

Admissions Principles and Procedures for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

1 Aims

- 1.1 The University of Bristol aims to:
- Maintain the high academic standards for which it is known.
 - Create a student body that is balanced and diverse in terms of background and experience, with all the educational and cultural benefits that this brings.
 - Recruit students who will engage with and contribute to the intellectual and cultural vitality of the University community.
- 1.2 The University will achieve these aims by:
- Encouraging applications from all those with the motivation and academic ability to thrive at Bristol, whatever their background.
 - Assessing each application carefully and fairly.
 - Offering places to suitably qualified applicants who have the potential to succeed at Bristol.
- 1.3 To ensure consistency and fairness, the general principles and procedures set out in this document will be followed by all those involved in the admissions process.
- 1.4 The University is committed to creating a diverse learning environment where all students are valued for their individual differences and contribution, with equal opportunities for all irrespective of age, disability, race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation. All applicants are considered on an equal basis in line with the [University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#).
- 1.5 The University will monitor and review its Principles and Procedures in the light of experience, research, relevant legislation, and best practice (e.g. the Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Universities UK Fair Admissions Code of Practice, and guidance from the Consumer and Markets Authority).

2 Transparency and Consistency

- 2.1. All University staff involved in the admissions process must act in a way that is consistent with the University's admissions aims (see section 1) and must follow the principles and procedures set out in this document.
- 2.2. The University ensures that appropriate support and training materials are provided for all staff undertaking or overseeing admissions activity, as well as update sessions on policy, legislation, processes and procedures and other related matters.

- 2.3. Admissions decisions are subject to strict quality assurance procedures, which will include the following:
- regular consultation with admissions colleagues to ensure compliance with selection criteria.
 - routine spot checks to ensure assessment consistency and compliance with legal and policy requirements.
 - regular review of selection criteria and outcomes.
 - monitoring of turnaround times to ensure that applications are assessed within a reasonable timeframe (see paragraph 8.1).
- 2.4. All data requested and held by the University through the application process will be processed in line with the [University's Student Fair Processing Notice](#), and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 2.5. The University will only correspond about an application or decision with the applicant, unless the applicant has given their express consent for the University to correspond with a nominated contact (family member, agent, representative).
- 2.6. The University will make reasonable efforts to deliver each programme of study as described in the relevant specification for the appropriate academic year. Where it is necessary for changes to be made to a programme, such as a change in timetabling, location, type of class, assessment or syllabus, the University will inform applicants as soon as possible, providing details of the nature of the change and any options that may be available to applicants.

3 How we assess an application

- 3.1. The University will detail the proposed method by which it will admit students for each programme on its website, in line with the principles and procedures set out in this document. The information will include:
- The method by which the University will support the principles and implement the procedures set out in this document.
 - The process by which the applicant is expected to make an initial application (either through a formal application, or informal enquiry to the School) and respond to any offer of a place of study.
 - Criteria used to select applicants for offer of admission beyond the minimum entry requirements (if applicable).
 - An indication of whether criteria will be weighted differently in the assessment of applicants.
 - The process for considering applications and assessing candidates.
 - Whether an interview or any other selection procedures (e.g., oral presentation) are likely to be required.
 - Whether external assessors are used in the selection process.
 - Whether professional or regulatory memberships and additional requirements are expected as part of any admissions process

