

## 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 Physics (F300)

MSci Physics (F303)

MSci Physics with Study in Continental Europe (F304)

MSci Physics with Industrial Experience (F305)

MSci Physics with International Experience (F307)

MSci Theoretical Physics (F340)

BSc Physics with Astrophysics (F3F5)

MSci Physics with Astrophysics (F3FM)

BSc Physics with a Preliminary Year of Study (F308)

Joint Honours:

BSc Physics and Philosophy (FV35)

MSci Physics and Philosophy (FVH5)

## 1. Admissions process

### 1.1. Admissions team

Applications are assessed by a centralised team in close co-operation with 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.

Applications for Physics courses are scored and ranked based on their academic record, according to their achieved or predicted A2 results with the following weighting:

- A-level: 80%
- GCSE: 20%

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**

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**

Academic attainment in Mathematics and Physics are most important for a Physics degree, and our assessment also takes account of both the appropriateness of the additional subject(s) offered and the grades predicted or obtained. We would expect to see high grades in Science and Mathematics subjects, and English, at GCSE level. We consider grades of examinations previously taken, and give credit to the top eight GCSEs.

Account is also taken of any constraints that may have limited the choice of subjects at A level or equivalent examinations.

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.

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.

### **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, then the admissions team looks for evidence in the personal statement that applicants have a good standard of written English, are well informed, and appreciate the importance of mathematics in a physics degree, and explain why they want to pursue a degree in physics.

Statements about other achievements, specific interests and aspirations will be considered in relation to availability of opportunities to the applicant.

We will also take note of any other information that applicants consider to be relevant and wish to present in this section of their application.

### **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.

The reports provided by schools and colleges provide valuable information from those who have worked closely with the applicant in an academic setting. We look for strong qualified support from referees, together with an assessment of mathematical ability and of potential for University level study. Account is also taken of any constraints that may have limited the choice of subjects at A-level or equivalent programmes.

### **2.5. Interview**

In rare cases where we cannot reach a decision based on the information in the application form, applicants may be called for an interview which would include a Mathematics test.

We may also interview applicants for the Physics with a Preliminary Year (F308) course if we're uncertain of their level of mathematical skills, or if they have not yet had the opportunity to gain such skills.

Applicants in these categories who we believe have the potential to succeed on our courses will be interviewed by two members of the academic staff (at least one of whom will be an admissions tutor) with at least one trained in fair and effective recruitment, and are undertaken in accordance with the University's policy on equal opportunities. Although interviews include some standard questions to facilitate comparison, the procedure is designed to provide an opportunity for each applicant to discuss their individual experience and qualifications.

All decisions are made on merit, with offers made to those applicants we feel would most benefit from our degree courses.

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 either in school or in the community;
- Other relevant skills or experiences.

## **2.6. Mature applicants**

We welcome applications from mature students taking an Access course, or who may be taking a limited range of A-levels, although clear mathematical knowledge and ability need to be demonstrated. For mature applicants, evidence of recent study and examinations within the last five years is expected.

Mature and non-standard applicants (eg those not taking A-levels, or taking examinations without an accepted standard of equivalence) whose applications suggest they have the potential to succeed on one of our courses will be considered on an individual basis and such applicants may be invited to interview, as described above in **2.5. Interview**.

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.

## **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.

#### 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 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.

#### 4.2. Resits

The School of Physics will consider applicants who resit their qualifications.

#### 4.3. Transfers

Transfers between BSc and MSci courses at the University of Bristol are possible up to the end of year two. Transfers between other Single or Joint Honours courses are usually possible, but remain at the discretion of the department(s).

We will, occasionally, accept suitably qualified students who wish to transfer from another University or institution directly into year two. However, this will depend on their academic suitability for our programs and the availability of spaces, and any decision would be entirely at the discretion of the University.

#### 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 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)117 928 8153.