

## Undergraduate admissions statement

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

**Year of admissions cycle:** 2016

### **Courses covered:**

Single Honours:

BA Religion and Theology (V600)

Joint Honours (offered in conjunction with other schools):

BA Theology and Sociology (VL63)

## 1. Admissions process

### 1.1. Admissions team

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

### 1.2. Application assessment methods

All applications are considered on an equal basis. Applications are not segregated by the type of educational institution attended.

All applications that are received on time (in accordance with UCAS deadlines) are guaranteed equal consideration.

All applications are allocated scores based on their academic record (achieved and/or predicted), weighting GCSEs as 30 per cent and A-levels (or equivalent qualifications) as 70 per cent.

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

All applications for Joint Honours courses are also assessed in relation to the other subject's selection criteria so the other relevant admissions statement should also be consulted.

All applications must be submitted through UCAS or Common Application. We do not consider any direct applications to the University, except in the case of applications for part-time study.

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

### 1.3. Interview or Visit Day

Applicants who receive an offer will normally be invited to a visit day. This provides the opportunity to see the city and the University, and to ask questions about the degree course(s) and other aspects of student life in Bristol.

While attendance at a visit day is strongly encouraged, 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.

#### **1.4. Correspondence with applicants**

All correspondence relating to an applicant'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.

Applicants will then be notified if their application has been successful or unsuccessful, or to inform them that their application has been assessed and put on 'Hold' pending a decision later in the cycle.

If you submitted your application by 15 January then the final deadline by which you will receive a decision is 7 May. Most decisions are made well before this date. We monitor the number of offers we make carefully and may hold some applications until later in the cycle.

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

## **2. Criteria for assessing applicants**

To assess an application we require:

- A full academic history from age 16 onwards, including any retakes or uncompleted qualifications.
- Predicted grades for any qualifications you are currently taking. Predicted grades can only come from your school or referee. These must include an overall grade (if applicable) AND where a particular subject is specified in the entry requirements, the achieved grades or predicted grades for that subject, and any related or major subjects you are studying.
- If predicted grades are not available, then we will accept a transcript showing the results of your previous year's courses or examinations.

### **2.1. Academic entry requirements**

Academic entry requirements for standard qualifications (A-level, SQA, IB, Access, BTEC, Welsh Bac, 14-19 Diploma, 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 through the [International Office](#).

### **2.2. Additional academic criteria**

A-levels in Critical Thinking and General Studies are not accepted for these courses and will form no part of any offer made.

We take an applicant's record at GCSE into account but there are no specific requirements, except for the mathematics requirement for VV56. We recognise that an applicant's academic abilities may improve significantly subsequent to GCSE. Credit is given to the eight highest grades achieved.

No tests are currently used as a standard part of the selection process for BA Religion and Theology, BA Theology and Sociology or BA Philosophy and Theology.

### **2.3. Personal statement criteria**

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

Applicants should be able to show in general terms that they can think clearly and understand complex ideas. More particularly, the personal statement should also demonstrate a genuine academic interest in the specific Single Honours subject area or Joint Honours subject areas for which application is being made.

We would expect the personal statement to be written using a good level of English.

### **2.4. Reference criteria**

References will be assessed for information on the applicant's motivation, ability to work independently, powers of analysis and expression. If the referee believes the applicant's performance does not reflect their ability, due to educational context and/or special circumstances, the applicant should complete an extenuating circumstances form at [bristol.ac.uk/applicants/applied/extenuating-circumstances/](http://bristol.ac.uk/applicants/applied/extenuating-circumstances/). We are unable to consider extenuating circumstances without this form.

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. Assessors will want to consider the accuracy and consistency of the predicted grades in the light of previous achievement, evidence of effort and a positive attitude towards studies. Where this is not possible, a non-academic reference should confirm the relevant experience of the applicant. It should indicate the potential of the applicant for study at degree level.

### **2.5. Interview**

Interviews are not usually part of our selection process. However, we may seek to interview applicants with non-standard qualifications or those who have returned to study less than six months prior to their application.

Where an applicant is interviewed, the purpose of the interview is to assess whether the applicant currently has the necessary skills and capabilities to pursue the chosen degree course, and whether the course is appropriate to the applicant's interests and aspirations. Attending an interview also provides applicants with the opportunity to ask questions and meet staff and students.

Interview days typically take place in March and decisions are then made based on a combination of the application and interview. Interviewees may be interviewed alone or in small groups. Interviewees based overseas will normally be interviewed by telephone or Skype. All interviews are conducted by two members of staff, at least one of whom is trained in fair and effective recruitment techniques. All interviews are undertaken in accordance with the University's policy on equal opportunities.

The principal assessment criteria are an applicant's interest in and commitment to the subject, his/her capacity for clear thinking and oral expression, for the critical analysis of arguments and evidence, and for working independently at degree level.

## **2.6. Mature applicants**

Mature applicants who meet our entry requirements and can demonstrate recent study within the last five years will normally be assessed on the basis of their application only.