4 Application Process

- 4.1. With the exception of PGCE applications (which can be made through [DfE Apply](#)), applications should be made using the University's online application form in accordance with the procedure described in the University's [How to apply](#) pages.
- 4.2. To be eligible for consideration, applications must be submitted with all required documentation. Specific document requirements for each programme can be found within the programme-specific Admissions Statement. Submission of incomplete applications will lead to delays in processing and may lead to the application being withdrawn.
- 4.3. While there is no University-wide charge to applicants for consideration of their applications, individual schools may charge application fees, as outlined in the Application Fee policy. Where applicable, applications will not be considered until the application fee has been paid. This policy can be found on our [postgraduate policies page](#).
- 4.4. Applications for each programme are reviewed in the order they are received, provided the application contains all required documentation and information (see 4.2).
- 4.5. Application deadline dates for each programme are published in the [course finder](#). The University aims to select a balanced international student cohort, and programmes may therefore close to applicants from some countries before others to reflect the different points in the application cycle that students from around the world typically apply.
- 4.6. Applicants are advised to submit their application as early as possible, as we cannot guarantee that offers will remain available up to the application deadline date.
- 4.7. The University carefully monitors the number of offers, acceptances and (where applicable) deposit payments for each programme to establish the appropriate number of offers to be made to deliver the University's postgraduate intake targets.
- 4.8. In some cases, applications will be placed on hold to allow the University to determine whether any further offers can be made. Applicants will be notified by email where this is the case. If we are not able to make further offers for the applied-for programme, we may recommend alternative programmes where possible. Further information can be found on the [after you apply](#) information page.
- 4.9. The University may determine that no further offers can be made without the risk of significantly exceeding the intake target for a programme. Where this is the case, applicants who have not yet receive a decision on their application will be notified that their application has been withdrawn due to places on the programme having been filled.
- 4.10. In the interests of achieving a balanced international student cohort, offer making may cease for applicants from some countries before others. This is in recognition of the fact that students from around the world will apply at different points in the application cycle.

5 Entry requirements

- 5.1. Applicants to postgraduate programmes are normally expected to have good higher education qualifications, usually a minimum of an undergraduate degree with honours. Some programmes may accept a qualification at [RQF level 6](#). Research programmes may expect completion of a Master's degree.

- 5.2. The University welcomes applications from students with international qualifications and aims to assess all qualifications fairly and consistently. Entry requirements for each programme are published in our online [course finder](#) and are expressed in terms of UK undergraduate honours degrees and grades. We use guidance from UK ENIC, along with internal research and market intelligence, to determine whether a qualification meets the required level. Country-specific information is available on our [Country and Region Pages](#), and applicants are welcome to contact our Enquiries Team for further information about how their qualification will be assessed.
- 5.3. In some cases, even if a qualification appears to be at the required level, we may determine that an applicant's previous study does not align with the academic expectations of our courses and cannot be taken forward in the assessment process. This may be due to factors such as the institution attended, its accreditation status, or the mode of study and whether academic rigour can be assured. If an application is unsuccessful on this basis, the reason will be explained to the applicant in the decision communication.
- 5.4. Minimum entry criteria for each programme are provided in the online [course finder](#), and the relevant admissions statement for each programme.
- 5.5. Meeting the minimum academic entry criteria does not automatically mean an applicant will receive an offer. The academic review of the application will consider the academic history of the applicant alongside relevance of degree, degree content, and performance in key modules. The University may ask for additional information about the qualifications that have been taken, such as full degree curriculum. Each applicant is considered both holistically on their own merit and in competition with the rest of the applicant cohort during that academic cycle.
- 5.6. Applicants whose first language is not English are also required to satisfy programme specific English language entry requirements, as described on the webpage for each programme. Applicants do not need to have reached the required level of English language before submitting an application. If necessary, English language will be included as a condition of offer.
- 5.7. Professional programmes which lead to a recognised professional qualification may require a specific professional qualification, membership of specific professional regulatory bodies and a number of years of relevant professional experience prior to admission, e.g. "an Education degree plus one year of post-professional experience"; "a qualified medical degree and, in addition, two to three years' experience and evidence of interest in Continuing Professional Development in the subject".

6 Selection

- 6.1 The University ensures that all programmes have explicit criteria by which applications are assessed, which support the University's Admissions Aims, are in accordance with the principles in this document and are articulated in programme-specific webpages.
- 6.2 The University may choose to interview candidates, request examples of candidates' written work, and/or set written tasks to further assess their suitability for the programme. Details of such selection methods will be provided in the admissions statement for each programme.

- 6.3 Where an offer of admission cannot be made for a chosen programme, in some cases applicants may be offered a place on an alternative, related programme. Where alternative programme offers are made the decision will be clearly communicated to the applicant and the reasons explained.

