

Admissions principles and procedures for undergraduate courses

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.

1.1 - 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 applicants who have the potential to do well at Bristol.

1.2 - The Principles and Procedures through which the University assesses applications and offers places are designed to be:

- easily understood by applicants
- transparent
- fair
- based on principles that are applied consistently across the University.

1.3- The University will review its 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 Monitoring of admissions

2.1 - Under Statute 21 of the University, Senate regulates the admission of students, subject to the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations.

2.2 - The Student Recruitment Committee is responsible for the development and oversight of a strategy to attract the best students to Bristol and supporting policies for fair and transparent admissions. This includes the recruitment and admission of both UK and international students to both undergraduate courses and postgraduate programmes. It also carries a specific responsibility for widening participation. These responsibilities are carried out on behalf of Senate.

The Committee is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International and Student Recruitment) and includes representative members of academic staff engaged in undergraduate and postgraduate admissions and spread across different faculties, the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions, and a Sabbatical Officer of the Students' Union.

2.3 - The Student Recruitment Committee is responsible for:

- overseeing admissions to the University;
- reviewing the Admissions Principles and Procedures annually to ensure they enable the University to achieve its aims and are consistent with its policies;
- overseeing the process to ensure that the Admissions Principles and Procedures are implemented consistently for all courses;
- overseeing the process to approve course selection criteria and protocols to ensure they are in line with the Admissions Principles and Procedures;
- overseeing the process to advise Schools on development of selection criteria and protocols, that will achieve the University's Admissions Aims;
- promoting good practice in delivery of school or course-based interviews and visit days;
- ensuring that procedures for enabling intake numbers to be met are satisfactory;
- approving the University's Access Agreement submission (including relevant targets and milestones) to the Office for Fair Access on behalf of the University;
- monitoring performance against targets and milestones (or any other form of benchmarking) agreed with Office for Fair Access.

2.4 - The Committee reports to the Education Committee, and will make an annual report to Senate. In order to respond to rapidly changing circumstances, the Chair is empowered to act on behalf of the Committee between meetings during the recruitment period.

3 Transparency

3.1 - The University's website and printed publications will make available clear information on Admissions Principles and Procedures and selection criteria for each course. The University will publish

on its website advice to applicants on what the University is looking for in personal statements and to referees on the elements that are helpful in an academic reference. Information will also be made available on how to contact the University for specific queries about applications (e.g. fee status information, entry requirements).

3.2 - The reports of the Student Recruitment Committee will be, wherever possible, open documents.

3.3 - The University will require each course to publish a course profile, to be made visible via UCAS and the University's own publications.

4 Responsibility

4.1 - Overall responsibility for the Undergraduate admissions process rests with the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions, who is responsible for ensuring both the integrity of the admissions process and that the University meets its undergraduate intake numbers target.

4.2 - The Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions has appointed a professional selection team who will be responsible for implementing the selection process for each undergraduate course at the University, on behalf of the University.

4.3 - Each academic School is responsible for appointing an academic Recruitment and Admissions Officer who will liaise with the selection team Admissions Team to devise the selection criteria, to advise on appropriate selection decisions, to recommend any changes to selection policy and procedure in the light of experience, and who will take responsibility for the organisation and delivery of applicant visit days, interviews and open days and other related activity.

4.4 - It is the responsibility of the Head of School (or the person nominated by the Dean) to appoint a School Recruitment and Admissions Officer and to ensure that they understand and support both the University's Admissions Aims and Principles and Procedures and the skills and qualities that are appropriate to the School's courses, and are given sufficient time and the necessary resources to carry out their responsibilities effectively. School Recruitment and Admissions Officers report to their Head of School, but are expected to work closely with the Director of Recruitment, Access and Admissions, their Faculty Recruitment and Admissions Officer and the staff of the Admissions Office.

4.5 - Each Faculty is responsible for appointing a Faculty Recruitment and Admissions Officer, who will provide academic input into the recruitment and admissions processes for their faculty, and act as the first point of contact with Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions for any undergraduate

admissions policy or procedural issue within the faculty. All School Recruitment and Admissions Officers within the Faculty will be responsible (in terms of admissions activity) to the Faculty Recruitment and Admissions Officer, who in turn will be responsible to the Dean.

5 Consistency

5.1 - All those involved in the admissions process must act in a way that is consistent with the University's Admissions Aims and must follow the admissions procedures and principles set out in this document.

