

Code of Practice for the Admission of Students to the University of Birmingham

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the University's Code of Practice (including policies, procedures and related information) for the admission of students to both undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) programmes. It provides information on the authority and responsibilities of those involved in the process (both University employees and applicants) and outlines how any disputes will be resolved.
- 1.2 Admission to the University is solely at the discretion of the University.
- 1.3 The overriding policy on admissions is to support the University's Mission and Strategic Objectives.
- 1.4 The University will at all times seek to operate procedures that are fair and are in accordance with the law of the United Kingdom, the University's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations, and the rules of natural justice. This includes specific compliance with legislation relating to discrimination (eg Race Relations Amendment Act, Sex Discrimination Act and the Disability Discrimination Act, etc) and Clause 13 of the University's Charter, which states:
No discrimination on the grounds of political opinion, age, colour, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender, marital status, race, religion or sexual orientation shall be exercised by the University in the admission of students, or the appointment or promotion of staff or the awarding of any Degree Diploma or Certificate, or generally, in the execution of any of its Objects as laid down by the Charter.
- 1.5 The University's admissions procedures also pay due regard to guidance regarding good practice issued by other bodies, including the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice, and such documents and directives as may be issued by the Government, the Higher Education Funding Council (England), and the Research Councils.
- 1.6 Students admitted to collaborative programmes or programmes validated by the University of Birmingham but administered and managed by a partner institution will be subject to the regulations and requirements of the institution to which they are admitted.

2 Authority

2.1 Council and Senate

- 2.1.1 The formal authority and responsibility for the academic issues pertaining to the admission of students is devolved from the Council of the University to the Senate, under Statute 26.1, which states that Senate shall "*be responsible to the Council for regulating and directing the academic work of the University in teaching examining and research for the award of all Degrees Diplomas Certificates and other academic distinctions of the University*".
- 2.1.3 The Senate requires each School of the University to have the academic and other criteria to be fulfilled for admission to each programme offered by that School to be published in the University prospectus and in other appropriate places, including on

the UCAS website for undergraduate programmes. The criteria are required to support the University's mission and strategic objectives and must be approved by the Portfolio Development Committee of Senate. Responsibility for initially setting these criteria rests with the Head of School, usually delegated to the School's Head of Academic Programmes and the School's Admissions Tutors.

2.2 **Heads of School**

- 2.2.1 Under the University Ordinances (specifically Ordinance 2.7.3), Heads of Schools are responsible to the Vice-Chancellor (and through him/her to Senate and Council) for, inter alia, the admission of students. This responsibility is normally delegated to a designated (level or programme) Admissions Tutor, who is appointed by the Head of School and who acts in conjunction and consultation with the University's Director of Admissions.
- 2.2.2 Heads of School will ensure that their Admissions Tutors are aware of the programme(s) and / or level(s) of study for which they hold delegated responsibility, the period of their appointment, and any consequential variation of their other duties.
- 2.2.3 Newly appointed Admissions Tutors should undergo an appropriate induction process, which should include receiving advice from previous Admissions Tutors and training from the Admissions Office.
- 2.2.4 A Head of School may also delegate responsibility for admitting students to his/her School to the Director of Admissions, who would then act in conjunction and consultation with the School's Admissions Tutor(s). When this is the case, the relevant Admissions Tutors will draw up, and agree with the Director of Admissions, any additional criteria to those published against which applicants may be assessed. These may include, for example, personal attributes or past experiences of applicants (as would be included in the Personal Statement) and combinations of A levels that would not usually be acceptable for the programme.

2.3 **Director of Admissions**

- 2.3.1 The Director of Admissions has general responsibility for the process for ensuring that the entry criteria proposed for new, amended or replacement programmes of study comply with the University's mission and strategic objectives, with legislation, and with relevant standards as to ability and level (having regard to established national and University criteria).
- 2.3.2 The Director of Admissions also has general responsibility for the management and smooth functioning of the administrative aspects of the admissions process. This includes ensuring that applicants are suitably qualified for admission in accordance with the general and programme entry criteria, that decisions are made and communicated to applicants in a timely manner, and that the offer letter includes all the academic and any non-academic requirements of admission.
- 2.3.3 The Director of Admissions will advise a Head of School or Admissions Tutor on issues around making an offer to an applicant, including
 - progress towards any targets that may have been set for the minimum or maximum number of students of particular categories (namely, Home or Overseas for fees) to be admitted to each programme (see section 2.4) and the number of offers that should be made to meet the target (so far as this can be estimated),

- when an offer has been made to an applicant who either does not or is not expected to reach the established criteria, and
- when an offer has not been made to an applicant who either does or is expected to reach the established criteria.

2.3.4 If the Head of School or Admissions Tutor do not agree with or follow the advice given by the Director of Admissions, the matter may be referred to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students) for adjudication of any dispute.

