

DEPARTMENTAL ADMISSIONS STATEMENT

Department Name: **Historical Studies**
Admissions Tutor: **Dr Hugh Pemberton**
Date last amended: **1 October 2008**

1. Admissions Process

UK/EU Applicants

We welcome applicants from any geographical, social, ethnic, or educational background, and from any age group to our undergraduate degrees in History (V100) and History with Study in German (V1R2). All applicants should submit their applications via UCAS.

Each UCAS form received by the Faculty Admissions Office is assessed independently by two members of the admissions team, and in some circumstances may also be considered by the Departmental Admissions Tutor. All applications are considered on an equal basis. Forms are not segregated by the type of educational institution attended.

Each of the two readers records his/her opinion of each application and assigns a score to the applicant. Applications that are judged to be out of the ordinary are passed to the Admissions Tutor, who makes an independent appraisal. After final assessment, the Faculty of Arts Admissions Office record the decision and forward the forms to the University Admissions Office for further processing and transmission to UCAS.

All applicants receive a written acknowledgement of their application within four weeks of its receipt by the Faculty of Arts Admissions Office, to establish contact and inform the candidate of the process to be followed and when they can expect to receive a decision on their application. Occasionally, the Admissions Tutor may seek further information from a candidate or their referee when there is an apparent mistake on or omission from the UCAS form that prejudices their application.

The Faculty of Arts Admissions Office writes to all candidates to whom we have made an offer, inviting them to attend either of the two Departmental Open Days that the School of Humanities holds in February or March.

Given the sheer number of applicants, we only interview selected mature (over 21) candidates and those candidates entering via the Access to Higher Education Programme. These interviews typically take place during February or March and 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. The purpose of the interview is to assess whether the candidate

currently has the necessary skills and capabilities to pursue a degree programme in History and whether the course is appropriate to his/her interests and aspirations. There is no testing of the candidate's subject-specific knowledge but s/he will be given the opportunity to discuss and debate his/her historical interests. The principal assessment criteria are a candidate's interest in and commitment to the subject, and his/her capacity for clear thinking and oral expression, for the critical analysis of arguments and evidence, and for working independently at degree level.

Overseas Applicants

There are no processes specific to Overseas applicants, except that their forms are fast-tracked, since they are not subject to the UCAS quota. Intending applicants are welcome speak to a member of the Faculty of Arts Admissions Office (email artf-admissionsteam@bristol.ac.uk or telephone +44 (0) 117 928 9989) who may then direct them to the Departmental Admissions Tutor.

2. Criteria for assessing candidates

All candidates are assessed on the basis of their actual or predicted examination performance, the strength of their personal statement and their school/college reference. Given the number of applications we receive each year from applicants who have achieved or are predicted to achieve top grades, we necessarily place substantial emphasis upon the quality of the personal statement.

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

Exam performance

We welcome applications from candidates offering any range of A2 subjects (or equivalents), including candidates not taking History at A2 and candidates offering one (but no more than one) vocational A2. We normally expect candidates to hold or be predicted AAB or AAA at A2 (or equivalent) but will consider those with ABB, taking into account their personal statement and reference. Our offers normally require three A2s, excluding General Studies. We take a candidate's record at GCSE into account, but there are no specific requirements and we recognize that a candidate's academic abilities may improve significantly subsequent to GCSE.

Mature applicants are welcome to apply also on the basis of either recent A-levels or a relevant Access to Higher Education diploma (a pass with at least 45 credits at level 3). In the case of mature applicants, vocational qualifications and/or employment history may in some instances also be taken into account.

For History with Study in German (V1R2) we require applicants to pass German A2 (or equivalent) at a minimum of grade B. Candidates for V100 who wish to transfer into the History with Study in French programme at the end of their first year are required to pass French A2 (or equivalent) at a minimum of grade B.

When assessing examination performance, a range of contextual information is taken into account to help us assess a candidate's true academic ability and potential. This includes: school or college performance (assessed on the basis of the institution's

average A2 or equivalent scores over the previous two years), and exceptional challenges which the candidate may have faced (such as serious illness or bereavement).

Personal statement

Given the very large number of applications we receive each year from applicants who have achieved or are predicted to achieve high grades, we necessarily place substantial emphasis upon the quality of the personal statement.