5.2 - The University acknowledges that procedures sometimes need to vary across subject areas. For example, some courses which are particularly heavily oversubscribed, may need to assess artistic performance or may need to consider fitness to practice issues.

5.3 -, In order to ensure consistency, an Admissions Statement is required for each course (or group of courses) which explains the entry requirements and selection criteria and procedures for that course (or group of courses) This is subject to formal approval by the Student Recruitment Committee and once approved, statements will be made publically available via the University's website.

5.4 - The Admissions Office will develop support and training materials for Selectors and academic Admissions staff, as well as update sessions on selection policy and other related matters.

5.5 - The Head of Admissions will ensure that Selectors receive regular training in the selection criteria and protocols for their courses as well as on the general admissions policies, processes and procedures of the University, to ensure that they are up to date with relevant changes in legislation, research and qualifications, as well as University policy and practice.

5.6 - In order to ensure consistent implementation of approved selection criteria, School Recruitment and Admissions Officers and Selectors will liaise regularly throughout the admissions cycle to review progress and to identify, and address, any emerging issues.

6 Process

6.1 - In order to ensure consistency and fairness, the general principles and procedures set out in this document must be followed by all those involved in the admissions process. The Student Recruitment

Committee will require an Admissions Statement for each course (or group of courses) admitting undergraduate students. Admissions Statements will include:

- the method by which the Selection Team will support the principles and implement the procedures set out in the current document;
- 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 (including certain A-level subjects, if they are weighted);
- the process for considering applications and assessing applicants;
- arrangements for Joint Honours courses;
- the range of offers and criteria used for making differential offers.

6.2 - Admissions statements will be developed by the central Admissions Team in close consultation with the relevant academic School Recruitment and Admissions Officer, and provisionally approved by the relevant Faculty Recruitment and Admissions Officer.

6.3 - Admissions Statements must be prepared in line with the principles and procedures in this document in the summer term, for informal approval by Faculty Recruitment and Admissions Officers. Statements will then be subject to formal approval by the Deputy Head of Admissions (UG). The Student Recruitment Committee will consider a sample of approved Statements for monitoring purposes. The aim will be to approve all Statements by the end of June to facilitate publication before applications open in the Autumn. Once approved, Admissions Statements will be made available to applicants and the general public via the University's website. An approved Admissions Statement must be in place before any applications can be considered.

6.4 - All decisions on applications are made subject to strict quality assurance procedures, which will include the following:

- regular consultation with School Recruitment and Admissions 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.

6.5 - All applicants are considered on an equal basis. Applications are not segregated by type of educational institution attended. Each case is considered on its individual merits, and there is no 'blanket' discrimination in favour of applicants from any particular type of background

6.6 - In general, the University does not require applicants to be interviewed. Schools or courses may interview applicants, subject to giving a clear rationale and explaining how the interview will be used in assessing the applicants, and as long as they follow University-approved procedures. These are:

- All applicants are considered on an equal basis, as set out in these principles and procedures. Applications are not segregated by type of educational institution attended. Each case is considered on its individual merits, and there is no 'blanket' discrimination in favour of applicants from any particular type of background. Interviews intended to select students should normally be conducted by two people, including a member of university staff who has undergone University-provided training on fair and effective recruitment techniques.
- The interview and consequent decision-making will be consistent with the University's policy on equal opportunities. Questions related to the race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion or age of the applicant must not be raised either at the interview or in subsequent discussion. However, staff should encourage applicants to disclose any disability to the University, to help ensure that any necessary adjustments can be planned to support their education.
- The School must set criteria for measuring an applicant's performance, which are to be included in the Admissions Statement.
- A standard format note of the interview must be taken and submitted to the Selection Team.

6.7 - In general, the University does not insist that applicants attend a specified School Visit Day. Schools may require this, subject to ensuring applicants understand the obligation to attend, and the nature of any interview or discussion they may have with School staff while they are at the University. Where there is an obligation to attend a Visit Day the Selection Team will ensure that applicants are offered a choice of possible dates and that arrangements are in place to allow for any exceptional circumstance such as illness or hardship.

6.8 - In general, the University does not require applicants to provide supplementary written work. Schools may ask applicants for an example of their work, or set them a written task, subject to clearly explaining why and how this will be used in assessing the applicant. It may, for example, be appropriate to set work for applicants who proceed to a second stage of selection or shortlist, to distinguish between applicants with similar academic profiles, or to give further consideration to an applicant whose application does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g. an applicant presenting non-standard qualifications).