7 Responding to individual applicants' situations

- 7.1 Applicants who submit multiple applications, either within a cycle or across admissions cycles, will have each application considered separately.
- 7.2 Deferred entry can be requested but is not guaranteed. If a deferred place is agreed, the offer holder will be notified by email, and the revised offer of admission will be issued at the start of the new admissions cycle once updated programme information is available to be published. The revised offer may include updated English language requirements if the applicant's existing qualifications no longer meet the validity period for entry.
- 7.3 Applications from students who have previously studied, or are currently studying at University of Bristol will remain subject to the [Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes](#). Applications from students who are re-applying for the same or a similar programme for which they have already studied mandatory unit(s) may not be eligible for offer and as such may be withdrawn in line with these regulations.
- 7.4 In recognition of prior learning, the University may grant exemption from some parts of an applicant's chosen programme of study. Requests will be considered on an individual basis in accordance with the [University policy on the Recognition of Prior Learning](#). Experience and/or Qualifications received via an online or distance learning course such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) will be considered on an individual basis and at the discretion of the University.
- 7.5 We recognise that some applicants may experience disruption or difficulties during their studies, such as illness, bereavement, disruption to schooling, caring responsibilities, or other difficult personal circumstances. If this applies to you, we strongly encourage you to declare your [Extenuating Circumstances](#) at the time of application. This information will be considered alongside the assessment of your academic profile.
- 7.6 The University has a dedicated policy to support displaced applicants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and individuals affected by conflict or humanitarian crises. This policy provides additional flexibility and tailored support throughout the application process, beyond what is available through the usual Extenuating Circumstances process.
- 7.7 The University welcomes applications from disabled students. Such applications will be considered against the same academic criteria that are applied to all applicants. Applicants are encouraged to disclose any disability that may require adjustments to our admissions process; this will not affect your chances of receiving an offer from the University. [Disability Services](#) can provide further advice as necessary. In the unlikely event that the University decides that adjustments required to support an applicant during their education cannot reasonably be made, the University will contact the applicant directly to confirm this decision.
- 7.8 Applicants who will be [under the age of 18](#) on registering as a student of the University will be required to complete a form signed by a parent/guardian as a condition of registration. This provides confirmation that the parent/guardian understands the University's

responsibilities and gives details of an emergency contact in the UK. The University has a risk assessment for applicants who will be under the age of 18 on registration (or under the age of 18 at the beginning of any academic year), which considers steps that need to be taken to admit and support these applicants and fulfil our safeguarding duties.

- 7.9 The University will disregard any criminal convictions that are spent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, unless the programme of study is likely to bring the student into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Where this is the case, a disclosure will be sought through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Where an applicant has an unspent (or spent in relevant cases) conviction, a decision on whether to offer a place will be made in accordance with the [University guidelines for the recruitment of students with a criminal conviction](#).
- 7.10 International applicants should indicate whether they require the University to act as a sponsor for the purposes of a visa application. When considering an application, the University of Bristol will consider whether a student is able to meet the necessary UK visa requirements for the full duration of their programme.
- 7.11 An offer of admission does not guarantee Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (a 'CAS') will be issued. When considering an application, the University will consider whether an applicant is able to meet the necessary UK visa requirements, and if these can be maintained for the full duration of their course. The University reserves the right to reject an application or refuse to issue a CAS in circumstances where these requirements cannot be met (or the University reasonably believes they cannot be met). Further information may be requested from applicants to enable the University to consider such a situation. Where the University refuses to issue a CAS, this decision is final.
- 7.12 ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) is one of the government's measures to prevent the spread of knowledge and skills used to develop weapons of mass destruction and associated technology. Applicants who are [subject to ATAS](#) will require ATAS clearance prior to being issued a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (for those intending to study on the Student route visa), or prior to registering at the University for those with other time-limited immigration statuses. ATAS clearance is an ongoing condition of study so any students who are refused ATAS clearance at any point during their studies will be required to withdraw from the University. For more information on ATAS please visit the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office \(FCDO\) website](#).
- 7.13 All offer holders may be required to provide original copies and translations of academic qualifications for verification either electronically during the application process, or in person at registration. The University of Bristol will not consider applications where information has been submitted that is believed to be fraudulent or plagiarised and reserves the right to reject or cancel an application under these circumstances, as outlined in the Document Verification and Fraudulent Applications policy. This policy can be found on our [postgraduate policies page](#).
- 7.14 The University reserves the right to exclude a candidate who is considered to be unsuitable for a place on a particular programme or for attendance at the University, in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity policy, Acceptable Behaviour policy, or any other [relevant policy of the University](#).