2.4 Intake targets

2.4.1 The University Council has delegated to the University Strategic Management Committee the responsibility for agreeing with Heads of School the intake targets for each School for different categories of students. These targets will be informed by the University's strategic and academic objectives, market analysis, historical trends, and our contractual obligations to HEFCE. Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that the targets are met and, where relevant, not exceeded. The Director of Admissions will provide guidance to Heads of School and to Admissions Tutors on progress towards achievement of the agreed targets.

3 Criteria for Admission

- 3.1 Every student shall on admission comply with the entry requirements of the programme of study for which they are being admitted.
- 3.1.1 Specific entry requirements for undergraduate programmes are usually presented in terms of three GCE A levels (some of which may be specified) at certain grades. However, the University will consider a wide range of other qualifications, including VCE A levels, the European and International Baccalaureate Diplomas, the Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma, the Irish Leaving Certificate, SQA Advanced Highers, BTEC, and other qualifications that may be approved from time to time. Access to Higher Education courses and overseas qualifications will also be considered.
- 3.1.2 Specific entry requirements for postgraduate programmes will normally include a first class or higher second class Bachelor's degree or a Masters degree in an appropriate subject. Some programmes of study at postgraduate level may also require evidence of relevant experience.
- 3.2 All applicants are required to demonstrate literacy and numeracy, normally defined by having GCSE English at grade C or above and GCSE Mathematics at grade C or above.
- 3.3 International applicants are required to have a good standard of written and spoken English, which may be demonstrated by a variety of qualifications, for example by successful completion of the University's pre-sessional English course or by reaching the necessary standard in IELTS, TOEFL or other examinations.
- 3.4 Applicants may be required to present their original certificates or certified copies of them for inspection.
- 3.5 For some subjects (for example Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Social Work,

and PGCE) and for research programmes, applicants who the University wishes to consider offering a place to will normally be required to attend a formal interview. The offer of a place will be dependent on the applicant's performance at this interview. If for applicants to research programmes it is not possible to interview, special care will be taken in assessing the candidate's suitability to undertake the proposed programme in the light of study previously undertaken and qualifications obtained.

- 3.6 Applicants may request prior learning to be taken into account, such that they may be granted an exemption from certain parts of the programme for which they are applying. Such prior learning may be either certificated or experiential. Applicants requesting consideration of prior learning will be required to provide evidence of the learning and its relevance to the programme for which they are applying.
- 3.7 The offer of admission to certain programmes of study may be subject to satisfactory completion of additional assessments. These may include general assessments for those who do not meet the normal (University or programme) entrance requirements, an assessment of ability in study skills for those returning to study, or admission tests which are specific to the discipline or programme of study concerned. Where such tests or assessments are specified, their satisfactory completion constitutes part of the requirements for admission.
- 3.8 In the case of applications for a course which leads to an award carrying professional recognition or qualifies the student as "fit to practise", the assessment criteria will include consideration of whether, having completed the academic programme successfully, the student is likely to meet the professional body requirements for recognition / registration. The student will be required to sign a programme-specific code of conduct and to meet any fees associated with registration.
- 3.9 If the applicant will come into unsupervised contact with children and/or vulnerable people, they will be required to show evidence that they have clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau or to agree to the University seeking a check from the Bureau on their behalf (and to pay the necessary fee for such a check). The applicant is responsible for paying all the fees necessary to obtain the required level of CRB check.
- 3.10 Admission may also be conditional on meeting other non-academic criteria, which may include the granting of Home Office approval to enter the UK for the purposes of study, providing evidence of good health (via a Health Declaration form), or meeting professional or fitness to practise requirements for the discipline or programme of study concerned. It is the applicant's responsibility to gain all the necessary approvals and to meet any costs involved.
- 3.11 Applicants for postgraduate research programmes should also consult the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students, which covers the areas referred to in this document in greater detail.

4 Duties of the Applicant

4.1 Admissions Procedures

- 4.1.1 With the exception of a small number of programmes (eg BPhil, AdCert, GradDip, and part-time degree programmes), applications for undergraduate programmes of study shall be made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) or through the relevant national clearing organisation (e.g. GTTR or NMAS). This applies to graduates of other higher education institutions in the UK or overseas, and applicants already at other UK higher education institutions who wish

to transfer to Birmingham.