6.9 - In general, the University does not require applicants to undertake further tests, e.g. SAT. Nevertheless, certain Schools or courses may set an additional test, subject to approval by the Student Recruitment Committee, as long as they explain clearly why and how this will be used in assessing the applicant. They must also treat all applicants on an equal and fair basis, as for interviews. It may, for example, be appropriate to set a test for applicants who proceed to a second stage of selection or shortlist, to distinguish between applicants with similar academic profiles, or to give further consideration to an applicant whose application does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g. an applicant presenting non-standard qualifications).

7 Criteria for assessing applicants

7.1 - Schools must set criteria that support the University's Admissions Aims, and be in accordance with the principles and procedures in this document.

7.2 – Selectors and, where appropriate, interviewers are expected to use professional judgement in assessing the academic potential of individual applicants, taking a number of factors into consideration, including educational and social context. In exercising their judgement, Selectors must operate in a way that is consistent with the University's Admissions Aims.

7.3 - Actual and/or predicted performance in public examinations is a key indicator of academic potential for degree-level study. Selectors will recognise that a level of performance which is exceptional in its context may indicate outstanding ability, motivation and potential, and will take this into account in assessing the varying performance of applicants. This may mean, for example, that an applicant who has suffered from educational disadvantage may be considered for an offer on the basis of lower predicted or achieved grades than would otherwise be demanded.

7.4 - Educational context may be evidenced in a variety of ways, depending on an individual applicant's circumstances. These may include quantifiable evidence of educational disadvantage as defined in para 7.5 or more generic evidence drawn from the applicant's personal statement or reference (see paras 7.11 and 7.12).

7.5 - Currently, educational disadvantage is defined as attendance at a state school or college where, in the previous year, the school or college was ranked in the bottom 40 per cent of all state schools and colleges in relation to the average score per A-level entry, the average score per A-level entrant or the percentage of students applying to Higher Education. For selection purposes, applicants from state schools/colleges in the lower 40 per cent nationally on one of a range of measures may be given a lower

offer compared to those from other schools/colleges. The University will review and refine its definition of educational disadvantage annually.

7.6 - The University recognises a wide range of qualifications for admissions purposes. As far as possible, details of approved qualifications are included in the University's online prospectus and the Admissions Office is also able to advise on the acceptability of particular qualifications. An offer to an applicant without a recognised qualification requires the prior approval of the Deputy Head of Admissions (UG). The Admissions Office sets the equivalences required for international qualifications in consultation with the International Office, which will be implemented consistently for all courses.

7.7 - In assessing the weight to be given to academic qualifications over and above three A-levels and eight GCSEs (or equivalent), academic Schools will recognise that not all feeder schools offer this as an option.

7.8 - Academic schools may set minimum entry requirements and may insist on specified performance in a particular subject at GCSE, A-level or other equivalent

7.9 - There is no University-wide policy of discounting achievement in any specific A-level or GCSE (or equivalent) subjects and the University does not therefore maintain a list of 'approved' or 'non-approved' subjects. If an individual academic School wishes to discount achievement in a specific subject such as General Studies or wishes to weight subjects differentially, this must be declared in their Admissions Statement.

7.10 - The University must be confident that the applicant has the proficiency in English language necessary to succeed in their chosen course. Therefore, applicants may be required to take an English language test as part of the condition of an offer. The Student Recruitment Committee will set an appropriate standard requirement for performance in IELTS or other tests. Please see the University's [English Language Entry Requirements Policy](#) for further information.

7.11 - The personal statement and reference provide important supplementary indications of ability, motivation and potential, as well as information about personal circumstances and social and cultural context, and may be taken into account in reaching a decision. Criteria for assessing the personal statement may include:

- Demonstrable interest in, and commitment to, the subject;
- Evidence of clear thinking and excellent understanding;
- Appropriateness of the Bristol course in relation to the applicant's declared interests and aspirations;

- Non-academic achievement and/or experience, or extra-curricular interests, that indicate the likely contribution an applicant will make to the life of the University;
- Other relevant skills – e.g. fluency in foreign language/s.

7.12 Attending a non-accredited preparatory course or summer school provided by the University or other agency can help students prepare for university life, but does not, in itself, guarantee a place, although it may be taken into account as an indicator of motivation and commitment. However, applicants who have successfully completed a University of Bristol Year 11 Summer School or a University of Bristol Sutton Trust Summer School will be guaranteed an offer of a place at the University, provided that they meet the entry requirements for their chosen course, with the exception of courses that interview which will instead guarantee an interview. If a course is heavily over-subscribed then it may be necessary, in some cases, to make applicants an offer for an alternative related course, rather than the course for which the applicant originally applied.