We would usually only interview mature applicants who meet our entry requirements with qualifications achieved over five years ago, and/or have only returned to education within the last six months prior to application, or those who do not meet our published entry requirements but who can demonstrate recent or current study and/or have particularly relevant employment history or life experience.

Selected applicants will be invited to interview as described in **2.5. Interview** above.

Mature applicants who do not meet our standard entry requirements and who cannot demonstrate recent study, relevant employment history or life experience will usually be advised to gain some academic experience before reapplying. Applicants in this position should consider applying to our Foundation Year in the Arts and Humanities or taking an Access course, A-level, Open University foundation module or equivalent.

## **2.7. International applicants**

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

[bristol.ac.uk/international/countries](http://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.

While we do accept foundation programmes please be aware that they are designed for applicants who have not been able to take the correct level of qualification in their home country. Therefore, we do not consider applicants who are taking a foundation programme and have previously completed A-levels or equivalent qualifications that do not meet our entry grade requirements, except in exceptional circumstances.

## **2.8. 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 [bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements](http://bristol.ac.uk/ug-language-requirements).

## **2.9. Contextual information**

We take a holistic approach to assessing all applications, ensuring that an applicant's educational and social contexts are taken into consideration, where supported by clear evidence that this may have adversely affected academic performance. 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.

Applicants may be eligible for a contextual offer if they are currently applying from (or in the 15/16 academic year were in full-time education in) a school ranked in the bottom 40 per cent in any of the following categories for the: 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 during the scoring process; i.e. 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.

To be eligible for a contextual offer, applicants currently attending school must apply from a school in the list below:

[2016 cycle list here](#)

Applicants not currently attending school must have been in full-time education in one of the following schools in the academic year 15/16:

[2015 cycle list here](#)

Please note that we use the "applying from" school code or the education history listed on the UCAS form to determine an applicant's eligibility for a contextual offer. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure these are correct.

The University reviews its definition of educational disadvantage 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, comprehensive school, academy) or an applicant's parents' experience of higher education.

### **3. Offers**

#### **3.1 Typical Offers**

Typical offers for A-levels and other UK qualifications can be found in the entry data in the [undergraduate course finder](#). 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](#).

#### **3.2 Aspirational Offers**

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.

### **3.3 Alternative Offers**

If you are not qualified or have an unsuitable academic background for the course to which you originally applied, we may offer you the opportunity to be considered for an alternative course in a related subject area. In such cases applicants will receive an email notification providing a list of the alternative options. Please note that receipt of this email does not guarantee that an offer will be made.

## **4. Other**

### **4.1. Deferred applications**

We will consider applications for deferred entry. However, deferred applicants should be aware that, in fairness to other applicants in the following cycle, we can only make a limited number of deferred offers in each cycle.

Applicants are expected to describe briefly in their personal statement how their 'gap' year might subsequently benefit their university career. Preference may be given to those demonstrating a clear and relevant academic purpose, or with significant health or personal issues.

### **4.2. Resits**

The Department of Religion and Theology will consider applicants who resit their qualifications.

### **4.3. Transfers**

Requests for transfers to our courses may be made from suitable applicants from other degree programmes within the University, subject to the conditions set out in the [Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes](#). This is at the department's discretion and relies on spaces being available.

Generally, we would expect students to begin their studies in the first year of the programme, but suitably qualified applicants who have completed the first year of a degree programme at another institution may seek entry to year two, but acceptance is at the discretion of the department and is subject to there being space available on that degree. Such applications must be submitted in the usual way through UCAS, indicating the year of entry as Year Two, with reasons for requesting such a transfer clearly outlined in the Personal Statement.

### **4.4. Extenuating Circumstances**

If your education has been significantly disrupted through health or personal problems, disability or specific difficulties with schooling you will need to submit an extenuating circumstances form (available from [bristol.ac.uk/applicants/applied/extenuating-circumstances/](http://bristol.ac.uk/applicants/applied/extenuating-circumstances/)) to Undergraduate Admissions.

The information provided on the form will be treated confidentially, and will help us to accurately assess your academic performance in light of your situation.

#### **4.5. Policies**

All applications are considered in line with our [Admissions policies and procedures](#).

We are committed to the provision of high quality, fair and transparent admissions procedures for all our applicants. We recognise, however, that there may be occasions when applicants believe that they have cause for complaint. At this point applicants should follow our [Applicant feedback and complaints procedures](#).

Should an applicant believe that University admissions principles and procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied, these complaints procedures provide a mechanism for objective review.

#### **4.6. Additional information**

The University can only guarantee places if the exact terms of the offer are met, however offer holders would not automatically be unsuccessful if the terms of the offer are narrowly missed.

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 in August after publication of A-level results. International offer holders may be reconsidered earlier depending when their exam results are released.

#### **4.7. Contacts for enquiries**

Any enquiries should be addressed to our Enquiries team: [choosebristol-ug@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:choosebristol-ug@bristol.ac.uk) or +44 (0)117 394 1636.