

Undergraduate admissions statement

This statement should be read in conjunction with the [University's admissions principles and procedures](#).

Year of admissions cycle: 2015

Courses covered:

BSc Biology (C100)
MSci Biology (C103)
BSc Zoology (C300)
MSci Zoology (C303)

NB: Geology and Biology courses FC61 and CF16 are the responsibility of Earth Sciences, and the process is explained in the Earth Sciences admissions statement.

Admissions process

1. Admissions team

Applications are assessed by a centralised team in close co-operation with admissions tutor/s.

2. Application assessment methods

All applications are considered on an equal basis. Applications are not segregated by the type of educational institution attended. Applications that are received on time (in line with UCAS deadlines) are guaranteed equal consideration.

All applicants are allocated scores based on their academic record, which forms 100 per cent of our assessment (80 per cent A-levels or equivalent, 20 per cent GCSEs).

We do not consider any direct applications to the University. Please note that it is sometimes necessary to delay making decisions until the majority of applications have been received, so as to ensure fair consideration for all candidates.

Applications will be assessed on the basis of their application only; we cannot take into account any additional information received from an applicant or institution, unless we have requested it.

Applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion, disability, or age.

3. Interview or visit day

If you are made an offer, you will be given the opportunity to attend one of the School of Biological Sciences visit days to become familiar with our teaching and research, meet and talk with academic staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students, and take a tour of the

building. Parents are welcome to attend; however, we request that no more than one visitor attends with each applicant due to capacity. Details of these events will be sent to applicants once an offer has been made to them.

Attendance at a visit day is strongly encouraged, but it is not obligatory and plays no role in the selection process; it is also recognised that not all applicants will be able to attend.

4. Correspondence with applicants

All correspondence relating to an application's status will be sent by email.

All applications are acknowledged by email on receipt (starting in mid-September), to establish contact and inform the applicant of the process to be followed.

All applicants should be contacted when we receive their application, to establish contact and inform the applicant of the process to be followed. Applicants will then be notified if their application has been successful or unsuccessful, or to inform them that their application has been assessed but that we will not be able to make a final decision until later in the cycle.

Applicants who receive an offer will receive an invitation to a visit day.

5. Deferred applications

We will consider applications for deferred entry on an equal basis to those applying for direct entry.

Criteria for assessing applicants

1. Academic entry requirements

Academic entry requirements for standard qualifications (A-level, SQA, IB, Access, BTEC, Welsh Baccalaureate, GCSEs) can be found in the [undergraduate course finder](#). Other qualifications, including international qualifications, will be considered on their individual merits; [further information](#) is available.

2. Additional academic criteria

We rank applicants according to the subjects offered at A-level (or equivalent) and predicted/actual grades. We will be looking to see that you have grade predictions in line with our usual offer conditions and that you are taking a preferred range of subjects, as outlined in our [undergraduate course finder](#).

The weightings we use to rank subjects at A-level (or equivalent) are:

Weighting 1:

Biology; Botany; Chemistry; Computer Science; Electronics; Economics; Engineering; Environmental Studies; Further Maths; Geography; Geology; Human Biology; Marine Science; Maths; Mechanics; Other Maths; Physics; Psychology; Science; Statistics; Zoology.

Weighting 0.6:

All other subjects (except General Studies and Critical Thinking).

We also expect applicants to have a broad range of GCSE subjects; the top eight GCSE grades are included in our scoring.

A-levels in General Studies or Critical Thinking are not counted as part of offers, nor are they considered in the academic assessment of applicants.

3. Personal statement criteria

In some cases we may need to refer to the personal statement and reference to differentiate between applicants with very similar academic profiles.

If this is the case, when reading and assessing personal statements, we are particularly keen to see evidence that applicants appreciate the scientific nature of a degree in biological sciences, rather than just being interested in natural history. Participation in relevant extra-curricular activities is useful, and evidence for general intellectual and practical skills, and non-academic experience, is also noted.

4. Reference criteria

References should ideally be from a school or college, from a personal tutor confirming the academic potential of the applicant to study at degree level. Where this is not possible, a non-academic reference should confirm the relevant experience of the applicant as well as mathematical and problem-solving capabilities. It should indicate the potential of the applicant for study at degree level.

5. Additional tests

Not applicable.