7.13 - The University is a sponsor of the Merchants' Academy and has undertaken to guarantee an offer of a place at the University to any student who is recommended by the Principal, provided that the student meets the entry requirements for their chosen course, with the exception of courses that interview, where the University will only guarantee an interview for a place. If a course is heavily over-subscribed then it may be necessary, in some cases, to make applicants an offer for an alternative, related, course, rather than for the course to which the applicant originally applied.

7.14 - The University's Bristol Scholars Scheme undertakes to guarantee an offer of a place at the University to five students as recommended by the Principal from each of five designated schools/colleges in the City of Bristol, provided that the student meets the agreed entry requirements for their chosen course. An exception is applied in the case of courses that interview, where the University will only guarantee an interview for a place. If a course is heavily over-subscribed then it may be necessary, in some cases, to make applicants an offer for an alternative, related, course, rather than for the course to which the applicant originally applied.

7.15 - Many universities, including the University of Bristol, offer enhanced Sports High Performance Scholarships and similar schemes which encourage students with exceptional Sporting achievement to apply to Bristol. In exceptional cases, the expert staff in the Centre for Sport, Exercise and Health can recommend that an offer is made to an applicant on the basis of their Sporting achievements.

7.16 - Admissions staff will take into account the applicant's response to the opportunities and challenges they have faced, in the understanding that these will not be the same for all.

7.17 - Allowance will be made for any applicant (from whatever educational sector) with verified exceptional circumstances or who has faced difficult challenges in a positive way, where these are made known to the University (e.g. illness, death of a parent, poverty, disrupted education, refugee status). The University may decide to offer a place to an applicant whose academic performance appears to have been affected by such circumstances and who might otherwise have been expected to perform better. If an applicant wishes to make us aware of extenuating circumstances affecting their studies during the application process, they can complete an extenuating circumstances form which will be taken into account by the Selection Team. We will only be able to consider extenuating circumstances brought to our attention by submitting the form. The deadline to complete the form is either two weeks before publication of their examination results or 31 July each year, depending on which date arrives first for the applicant.

7.18 - Bristol was established in 1909 as a university for the city of Bristol and the West of England, yet the number of local students who apply today is relatively low. While the residence of an applicant will not be taken into account when making admissions decisions, the University will continue to work hard to increase the number of appropriately qualified local students applying from the Bristol (BS) postcode area, as part of its engagement with the community from which it originated and its wish to encourage students who, for family, economic or cultural reasons, intend to live at home.

7.19 - In their holistic assessment of the broader context of an applicant's academic achievement, admissions staff may take into account indicators of social context where supported by clear evidence that these may have adversely affected academic achievement. It should be noted that the University does not take the following into consideration when making admissions decisions: the socio-economic group of an applicant, whether an applicant's parent has any experience of higher education or the type of school attended by the applicant.

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

7.21 - Consideration of applications from students who declare a disability is based on the same criteria and principles as for other applicants. The University is seeking to reduce any barriers that might confront a student with a disability seeking to study at Bristol. Such cases will be addressed on an individual basis. Implementation of the Admissions Principles and Procedures will be sensitive to the different experiences of disabled applicants, and will take into account their response to the opportunities and challenges they have encountered, on the understanding that these may be individual to the applicant. Applicants with a disability are encouraged to disclose this to the University, to enable any necessary reasonable adjustments to be planned in support of their education. Failure to

do so may impact on the ability to make any necessary reasonable adjustments. More information is available from the [Disability Services](#) website.

7.22 - Applications from mature and other students 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.

7.23 - Admissions staff will disregard any criminal convictions which are spent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, 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 through the Disclosure and Barring Service. Where an applicant has an unspent (or spent, in relevant cases) conviction, a decision on whether to offer a place will be made by a group convened by the Director of Student Recruitment, Access and Admissions, as set out in our procedures for the with a criminal conviction.

7.24 - The University reserves the right to exclude an applicant who is considered, on justifiable grounds, to be unsuitable for a place on a particular course or for attendance at the University in general.

7.25 - The University will not admit applicants on the strength of information believed to be either fraudulent, or plagiarised, and reserves the right to make an application unsuccessful or cancel an offer made under these circumstances, as outlined in the [University statement of policy on fraudulent applications](#).