We seek evidence of a serious interest in, and commitment to, the study of history. We are particularly eager to identify applicants whose interest in the subject extends beyond the A2 syllabus (if they are taking A2 History), who are keen to engage in historical research, and who wish to learn how to undertake such research at university level. Evidence of wider reading and of a critical engagement with this reading is important. Applicants who have gained a relevant broader experience of the practice of history (e.g. volunteering at a museum, independent research projects, etc.) are also given credit. Within the Personal Statement itself, we seek evidence of coherent, analytical and critical thinking. Credit is given for well-constructed and accurately expressed argument. We may also take into consideration a candidate's competence in a foreign language or understanding of how other relevant disciplines can inform the study of history, and whether the course applied for is appropriate to the candidate's declared historical interests and aspirations.

We give some credit for non-academic achievements and experience, extra-curricular activities and positions of responsibility held, including paid and voluntary employment, bearing in mind the range of opportunities available to the candidate and the nature of any particular challenges s/he may have faced.

Applications for deferred entry will be considered but candidates are expected to describe briefly in their personal statement how their 'gap' year might subsequently benefit their university career. Generally, we urge candidates to submit undeferred applications wherever possible: since we do not interview, this should not interfere with travel arrangements for a gap year.

School/College reference

When assessing the school/college reference, we are looking for evidence of high levels of motivation, an ability to work independently, and intellectual inquisitiveness. We are particularly interested to hear of anything that might bear on the ability of the applicant to engage in historical research, or their interest in undertaking such research.

References should provide detailed assessment of the applicant's powers of critical analysis and expression, and of the applicant's potential for further development in these areas. We welcome teachers drawing our attention to applicants whose actual or predicted examination performance does not, in the teacher's opinion, accurately reflect their ability and commitment and any educational or special circumstances that may affect it.

Where a recent academic reference is unavailable (e.g. for mature applicants), candidates should ask an employer or other person with a good knowledge of their abilities for a reference that provides as much detailed information as possible about

their skills, capacities and achievements as evidence of their suitability to pursue a degree-level course in History.

If English is not the applicant's first language, we require evidence of the necessary linguistic skills to cope with the demands of an undergraduate degree in the Arts: usually an overall IELTS score of at least 7.0, including 7.0 in writing.

3. Offers

UK/EU Applicants

Offers are usually within the range of AAA-AAB (or equivalents). The actual individual offer which is made varies according to a range of factors, including AS level results, the combination of A2 subjects being studied, any exceptional personal circumstances, and broader contextual information such as school performance.

For mature applicants who have not taken a recent qualification in History (or other Humanities subject) the department suggests that they enrol for one previous to application. Usually, these qualifications take the form of an A-level in History (or other Humanities subject) or an Access to HE Diploma. Should an offer be made, this would normally be conditional to a grade A-C (to be determined by the admissions panel) in the A-level or a pass with a minimum of 45 credits at level 3 for those taking the Access to HE Diploma

For History (V100) and History with Study in German (V1R2): we typically make 350-400 offers for the 106 places available. There is no separate quota for History with Study in German (V1R2).

The Department expects to receive over 1500 applications in each admissions cycle (including approximately 30 for History with Study in German). We must attempt to meet but not exceed our intake target. We do this by considering the statistics from the previous few years' cycle, taking into account the total number of applications, acceptance rate and rate of attainment of required grades.

Given the sheer number of applications we receive each year, it is possible that applicants may not hear from us for some time after an initial acknowledgement that their application has been received from UCAS. This should not be construed as lack of attention or interest in their applications. Whilst we will endeavour to release a certain number of decisions on a regular basis, it is also our duty to ensure and guarantee that all applications received by the January 15 deadline are given full and fair academic consideration.

In addition, the Faculty of Arts Admissions Office maintains running statistics on admissions throughout the year, which allows us also to react to changes in trends occurring during the current cycle.

Regretfully, the pressure of numbers prevents us from offering feedback on individual applications. Any post-decision query should be addressed to the University Admissions Office.

4. Other

Applications from local candidates and prospective students who have attended a University of Bristol or other university's summer school are especially welcomed.

The Department's procedures for dealing with any complaints concerning admissions follow the University's policy (for more information please see http://www.bris.ac.uk/prospective/undergraduates/complaints_procedures).