

Student name policy

Name records and use of names

1. At the University of Bristol we use British English naming conventions to record applicants' and students' legal names (as listed on their passport, national identity card, driver's licence):
 - **Forenames** – often referred to as first or given name, and middle names. We can record up to three forenames
 - **Surname/family name** – sometimes referred to as last name
 - **Initials**
2. We recognise that many cultures have naming practices relating to written order and parts of the name which form an important part of individual's cultural identity and differ from those in the UK. We record a student's Official name to ensure that names are presented correctly on degree certificates but may on occasion address correspondence in the written order forename then surname.
3. We also recognise that many members of our community prefer to use names other than their legal name to identify themselves. The University is committed to using the preferred names of individuals in our community wherever possible:
 - The University allows applicants and students to use a first name different than their legal name on certain University records.
 - There are certain legal documents and communications that require use of an individual's legal name.
4. Any student may choose to identify a Preferred forename in addition to their legal name. The University will display the preferred name to the University community where possible and appropriate and make a good faith effort to update reports, documents, and systems accordingly.
 - By providing a preferred name, applicants and students give consent for use of this name by the University, where use of their legal name is not required.
 - This does not constitute a formal name change and will not remove other names from the record so they will be visible to staff when appropriate.
5. The University reserves the right to reject a preferred forename if it is inappropriate in nature. Preferred names used as misrepresentation or fraud can result in disciplinary action.
6. Any student may correct or remove the title held on their record, without supporting documentation.

Examples of use of preferred and legal name

7. Preferred name:

- Most email and letter correspondence with applicants and students, including communication about exam board outcomes, appeals, and disciplinary matters
- Calls to prospective students or students, e.g. to support application process or wellbeing contact
- Tutor and supervisor lists, class lists
- Blackboard virtual learning environment (including Grade centre)
- Office 365, email, and directory
- UCard (University of Bristol membership/identification card)
- Student record administration systems and reporting, except where required for verification against official documentation e.g. registration, right to study checks, qualification checks, or billing and debtor management
- Tasks and reports relating to marks and results processing, exam board meetings, recording progression and award decisions in our systems
- Display in student systems and forms

8. Legal name:

- Offer letters, which form part of the terms of the contract with the applicant once accepted, and against which qualifications are checked. The same name must be used on offer and acceptance communications.
- Enrolment status letters, providing formal evidence to external organisations, which must match proofs of identification
- Immigration documents, which must match proofs of identifications and qualifications for visa purposes
- Immigration compliance correspondence, which must be auditable by and support reporting to UK Visas and Immigration
- Financial statements and formal debtor correspondence, particularly final reminders, which may form a legal basis in cases of recovery of debt
- Tenancy agreements for University allocated accommodation, which form part of the terms of contract with the student
- Official correspondence with external entities, for example Student Loans Company, which must match proofs of identification and records held by external entity
- Tasks and reports relating to marks and results processing, exam board meetings, recording progression and award decisions in our systems

9. These lists are representative, not exhaustive.

Legal name change

10. Applicants or students may request a change to the legal name held in our record. To change their name, the applicant / student must provide one of the official documents from this list:

- Passport or National Identity Card
- Driving licence
- Marriage certificate
- Divorce decree absolute/final order
- Deed poll
- Statutory declaration
- Police report (in the case of adoption of pseudonym for personal safety)
- Birth certificate

11. Degree certificates are legal documents issued in the name in which a student was registered. For alumni, names held in student records will only be changed and certificates reissued if:

- the individual has documentary evidence of their change of gender, or
- if an error identified after graduation in the official name shown on the certificate is materially impacting an alumnus e.g. obstructing a visa application.

The University does not charge a fee to reissue a degree certificate in either case.

12. The alumnus must provide one of the following documents as legal proof of the change of name and, where relevant, change of gender:

- Passport or National Identity Card
- Birth certificate

13. The University will never ask applicants, students, or alumni to provide a Gender Recognition Certificate or any proof of medical history.

Student name policy

Document control information



Summary: This policy states how we use student name records in correspondence with students and applicants, University systems, reporting to external bodies, and official university documents such as degree certificates. It includes information about the format in which names are stored, choices that students and applicants can make about preferred names and titles, and examples of where the legal name and preferred name may be used.

This provides guidance for all staff in interactions/correspondence with students, and for standards of system development.

Scope – This document applies to: All staff, for compliance, and all students

For applicants entering in: 2024-25 onwards

Applies to academic year: 2024-25 onwards

Owning team: Administration and Records Team

Division: Education and Student Success

Lead contact: Helen Jacobs, Lifecycle Administration Manager

Type: Policy

Status: Published

Version: 1.2

Approved by: Student Experience Committee

Date current version approved: 25/02/2025

Date current version published: 12/03/2025

Date first published: 08/02/2023

Revision schedule: 2 years

Next review date: 24/01/2027

Superseded documents: Version 1.1

Related documents:

- Student guidance – [update your personal details](#)
- Staff process guidance (staff access only) – [amend student name](#)

Keywords: Student name, change name, preferred name