7.26 - In order to avoid the proliferation of potentially dangerous technologies in unstable or unfriendly regimes, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) runs an [Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#). This scheme is compulsory for international applicants from outside the EU and approval by the FCO under the terms of the scheme is a requirement for entry to a number of courses. An international student is defined as a student who, wherever they are educated or whatever their source of funding, is required to pay fees to the University at the international rate, in accordance with The Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations 2007 and The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) (England) Regulations 2007.

7.27 - 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.

7.28 - Applicants who submit multiple applications, either within a cycle or across admissions cycles, will have each application considered separately.

8 Offers

8.1 - Wherever possible, all applicants are contacted by the University within four weeks of their application being received (commencing in October), to establish contact and inform the applicant of the process to be followed.

8.2 - Academic Schools will inform the Student Recruitment Committee in their Admissions Statement of their offer range and criteria. The standard of the conditional offers made should normally be in line with published entry requirements and may not vary substantially from these.

8.3 - Different levels of offer may be made to applicants from schools/colleges in the lower 40 per cent nationally on one of a range of measures, to reflect individual circumstances or to send an encouraging signal to specific applicants. There are no quotas or targets for different types of school or college.

8.4 - The Selection Team may not exceed their maximum allocated offer numbers without the agreement of the Student Recruitment Committee. In deciding the numbers of conditional and unconditional offers to be made, the University takes into account historic conversion trends (in terms of both offer-to-acceptance and acceptance-to-conditions-met) in order to meet their allocated student numbers. In determining the number of offers to be made, the University may also take into account the fact that conversion trends may vary for different types of applicant in different subject areas. However, variations in conversion trends for different types of applicant do not affect the selection criteria applied or selection decisions in relation to individual applications. In making such decisions they will be guided by the University's Admissions Aims.

8.5 - The Selection Team may make early offers to attract exceptional applicants, but will ensure that mechanisms are in place to guarantee that all applications received at UCAS by the January deadline are treated on an equal basis.

8.6 - Offers are made only to applicants judged to have the academic potential to succeed in their chosen course of study, including the required level of proficiency in the English language. Applicants must also be able to satisfy any necessary immigration requirements and be able to satisfy the University as to the source of funding for tuition and any accommodation fees for the full period of study.

8.7 - In cases of courses which are heavily over-subscribed, in some cases applicants may be offered a place on an alternative, related course. If this is the case, this will be communicated to the applicant and the reasons explained.

8.8 - 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.

9 Confirmation

9.1 - Confirmation is the name given to the period in August each year when the University receives A-level and other UK and international qualification results for any applicants who have accepted conditional offers. On the basis of these results, applicants who achieve the grades required by their conditional offer have their place confirmed. Applications from those students who have not quite met the required grades are reviewed and their places may be confirmed if there are places still available on their course.

9.2 - In order to carry out the Confirmation process described above, the University relies on receiving and processing electronic results data from UCAS, for results of A-level and some other UK qualifications. In turn UCAS relies on receiving and processing electronic results data from the A-level and other UK qualification examination boards. All bodies also rely on the appropriate staff being available to process the examination results. These activities normally have to be accomplished within a tight timescale of three to four working days.

9.3 - The University has contingency plans in place to enable it to cope with failure of these processes. However, in the event of some very exceptional circumstances beyond its control (e.g. extensive computer systems failures, mass staff unavailability affecting either students' ability to sit school leaving examinations or the University's ability to process results within the timescale), 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 CF (Conditional Firm) applicants to admit to its undergraduate degree courses for the forthcoming academic year.

9.4 - Should such exceptional circumstances occur, the University will make every possible effort, once normal service is resumed, retrospectively to offer places to CF applicants who had achieved the terms of their offers but who had not been allocated a place under the emergency procedures. Depending on

the timescale and availability of places, it might be necessary to offer a place for the following academic year (i.e. deferred entry).

10 Applicants to whom an offer is not made

10.1 - The University currently receives over 10 applications per place, which unfortunately means that we have to disappoint many applicants. We aim to send an email to unsuccessful applicants, in order to explain the outcome in general terms by providing contextual data about competition levels, and the admissions procedures followed. Guidance on requesting further feedback is provided in the [applicant feedback and complaints procedures](#).

10.2 - The University will correspond about a decision only with the applicant, or their nominee with prior approval from the applicant. There is no right of appeal, and the decision will not be reviewed. However, concerns that the University's admissions principles and procedures have been incorrectly implemented may be investigated under the [applicant feedback and complaints procedures](#).

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