8 Offers and decisions

- 8.1 Once a complete application has been received with all required documentation, we aim to provide a decision within 30 working days. However, decisions can take longer than this during peak periods where we receive a very high volume of applications for processing or following periods of University closure.
- 8.2 Offers may be made with or without conditions attached. Where conditions apply, they will be clearly stated in the formal offer of admission and will be in line with the published entry requirements for the course.
- 8.3 In some areas, the completion of the registration process will be conditional on a clear Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) criminal records check, fitness to practice certification, immunisations, or other non-academic and non-language requirements. Where this is the case, this will be clearly stated within the programme pages and communicated following the formal offer of admission.
- 8.4 Due to the high level of competition for places, there will inevitably be occasions when an applicant disagrees with a selection decision. Providing that the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the published selection criteria, appeals will not be accepted, and the original decision will not be overturned. Grounds upon which an appeal can be made are outlined in the Applicant Complaints and Appeals policy. This policy can be found on our [postgraduate policies page](#).

9 Meeting the terms of your offer

- 9.1 The date by which an applicant is expected to confirm their acceptance of an offer will be stated in the official offer letter. The University does not guarantee to hold open places for offer-holders who have not confirmed their acceptance.
- 9.2 Where a conditional offer is made, applicants are expected to provide the University with evidence that any offer conditions have been met. The offer letter will make clear the timeframe in which applicants are expected to provide evidence that conditions have been met.
- 9.3 Applicants who accept an offer from the University but do not meet the terms of their offer in full may still have their place confirmed. In such cases, decisions will be made with consideration of the individual application and results, and the availability of places on the programme. Decisions will be made in line with the principles outlined in this document.
- 9.4 For current and former University of Bristol students applying to Postgraduate Taught programmes, it is a condition of application that the Admissions Team will access and review relevant academic data from the applicant's time at the University, including unit results and final degree outcomes. This streamlines the admissions process and removes the need for applicants to provide this information themselves.

10 Deposits, Fees, and Funding

- 10.1 Some students will be required to pay a tuition fee deposit to secure their place. This deposit forms part of your tuition fees and as such, will be deducted from your tuition fee

amount required to be paid upon registration. If a deposit is required, it will be clearly stated in the offer letter along with any applicable deadlines and instructions for payment.

- 10.2 International applicants who are made an offer for a taught postgraduate programme will be required to pay a deposit to secure their place. In most cases, this deposit will be £2,000. However, to support our commitment to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) regulations, applicants from certain countries or regions may be required to pay an increased deposit. This enhanced deposit helps to demonstrate financial credibility and ensures that both the University and the applicant are aligned with UKVI requirements. The deposit amount required will be clearly stated in the applicant's official offer letter.
- 10.3 The deposit is non-transferable and non-refundable except under the circumstances outlined in the [international deposits refund policy](#).
- 10.4 Students who can supply evidence to confirm fees are being paid by an external organisation or sponsor (e.g. a government department or recognised charity) are not required to pay a deposit upon submission of evidence. Proof of sponsorship should be provided by the sponsor themselves, and all sponsorship letters may also be verified directly with your sponsor. In the event that sponsorship cannot be verified the University of Bristol reserves the right to restrict the issuances of a CAS or registration until the sponsor can be verified.
- 10.5 Offers of admission are not offers of funding. If funding is to be awarded, this will be confirmed via a separate communication.
- 10.6 For the purposes of determining the fee status of applicants, the University considers the "first day of the first academic year" as the first day of the calendar month in which a student first registers at the University for the specific course in question, regardless of any prior registrations or engagements with the University in different courses or academic programs. For example, if you are entering, or are applying to enter, Year 2 of a programme for which you have taken an extended break, the first day of the first academic year will remain first day of the calendar month in which you registered for Year 1.
- 10.7 Where any fees have still to be confirmed (for example, where tuition fee levels are dependent on external bodies setting stipends, or where an offer is deferred and fee levels are not yet set for the proposed year of entry) this will be made clear in the offer of admission or confirmation of the deferral. For students wishing to start mid-year, pro-rata fees will be quoted on the offer of admission.
- 10.8 The University has two main tuition fee levels: a 'home' fee and an 'overseas' fee. For most applicants, this tuition fee status is determined through assessment of information provided in the application form. Fee status assessments are conducted in line with UK Government regulations for who pays home fees for higher education, and are based on [guidance provided by UKCISA](#), the UK Council for International Student Affairs.
- 10.9 Where a fee status cannot be determined from the information made available in the application form, the University may request additional evidence via a fee status questionnaire. Applicants have the right to request a review of their fee status once a decision has been made, and are encouraged to do so as soon as possible to ensure the assessment can be completed in good time before the start of the course. Late submissions may result in delays to registration or funding arrangements. Review requests should be submitted to admo-fees@bristol.ac.uk.

