

Undergraduate admissions statement

This statement should be read in conjunction with the University's admissions principles and procedures.

Year of admissions cycle: 2014

Courses covered:

Single Honours Programmes:

BSc Politics & International Relations (L200)

BSc Sociology (L300)

BSc Sociology with Study Abroad (L301)

Joint Honours Programmes:

BSc Economics and Politics (LL12)

BSc Politics and Sociology (LL23)

BSc Social Policy and Politics (LL42)

BSc Sociology and Social Policy (LL43)

BSc Sociology and Philosophy (LV35)

BA Politics and French (RL12)

BA Politics and German (RL22)

BA Politics and Italian (RL32)

BA Politics and Portuguese (RL52)

BA Politics and Russian (RL72)

BA Politics and Spanish (RL42)

BSc Philosophy and Politics (VL52)

BSc Theology and Sociology (VL63)

Admissions process

1. Admissions team

Applications assessed by 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. 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. Applications that are received on time (in accordance with the deadlines of the UCAS application cycle) are guaranteed equal consideration.

When assessing an application the Admissions Team will consider the following;

- A candidate's academic potential, and their potential to succeed on our programme
- The personal statement

- The reference
- Exceptional circumstances and/or the educational and social context in which an applicant applies, where there is clear evidence that this may have adversely affected academic achievement.

All applications are allocated scores on the academic record and the personal statement / reference. The respective weighting ratio out of 100 is as follows:

L200 BSc Politics & International Relations – 25:75

L300 BSc Sociology – 25:75

L301 BSc Sociology with Study Abroad – 25:75

LL12 BSc Economics and Politics – 50:50

LL23 BSc Politics and Sociology – 30:70

LL42 BSc Social Policy and Politics – 25:75

LL43 BSc Sociology and Social Policy – 25:75

LV35 BSc Sociology and Philosophy – 40:60

RL12 BA Politics and French – 30:70

RL22 BA Politics and German – 30:70

RL32 BA Politics and Italian – 30:70

RL52 BA Politics and Portuguese – 30:70

RL72 BA Politics and Russian – 30:70

RL42 BA Politics and Spanish – 30:70

VL52 BSc Philosophy and Politics – 40:60

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

3. Interview or visit day

We hold School Visit Days in February and March for students to whom we have made offers. Although candidates are actively encouraged to participate, attendance is not compulsory and does not affect the decision of the admissions team, nor does it form a part of the selection process.

In addition, there are two University Open Days each year for those at an earlier stage of application.

4. Correspondence with applicants

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

All applicants should be contacted when we receive their application, to establish contact and to 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.

5. Deferred applications

We welcome applications for deferred entry.

Criteria for assessing applicants

1. Academic entry requirements

Academic entry requirements for standard qualifications (A-level, SQA, IB, Access, BTEC, Welsh Bacc, 14-19 Diploma, GCSEs) can be found in the online Undergraduate Prospectus; <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014>

Other qualifications, including international qualifications, will be considered on their individual merits; further information is available at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/international/study-at-bristol/how-to-apply/country-specific/>.

Please note - cross school/joint honours courses may have different subject and/or grade requirements to that of the single honours courses offered by the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies. Prospective applicants are therefore advised to look carefully at the information provided in the online Undergraduate Prospectus, for requirements specific to your intended course of study.

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014>

2. Additional academic criteria

The School is interested in academic potential rather than simply academic attainment so far. Admissions tutors draw on actual and predicted attainment, the educational context, the personal statement and the school reference in making this assessment.

Where appropriate the School will take into account contextual information such as school performance, educational disadvantage, or exceptional challenges which the candidate has faced. In so doing, reference may be made to information in the public domain concerning school performance, as well as information given on the UCAS form.

Consideration of applications begins by looking at actual or predicted A-level (or equivalent) grades. Offer conditions may specify achievement in subjects most appropriate to the programme of study (usually essay based subjects appropriate to study in the social sciences). Taking subjects such as Art, Music or Theatre Studies does not automatically work against candidates. For those students who have not taken courses in the Social Sciences their personal statement should indicate how their chosen A level (or equivalent) studies is relevant to the particular degree programme and/or explain why they are choosing to take a different academic direction

General Studies and/or Critical Thinking are not included as part of an offer.

