

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:

BSc Politics and International Relations (L200)
 BSc Politics and International Relations with Study Abroad (L201)
 BSc Politics with Quantitative Methods (L202)
 MSci Politics with Quantitative Methods (L203)
 BSc Sociology (L300)
 BSc Sociology with Study Abroad (L301)
 BSc Sociology with Quantitative Methods (L302)
 MSci Sociology with Quantitative Methods (L303)

Joint Honours:

BSc Politics and Sociology (LL23)
 BSc Sociology and Philosophy (LV35)
 BSc Philosophy and Politics (VL52)

1. Admissions process

1.1. Admissions team

Applications are assessed by a centralised team in close co-operation with 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 scored according to their (achieved or predicted) A-levels and their GCSE results (or equivalent), using the following weightings. Please note that these weightings differ by course chosen:

Course	A-levels	GCSE	Personal statement
BSc Politics and International Relations (L200)	30%	-	70%
BSc Politics with Quantitative Methods (L202)	30%	-	70%
MSci Politics with Quantitative Methods (L203)	30%	-	70%

BSc Politics and International Relations with Study Abroad	30%	-	70%
BSc Sociology (L300)	30%	-	70%
BSc Sociology with Quantitative Methods (L302)	30%	-	70%
MSci Sociology with Quantitative Methods (L303)	30%	-	70%
BSc Sociology with Study Abroad (L301)	30%	-	70%
BSc Politics and Sociology (LL23)	30%	-	70%
BSc Sociology and Philosophy (LV35)	40%	-	60%
BSc Philosophy and Politics (VL52)	60%		40%

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

We do not consider any direct applications to the University.

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.

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

1.3. Interview or visit day

A visit day is normally held at the school in February/ March. All applicants made an offer before this stage in the applications cycle will be invited to attend. Although applicants are actively encouraged to participate, attendance is not compulsory and does not affect any decision made by the admissions team, nor does it form a part of the selection process

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.

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](#).

All applications must be submitted through UCAS or Common Application; we cannot consider any direct applications.

Applications that are received on time are guaranteed equal consideration.

2.2. Additional academic criteria

The School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies is interested in academic potential rather than simply academic attainment so far. Admissions staff will draw on both actual and predicted attainment, the educational context of an applicant, along with information in both the personal statement and the academic reference in making this assessment.

For students who have not previously studied social science subjects, their personal statement should indicate how their chosen A-level (or equivalent) studies are relevant to the particular degree and/or explain why they are choosing to take a different academic direction for their degree.

A-levels in General Studies and Critical Thinking are not included in our assessment of applicants or included in the terms of offers.

2.3. Personal statement criteria

For courses where we refer to the Personal Statement to differentiate between applicants with very similar academic profiles, the admissions team take into account the following when assessing personal statements:

- Evidence of individual engagement with the chosen 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 (ie what specifically is it that enthuses you about the debates you engage with, the books you read and the ideas you discuss?);
- A sense of the individual – what interests you and why;
- Additional hobbies, interests and activities.

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/. We are unable to consider extenuating circumstances without this form.

References should ideally be from a school or college and from a personal tutor confirming the academic potential of the applicant to study social sciences 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, a positive attitude towards studies and any circumstances that may have had an impact on exam performance. The reference should also provide evidence of the applicant's interest in, and commitment to, the discipline of social science, and evidence of the applicant's extra-curricular activities and responsibilities which are relevant to the chosen course or career aims.

Where an academic reference is genuinely not possible (for instance, for mature applicants), a non-academic reference is acceptable. This should confirm the relevant experience of the applicant and should indicate the potential of the applicant for study at degree level and, if appropriate, their suitability for studying social science.

2.5. Interview

For these courses, applicants are not routinely interviewed. In the majority of cases, admissions decisions will be made on the basis of the application information alone.

2.6. Mature applicants

The School welcomes mature applicants, and such applications are assessed holistically, taking into account factors such as relevant work experience and personal circumstances that may have interrupted or prevented previous degree level study. Although there are no fixed academic requirements specific to mature applicants, evidence of relevant recent study and examinations undertaken within the last 3 years is expected. See **9. Contextual information** below.

2.7. International applicants

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

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](#).

Offers to applicants with non-standard qualifications will be made equivalent to the published A-level offer. Offer conditions may specify achievement in subjects most appropriate to the course of study (usually essay-based subjects appropriate to study in the social sciences). We recognise that some applicants may eventually achieve higher than their predicted grades, and so we may also make offers to those who are predicted to achieve one grade below the entry requirements (as long as this is in a non-specified subject). Any such offer would however be at the standard level.

If you do not meet our admissions requirements or are considered unsuitable 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 for another course at Bristol will automatically be made.

4. Other

4.1. Deferred applications

We will consider applications for deferred entry to the following year of entry, either at the time of application or by request later in the admissions cycle. However applicants should be aware that, in fairness to those applying in the following cycle, we can only make a limited number of deferred offers in each cycle, and that we may decide not to make any more deferred offers beyond a particular point in the admissions cycle.

4.2. Resits

The School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies will consider applicants who have retaken or are retaking existing qualifications. Mention of the reasons for the previous poor performance should be made in the academic reference.

4.3. Transfers

While it is occasionally possible for University of Bristol students to change degree courses at the end of the first year (either to Joint Honours or Single Honours), applicants should

note that there is no automatic right to do so. Such decisions are entirely at the discretion of the department, and may depend on the availability of places.

The School may occasionally allow a student from another institution or University to transfer into the second year of a course at the University of Bristol. Applications should be made in the usual way through UCAS with the 'point of entry' as Year Two, and reasons for the proposed transfer clearly stated in the Personal Statement.

The factors that we take into account when making a decision about a transfer are academic merit as well as the availability of places in any particular year cohort. If our degree courses are full, our policy is that we will not allow any transfers at all.

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 at 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 or +44 (0)117 8154.