

## Undergraduate admissions statement

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

**Year of admissions cycle:** 2017

### **Courses covered:**

BSc Biology (C100)

MSci Biology (C103)

BSc Zoology (C300)

MSci Zoology (C303)

## 1. Admissions process

### 1.1. Admissions team

Applications are assessed by a centralised team in close co-operation with the School Recruitment and Admissions Officer(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 20 per cent and A-levels (or equivalent qualifications) as 80 per cent.

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.

### 1.3. Interview or visit day

All UK candidates who receive an offer are strongly encouraged to attend one of our visit days. Applicants are given an opportunity learn more about the degree, and to view the Faculty, the wider University and the city of Bristol. Applicants are normally given a choice of dates to attend a visit day. We do not normally expect international applicants to attend a visit day unless they are resident in the UK (for instance, at school here) however they are encouraged to attend wherever possible.

## 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 5 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](#).

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

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 (excluding 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.

### **2.3. 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 extracurricular activities is useful, and evidence for general intellectual and practical skills, and non-academic experience, is also noted.

### **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.

### **2.5. Interview**

Applications from those with non-standard educational backgrounds will be considered on a case-by-case basis; 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.

### **2.6. Mature applicants**

We interview a selection of suitable mature applicants. All interviews are conducted by two people, with at least one trained in fair and effective recruitment, and are undertaken in

accordance with the University's policy on equal opportunities. Non-mature applicants are interviewed only in exceptional circumstances.

The criteria for assessing interview performance may include, for example:

- Demonstrated interest in, suitability for, and commitment to the subject;
- Evidence of clear thinking and understanding, problem solving and analytical skills;
- Standard of spoken English;
- 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;
- Positions of responsibility held;
- Other relevant skills.

For mature applicants, evidence of recent study and examinations is expected within the last two years.

## **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.

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 state 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 applies from a school which 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 two grades 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. Applicants not currently attending school must have been in full-time education in one of the following schools in the academic year 15/16:

### [Contextual Offer Schools](#)

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).

## 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.

## 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.

## **4.2. Resits**

The School of Biological Sciences will consider applicants who resit their qualifications.

## **4.3. 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.

## **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/](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 or later 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 39 41639.