementary written work or admissions tests are required, these requests must be responded to within the required timescales. Any waivers to requirements or deadlines would be considered in conjunction with the Extenuating Circumstances process.

- 3.11 All applicants who do not hold a nationality of a majority English speaking country (as defined by the UK Home Office), will be required to provide evidence of their English Language proficiency by meeting the relevant English Language profile on the course specific information accessed via the course finder.

#### **4 Extenuating Circumstances**

- 4.1 The University recognises that individual applicants' educational attainment and experience may be impacted by a range of factors. Where an applicant's education has been significantly disrupted through health or personal problems, disability or specific difficulties with schooling, they can provide additional information and documentation for consideration via the Extenuating Circumstances form. This form, and further details on the process and requirements for providing and considering this information can be found on the University website.
- 4.2 All staff involved in the admissions process are expected to use professional judgement in assessing the academic potential of individual applicants and must operate in a way that is consistent with the University's Admissions Aims. However, submitting an extenuating circumstances form does not guarantee that the University will make the applicant an offer, or that the University will accept the applicant if offer conditions are not met. Extenuating circumstances are not considered when assessing the personal statement, interview performance or any additional tests such as UCAT.
- 4.3 Where a decision is made to offer a place, the University may decide to make an offer different from the published typical offer where this is considered to be an appropriate response to the extenuating circumstances.
- 4.4 Extenuating circumstances provided prior to the release of exam results, may be considered when assessing offer holders who have not met the terms of their offer in full.

#### **5 Contextual Offers**

- 5.1 The University acknowledges that applicants from groups underrepresented at the University may apply with qualifications that do not accurately reflect their abilities and potential and may have access to fewer opportunities than other applicants. All staff involved in the admissions process are expected to use professional judgement in assessing the academic potential of individual applicants and must operate in a way that is consistent with the University's Admissions Aims.
- 5.2 An applicant will be considered eligible for a contextual offer if they meet one or more of the following criteria:
- A. Attending (or attended last year) a state school or college where, in the previous year, the school or college which
- i) In England:
- was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state schools and colleges for average point score per level 3 entry (A Levels, IB, Pre-U and EPQ), or
  - was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state schools and colleges for progression to higher education, or
  - had 75% or more of pupils resident in POLAR4 quintile 1 or 2 postcodes
- ii) In Wales:

- was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state schools for average point score for 17-year-olds (A Levels and equivalents), or
  - was ranked in the bottom 40% of all colleges for average wider points score for A2 or mixed-A2 learners, or
  - was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state schools and colleges for progression to higher education
- iii) In Northern Ireland:
- was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state schools and colleges for proportion of final year cohort that achieved at least 3 A Levels at grade A\*-C, or
  - was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state school and colleges for progression to higher education
- iv) In Scotland:
- Was ranked in the bottom 40% of all state schools and colleges for average tariff score of school leavers.
- B. Home address in a Polar 1 or 2 category
- C. Having spent more than three months in public care or as a looked after child.
- D. Having participated in a University of Bristol Widening Participation Programme.
- E. Having been in receipt of Free School Meals at secondary school
- 5.3 Educational disadvantage will be taken into account when considering whether to make an offer of a place or an interview, including in assessing an applicant's academic attainment and their personal statement. Where a decision is made to offer a place, applicants from these underrepresented groups will normally be eligible for the published Contextual Offer for their course.
- 5.4 Educational disadvantage may also be considered after examination results are published, when assessing offer holders who have not met the terms of their offer in full.

## **6 Responding to individual applicants' situations**

- 6.1 The course profile and admissions statement will confirm whether a course accepts applications for deferred entry. Any applications submitted for deferred entry will be considered in the cycle they are submitted, and under the policies in place for that cycle. The number of places available for deferred applicants may be limited.
- 6.2 The University welcomes applications from disabled students. Such applications will be considered against the same academic criteria that are applied to all applicants. Applicants are encouraged to disclose any disability that may require adjustments to our admissions process; this will not affect your chances of receiving an offer from the University. Disability Services can provide further advice as necessary. In the unlikely event that the University decides that adjustments required to support an applicant during their education cannot reasonably be made, the University will contact the applicant directly to confirm this decision.
- 6.3 Applications who are not applying directly from, or within a year of leaving, school or college, who have non-standard qualifications or who wish work or life experience to be taken into account as part of their application, will be considered on an individual basis, in line with the general aims and principles of the Admissions Principles and Procedures. Where a course has

a requirement for formal study within a particular recent period, this will be referenced in the Admissions statement.