6. Interview

Applications from those with non-standard educational backgrounds will be considered on a case-by-case basis; promising applicants may be invited to interview to discuss their application and to provide an opportunity to explain the course structure to see if it meets their needs.

Such interviews are conducted by two people, at least one of whom has been trained in fair and effective recruitment techniques, and are undertaken in accordance with the University's policy on equal opportunities. In addition to the interview, there may be a short written comprehension exercise to allow an assessment of the applicant's ability to understand and explain a scientific article.

7. Mature applicants

We welcome applications from mature candidates. We normally require evidence that their level of academic ability is equivalent to our standard requirements. Suitable candidates may, therefore, be invited to interview (see **6. Interview** above).

8. International applicants

International applicants will be subject to the criteria as detailed here:

www.bristol.ac.uk/international/countries

We also consider applications for these courses through the Common Application system, and the same criteria and assessment used for UCAS applicants are applied. Applicants can only be considered through one application route; we cannot consider applicants through the Common Application who have also applied to Bristol and/or other institutions through UCAS.

9. English Language requirements for non-native speakers

All applicants are required to demonstrate that they have sufficient ability to understand and express themselves in both spoken and written English in order to benefit fully from their degree course.

English Language requirements for each course can be found in the [undergraduate course finder](#) and are explained at www.bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements.

10. Contextual information

We take a holistic approach to all applications, ensuring that the educational and social context in which an applicant applies is taken into consideration, where supported by clear evidence that this may have adversely affected academic achievement. This may include time spent in Local Authority care, information about which can be provided in the application.

As part of our commitment to the UK national agenda on widening participation, we consider the educational context in which grades have been achieved, particularly if there is evidence that an applicant's current school or college performs below a defined threshold.

When assessing whether applicants meet our academic requirements, contextual criteria may be applied to those who attend and apply from a school or college which in the previous year ranked in the bottom 40 per cent in any of the following categories:

- average score per A-level entry
- average score per A-level entrant
- percentage of students applying to higher education.

If an applicant meets one of these criteria, we will raise their predicted/achieved grades by one grade in our rankings; ie an AAB applicant will be awarded the same academic score as an AAA applicant. Applicants still need to satisfy specific subject requirements. Contextual offers are usually one grade lower than the standard offer.

The University reviews its definition of educational disadvantage and low-performing schools each year and each case is considered on an individual basis.

We also consider evidence of clear motivation to study. This may include participation in higher education outreach activities, attendance at a University summer school or a targeted Access Scheme (such as Access to Bristol or Realising Opportunities where applicants receive special consideration and in some cases, guaranteed and/or lower offers; please see

the [University's admissions principles and procedures](#) for more information). We do not take the following into consideration when making admissions decisions: the school type attended by an applicant (e.g. independent school, state school, academy), or whether an applicant's parent has any experience of higher education.

Offers

Typical offers for A-levels and other UK qualifications can be found in the entry data in the online [undergraduate course finder](#). Offers to applicants with non-standard qualifications will be made equivalent to the published A-level offer.

We recognise that some applicants may achieve higher than their predicted grades, and so we may also consider applicants who are predicted to achieve one grade below the entry requirements (as long as this is in a non-specified subject). Any offer made would be at the standard level.

We may make lower 'contextual' offers based on whether an applicant is deemed to have experienced educational disadvantage, as defined in section 7.5 of the [University's admissions principles and procedures](#) (see also **Criteria for assessing applicants: 10. Contextual information** above).

Other

1. Transfers

Transfers are considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any grades achieved by the student during their university studies to date, the subjects studied, space on the course and any other information pertinent to the case.

We do not usually accept entry into year two of our degree courses.

2. Additional information

The University can only guarantee places if the exact terms of the offer are met, however offer holders would not automatically be rejected if the terms of the offer are missed by one grade.

If offer holders do not meet the terms of their offer when exam results are released they may be considered as a 'near miss candidate'. All near miss candidates are reviewed mid-August after those who have met the terms of their offer have been confirmed. International offer holders may be reconsidered earlier depending when their exam results are released.

Contacts for enquiries

Any enquiries should be addressed to the Undergraduate Admissions Office: sci-ug-admissions@bristol.ac.uk or +44 (0)117 331 7203.