- 10.10 The University has the right to review a fee status if it considers that any information in the application to be inaccurate. A change in fee status may result in the offer of a place on a course being reconsidered.

11 Applicant Conduct

- 11.1 Our [policies, procedures and regulations for students page](#) contains the codes of conduct, policies and procedures that you need to be aware of as potential student at University of Bristol.
- 11.2 The University reserves the right to exclude a candidate who is considered to be unsuitable for a place on a particular course or for attendance at the University, in accordance with the University's Equality and Diversity policy, Acceptable Behaviour policy, or any other relevant policy of the University's [Student Rules and Regulations](#).
- 11.3 The University maintains a commitment to fostering a respectful and safe environment for all members of its community, including staff, students, and applicants. Applicants are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, respect, and courtesy in all interactions with University staff, students, and fellow applicants. Inappropriate conduct, including but not limited to abusive language, harassment, dishonesty, or any other form of misconduct (as outlined in the policies cited above in sections 11.1 and 11.2), will not be tolerated. Should such inappropriate conduct occur, the University reserves the right to withdraw the application and cease further communication with the individual responsible. This ensures that all members of our community adhere to the highest standards of behaviour and fosters a safe and supportive environment for all.
- 11.4 The University reserves the right not to admit an applicant where information is believed to be either fraudulent or plagiarised and reserves the right to reject an application or cancel an offer made under these circumstances, as outlined in the University's Document Verification and Fraudulent Applications Policy. This policy can be found on our [postgraduate policies page](#).
- 11.5 All application materials must be the applicant's own work. Using generative AI tools to create or substantially edit content may be treated as contract cheating and academic misconduct, even if the tool is freely available. Where there is reasonable suspicion of AI use or third-party authorship, the University may investigate under the Document Verification and Fraudulent Applications Policy. This may result in the application being withdrawn. This reflects the University's Policy on Academic Integrity, which is built on the values of honesty, trust, fairness, and responsibility.
- 11.6 Where an application is cancelled, withdrawn or rejected on this basis, applicants reserve the right to submit a complaint or appeal as per our Applicant Appeal and Complaints Policy. Applicants should refer to this policy, which can be found on our [postgraduate policies page](#).

12 Evaluation and Monitoring

- 12.1 Where there is concern that the Admissions Principles and Procedures outlined in this document have not been correctly implemented, the case may be investigated under the Applicant Complaints and Appeals policy. The University has processes in place to capture and progress corrective actions where policy and procedures have not been implemented

correctly. Due to the volume of applications received by the University, we regret that it is not possible for us to enter into correspondence with unsuccessful applicants outside of the provisions of this process. Our Applicant Appeals and Complaints policy can be found on our [postgraduate policies page](#).

- 12.2 The University has contingency plans in place to enable it to cope with failure of these processes (for example, localised computer systems failure) or in the event of candidates being unable to satisfy their offer conditions because the outcomes of previous qualifications have been delayed by strike action, by natural disasters or similar unforeseen circumstances beyond the applicant's control. However, depending on the timescale, the amount of information available and availability of places, it might be necessary to offer a place for the following academic year (i.e., deferred entry).