- 6.4 Applicants who meet one (or more) of a range of a criteria will be eligible for the University's Guaranteed Offer scheme, subject to the conditions below. To be eligible, applicants must meet one or more of the following criteria:
- a) Be applying to the University of Bristol on the basis of a UK-accredited Access to Higher Education Diploma and be eligible for Home fee status.
  - b) Be applying from a home address local to the University, i.e. in Bristol (with a postcode beginning BS) or the surrounding area (with a postcode beginning, BA1, BA2, BA3, BA5, BA14, BA15, SN12, SN13), and be eligible for Home fee status.
  - c) Be a current or recent participant in one of the University of Bristol Widening Participation programmes.
  - d) Be a current student at one of the schools within the Venturers Trust, the multi-academy trust co-sponsored by the University.
  - e) Be a current student on one of the University's partner International Foundation Programmes and be eligible for Overseas fee status.
  - f) Be a current or recent participant in one of the University of Bristol Global Summer School programmes and be eligible for Overseas fee status.
  - g) Be selected for the Performance Potential Group by the University's Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health, based on criteria available on their website.

Applicants may be required to validate their eligibility on a timetable set out to them in email communications in order to be eligible for this scheme.

- 6.5 To be eligible for the guaranteed offer scheme, applicants must:
- a) Apply by the relevant UCAS deadline, or whilst the course is accepting applications through UCAS.
  - b) Complete the application form in full, and complete all elements of the application process (including any tests and/or assessment questionnaires) to a satisfactory standard
  - c) Be taking and/or have achieved qualifications which would enable them to meet the offer which would be made to them in full, including any language and numeracy/ literacy requirements.
  - d) If an admissions test is offered to applicants as an alternative to specific qualifications, successful completion of that test would be required before the guaranteed offer is made.
  - e) Not fail any compliance checks that mean an offer cannot be made to an otherwise eligible applicant.
- 6.6 Students attending the International Foundation Programme or other Foundation Year programmes at the University of Bristol, or an approved progression partner foundation programme, will be eligible to enter specified undergraduate degree programmes, subject to meeting the required academic and English language standards for progression and subject to satisfactory completion of the admissions process, including performance in admissions tests or at interview where appropriate.

- 6.7 Applicants to the University may be selected for the Performance Potential Group by the Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health, based on criteria available on their website. Applicants selected for the Potential Performance Group will be guaranteed an offer of a place at the University if an interview would not otherwise be required and provided that they are taking and/or have achieved qualifications which would enable them to meet the offer in full. Where an interview is required, such applicants will be guaranteed an interview if their predicted or achieved grades meet the applicable typical offer for that programme. In certain circumstances, the offer may be for an alternative related course rather than the course for which the applicant originally applied. Any offer made would be at the standard level for the course and applicant.
- 6.8 The University will disregard any criminal convictions, unless the course of study is likely to bring the student into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Where this is the case, a disclosure will be sought via the UCAS application, and through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). In these circumstances, a decision on whether to offer a place will be made in accordance with the University guidelines for the recruitment of students with a criminal conviction.
- 6.9 Applicants who will be under the age of 18 on registration as a student of the University will be required to complete a form signed by a parent/ guardian as a condition of registration. This provides confirmation that the parent/ guardian understands the University's responsibilities and gives details of an emergency contact in the UK.
- 6.10 The University has a risk assessment for applicants who will be under the age of 18 on registration (or under the age of 18 at the beginning of any academic year), which considers steps that need to be taken to admit and support these applicants, and fulfil our safeguarding duties.
- 6.11 The University reserves the right to not admit applicants on the strength of information believed to be either fraudulent or plagiarised and reserves the right to reject an application or cancel an offer made under these circumstances, as outlined in the University statement of policy on fraudulent applications.
- 6.12 International applicants should indicate whether they require the University to act as a sponsor for the purposes of a visa application. When considering an application, the University of Bristol will take into account whether or not a student is able to meet the necessary UK visa requirements for the full duration of their course. The University reserves the right to reject an application, in circumstances where these requirements cannot be met. Further information may be requested from applicants to enable the University to consider such as situation.
- 6.13 There are a small number of undergraduate MEng and MSci courses which require Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance. Applicants from countries listed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who are offer holders to one of these courses will require ATAS clearance prior to registering at the University. For more information on the scheme and how to apply for clearance please visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) website.
- 6.14 Applicants who submit multiple applications, either within a cycle or across admissions cycles, will have each application considered separately, unless an application has been withdrawn by the University in line with these policies and procedures.