Please note - cross school/joint honours programmes may have additional/different requirements specific to the particular course of study. Prospective applicants are therefore

strongly advised to refer to the Admissions Statements provided by partner Schools for their intended course of study;

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014/admissions-statements.html>

3. Personal statement criteria

We pay particularly close attention to the personal statement. The admissions team take into account the following when assessing personal statements: Evidence of individual engagement with the course of study, as well as empirical evidence of a commitment to the subject that goes beyond the A-Level (or equivalent) syllabus.

Evidence of independent, critical engagement with the themes and controversies that underpin the discipline:

This is not simply a case of describing the issues you are interested in, or listing the books you have read, it is about addressing the 'why' question. What is it – specifically and explicitly – that so enthuses you about the debates you engage with, the books you read and the ideas you discuss? In most cases, there is a clear sense of your own intellectual journey and how this has forged your interest and passion for the subject.

A sense of the individual:

A personal statement should be just that – a personal reflection on what it is that interests the applicant about the subject and why. We are not looking for a model answer. Indeed, there are countless different ways to write a successful application. For this reason using a template is **STRONGLY DISCOURAGED** as it will result in a generic statement that will not distinguish the candidate from the other applicants following the same model.

Additional hobbies, interests and activities:

For programmes of study in SPAIS, strong applications could be bolstered by evidence of engagement in activities broadly connected to the social and/or the political, for example volunteering work or work with a political party or campaign. However, whilst important, this aspect of the application is less decisive than the vibrancy of the candidate's intellectual engagement with the ideas.

Please note - cross school/joint honours programmes may have additional criteria specific to the partner school. Prospective applicants are therefore strongly advised to refer to the Admissions Statements provided by partner Schools for their intended course of study; <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014/admissions-statements.html>

4. Reference criteria

We will check the personal statement and reference for evidence of mitigating circumstances. 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, then the criteria will include the following:

- Accuracy and consistency of the predicted grades in light of previous GCSE and AS level (or equivalent) achievement
- Exceptional circumstances or matters that may have affected the applicant's previous academic performance.

- Evidence of effort and a positive attitude towards studies, and if there are any educational or special circumstances.
- Evidence of the applicant's interest in, and commitment to, the discipline.
- Evidence of the applicant's extra-curricular activities and responsibilities.

Please note - cross school/joint honours programmes may have additional criteria specific to the partner school. Prospective applicants are therefore strongly advised to refer to the Admissions Statements provided by partner schools for their intended course of study;

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014/admissions-statements.html>

5. Additional Tests

Not applicable.

6. Interview

Interviews are used only occasionally for mature, local or 'special case' applicants. Where interviews are held, they are conducted by two people, at least one trained in fair and effective recruitment techniques, and are undertaken in accordance with the University's policy on equal opportunities.

7. Mature applicants

The school welcomes mature applicants. Although there are no fixed academic requirements, evidence of recent study and examinations is expected. In some cases mature applicants may be invited to interview.

8. International applicants

Overseas applications are considered using the same criteria and procedures outlined above. There are no special arrangements for considering Overseas Applicants.

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

www.bristol.ac.uk/international/countries

We also consider applications through the Common Application system, and the same criteria and assessment used for UCAS applicants are applied.

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 can be found in the Undergraduate Prospectus and at: www.bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements

The specific IELTS standard required for this programme can be found in our online prospectus:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2014/>

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 is provided in the UCAS application. Such applications will have one grade lifted for their academic score: e.g. an AAB applicant will be awarded the same academic score as an AAA applicant. Applicants still need to satisfy specific subject requirements.

We also consider evidence of clear motivation to study. This may include attendance at a University summer school, a targeted Access Scheme (such as Access to Bristol or Realising Opportunities), or participation in other higher education outreach activities.

We do not take the following into consideration when making admissions decisions: the school type attended by an applicant, 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 Prospectus](#). Offers to applicants with non-standard qualifications will be made equivalent to the published A-level offer.

We may make lower 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](#).

Other

1. Transfers

It is occasionally possible to change degree courses at the end of the first year (either to joint honours or single honours), but there is no automatic right to do so. The factors that we take into account are academic merit as well as availability of places. If our programmes are full, our policy is that we do not allow any transfers at all.

2. Additional information

Applications for direct entry into year two are considered from suitable applicants who have completed the first year of a degree programme with similar content at another institution. However, this is dependent on availability of places and the suitability of previous study. Applications must be made through UCAS or the Common Application system.

Contacts for enquiries

Any enquiries should be addressed to the Undergraduate Admissions Office: socsci-ug-admissions@bristol.ac.uk or +44 (0)117 928 8154.