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:
Single Honours:
- BSc Geology (F600)
- MSci Geology (F603)
- MSci Geology with Study Abroad (F609)
- BSc Environmental Geoscience (F640)
- MSci Environmental Geoscience (F641)
- MSci Environmental Geoscience with Study Abroad (F644)
- BSc Geophysics (F661)
- MSci Geophysics (F662)
- MSci Geophysics with Study Abroad (F663)

Joint Honours:
- BSc Palaeontology and Evolution (CF17)
- MSci Palaeontology and Evolution (CF16)

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, which forms 100 per cent of our assessment. The weighting is as follows:

- A-level (or equivalent): 80%
- GCSEs: 20%

Decisions to make offers are based on the application, and offers are made to those who have chosen the most appropriate A-level subjects and who show potential, appear to be well-motivated and are likely to achieve the standard offer.
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.

We do not consider any direct applications to the University.

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.

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 weightings we use to rank A-level (or equivalent) subjects are:

- **Weighting 1.0:**
  Ancient History; Biology; Botany; Chemistry; English Language; English Literature; Environmental Studies/Science; Further Maths; Geography; Geology; Greek; History; Human Biology; Latin; Marine Science; Maths; Modern Languages; Physics; Psychology; Statistics; Zoology

- **Weighting 0.8:**
  All other subjects (except General Studies and Critical Thinking which are zero).

Applicants with the subject combinations listed below will be at a disadvantage:

- Environmental Studies and Biology
- Environmental Studies and Geography
- Marine Science and Biology
- Marine Science and Geography
- Geography and Geology

These combinations can only be considered with a physical science as a third subject.

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

2.3. Personal statement criteria
In cases where we refer to the personal statement and reference to differentiate between applicants, the criteria will include the following:

- Interest in and commitment to Earth Sciences;
- Evidence of clear thinking and understanding;
- Problem-solving, analytical and practical skills;
- Non-academic achievement/experience, extra-curricular activities, positions of responsibility;
- Relevant work experience;
- Written English, expression, construction, argument.

2.4. Reference criteria
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.

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.

2.5. Interview

Interviews will be reserved for cases where the application relies on non-standard academic qualifications. Interviews will be conducted by two members of the school admissions team who will have undergone appropriate University training in fair and effective recruitment techniques. All interviews are undertaken in accordance with the University’s policy on equal opportunities.

2.6. Mature applicants

Mature applicants, and others who have come through a non-standard route, are required to attend a visit day and a competitive interview. The aim of the interview is to discern the applicant’s knowledge level and ability to apply that knowledge to answer relevant questions. Such applicants tend to be invited later in the admissions cycle to enable them to gain the maximum benefit possible from their studies, e.g. Access to Science course, prior to assessment.

If A-levels or equivalent are not offered, applicants may be required to sit a test involving basic science and quantitative skills. The purpose of the test is to ensure that applicants have enough knowledge and understanding of physical science to enable them to start a degree from a knowledge base comparable to that of their peers.

Mature applicants may be admitted with slightly lower grades than the standard offer, particularly if they have had a relevant employment history.

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.

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 (usually 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.

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 Earth Sciences will consider applicants who resit their qualifications.

4.3. Transfers
The standard offer for all our Earth Science courses is the same, and so applicants may change their Single Honours course of study (subject to their offering the required A-level subjects within this group) at any time prior to registration.

Geology and Environmental Geoscience students have a common first year of study and so may change subject stream prior to the start of their second year, subject to relevant academic criteria being met.

For Joint Honours and Geophysics degrees, transfer may be possible but will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Occasional transfers from other universities are possible as long as the material studied in a first year elsewhere is comparable to that studied by our first years. Each case is treated individually.

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/) 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 3941639.