6.15 The University reserves the right to exclude a candidate who is considered to be unsuitable for a place on a particular course or for attendance at the University, in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity policy, Acceptable Behaviour policy, or any other relevant policy of the University.

## **7 Offers and decisions**

7.1 Decisions on applications will be communicated to the applicant by email and via UCAS track.

7.2 When an application is selected for offer, the offer made may be Unconditional (if the entry requirements have been met in full) or Conditional (where certain conditions must still be met).

7.3 A conditional offer will normally be made at the typical offer level published, or the published contextual offer level if relevant. Participants on the Bristol Scholars scheme will be eligible for the specific offer relevant to that scheme and that offer may include a condition of successfully completing the Bristol Scholars programme.

7.4 An offer made will be specific to a course, entry point and year of entry. Any request to change course or year of entry will be considered by the University but will not necessarily be agreed.

7.5 Applicants' tuition fee status is automatically determined through information provided in the application form and will be communicated to students when an offer is made. Tuition fee status is assessed in line with the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007; and The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) Regulations 2007, and based on guidance provided by UKCISA, the UK Council for International Student Affairs.

7.6 Where a fee status cannot be determined from the information made available in the application form, the University may request specific information from an applicant, via a fee status questionnaire, usually after an offer is made but occasionally before. Applicants have the right to request that their fee status be reviewed once after the decision has been made, but this must be requested within four weeks of the offer being made, and no later than 31 July in the year of application. For any offers made after 31 July, any review must be submitted within seven days of the offer.

7.7 The University has the right to review a fee status if it considers that any information in the application to be inaccurate. A change in fee status may result in the offer of a place on a course being reconsidered.

7.8 A conditional offer may include additional requirements, such as meeting the relevant English Language profile, completing an administrative task, receiving Occupational Health clearance, verification of qualifications, immigration compliance tasks, etc. Where this is made a condition of the offer, the offer will not be considered to have been met until evidence of satisfactorily completing this has been received.

7.9 Where an application is not successful for the original course, the University may offer the applicant a place on an alternative course for which they are eligible. This offer will only be made once the original application has been made unsuccessful. If this is the case, this alternative course offer will be communicated to the applicant and the reasons explained.



- 7.10 Applicants who receive an unsuccessful decision on their application will be provided with feedback as to the reason(s) that lead to the unsuccessful outcome at the point the decision is communicated to them. Our full Applicant Feedback Policy can be found on our [admissions policy pages](#).
- 7.11 The University monitors the numbers of applications, offers and acceptances for each course carefully, in order to make the number of offers expected to deliver the University's undergraduate intake targets for each course. All applications received before the UCAS Equal Consideration Deadline will be considered on the same basis, though offers will begin to be made before of this deadline.
- 7.12 Applicants who receive an offer from the University are able to consider whether or not to accept it by a deadline they are given. If an applicant declines an offer, the University is not obliged to honour the original offer if the applicant requests to change their response. Any such request should be made to the Admissions Team as soon as possible, and may require agreement from the University and any other institutions impacted.

## **8 Meeting the terms of your offer**

- 8.1 All applicants who firmly accept an offer from the University (or accept an offer as Insurance and are not confirmed by their Firm choice) and meet the terms of their offer in full will have their place confirmed.
- 8.2 Applicants who firmly accept an offer from the University (or accept an offer as Insurance and are not confirmed by their Firm choice) who do not meet the terms of their offer in full may still be considered for a confirmed place. This will be based on the individual application and results, as well as the places available and any University scholarships awarded. Any decisions made will be in line with the University Admissions Aims and these Admissions Policies and Procedures.
- 8.3 All offer holders will be required to provide confirmation of their results, with formal translations where necessary for any qualifications listed in their offer by the stated deadline, either automatically from their exam board or directly to the University. Where this result cannot be verified by the University, offer holders may be required to provide the University with original documentation in order to register or maintain their registration as a student.
- 8.4 In the event of exceptional circumstances which make it impossible to assess whether applicants have met the terms of their offer, the University reserves the right to use alternative methods including, but not limited to, use of prior assessment and/or scoring of applications, or any other method(s) deemed most appropriate, to decide which firm offer holders' places to confirm. Should such steps be required, the University will make every possible effort to offer places to firm offer holders who had achieved the terms of their offers but who had not been allocated a place under the emergency procedures.

**University of Bristol, August 2022**