- 4.1.2 Communications on the progress of an application and any formal offer of admission on these programmes shall normally be made through the appropriate clearing organisation, although the University (either the Admissions Office or the relevant School) will write separately to the applicant and / or their sponsor to provide information on the level of fee to be paid, to provide further information on the University, or to seek additional information from the applicant.
- 4.1.3 Applications for postgraduate programmes (except PGCE, GDip Legal Studies, Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, MA Social Work, and MSc Educational Psychology) shall be made direct to the University, using the (web-based) postgraduate application form.
- 4.1.4 The information presented in an application must be truthful and accurate, whether it is through UCAS or a similar body or direct to the University. Any applications which are found to be fraudulent will be rejected, and any student admitted to the University who it later transpires made a fraudulent application will have their registration terminated and be required to leave. Any fees already paid will not be refunded.
- 4.1.5 It is the duty of applicants to inform the University promptly of any change of address, any change of name, or of any other change in circumstances which may affect their application.
- 4.1.6 All applicants are required to bring to the attention of the University any criminal record, including spent convictions, when applying for a place on a programme of study. The University will use its discretion as to whether a conviction is of sufficient seriousness to preclude the offer of a place. For some programmes, a Criminal Records Bureau check is mandatory.
- 4.1.7 Applicants who have a disability (seen or unseen) that may have an effect on their successful participation in the programme of study for which they are applying or on their life at the University (for example dyslexia or mobility requirements), are advised to bring it to the attention of the University (and in particular to the attention of the University's Disability Coordinator) when applying, so that due account can be taken and necessary agreements drawn up and / or changes made to alleviate potential problems. The University complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and has a policy of making reasonable adjustments.
- 4.1.8 Admission requirements and procedures are detailed in University publications (including electronic publications and those held, for example, on the UCAS website) and applicants should make themselves aware as to whether and at what stage an interview and / or qualifying examination is normally required.

4.2 Fees

- 4.2.1 Students are responsible for the payment of their own fees and debts. The University may agree to a request to invoice a third party for any fee or debt (for example, the Student Loans Company, a Local Authority, Funding Council, or other sponsor). This does not affect the ultimate responsibility of the student for paying the fee or debt.
- 4.2.2 Some programmes of study require the payment of additional non-tuition fees (e.g. linked to laboratory use). Where this is the case, the additional fee will be payable on

the same basis as a standard tuition fee.

- 4.2.3 The tuition fee is due in full at the beginning of the University Session, or at the start of registration if this is a different date. Arrangements may be made with the Director of Finance for payment of tuition fees in instalments in accordance with the approved scheme.
 - 4.2.4 The University complies with Home Office guidance on the classification of students as Home or Overseas for fees' purposes.
 - 4.2.5 If a student, having accepted the offer of admission, subsequently appeals against their tuition fee classification, the tuition fee shall remain payable at the original rate while the appeal is being considered. Where an appeal is upheld in full or in part, the new rate of fee will be confirmed and any overpayment will be refunded.
 - 4.2.6 The University, in consultation with the School concerned, may levy an application fee for certain programmes. Applications to these programmes will not be considered until the application fee has been received
 - 4.2.7 The University, in consultation with the School concerned, may charge a non-returnable deposit, to be used against the programme fee, when an applicant accepts the offer of a place on certain programmes. An applicant will not be accepted onto these programmes until the deposit has been received.
- 4.3 Every student shall, on admission, agree to abide by the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University.

5 Responsibilities of the University

- 5.1 The University retains the right to refuse admission to any applicant without assigning any cause. However, the University (either the Admissions Office or the relevant School) will endeavour to provide appropriate feedback on request to unsuccessful applicants.
- 5.2 The University will communicate with applicants in a timely manner either via the appropriate national clearing house (e.g. UCAS) or to the correspondence address provided on the application. Data will not be released to any third party without the express agreement of the applicant, except in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- 5.3 When making an offer of a place, the University shall inform the applicant of their expected fee status or the level of fee to be paid for the programme.
- 5.4 The University cannot accept responsibility for any delay of correspondence by postal authorities in the United Kingdom or abroad, for the misdirection or non-arrival of correspondence when the correct address has not been provided, if the correspondence is forwarded to a mail sorting office or returned because the applicant or his / her agents were not at the address to receive the postal delivery, or for any consequences (such as delays in the granting of funding, visas or other official documents or a delay in completing the requirements for starting the programme of study on time) which have arisen as a result of the above.
- 5.5 The University seeks to consider applications in a fair and transparent manner (see paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5). Irrespective of whether an interview is offered, the assessment will be on the basis of perceived ability to benefit from higher education in general and the specific programme applied for in particular. The assessment of applications is therefore not restricted

solely to academic qualifications (gained or anticipated), but may include non-standard qualifications, the experience and interests of the applicant (as evidenced on the application form), and the health requirements of the programme.

- 5.6 All applications to undergraduate programmes received by the published deadlines will be given equal consideration. If received after the deadline, they may be rejected if the competition for admission to a particular programme exceeds the available space and resources, or if the admission of additional students would contravene the maximum permitted by the University, by the Higher Education Funding Council (England), or by other relevant authority.
- 5.7 For applications for postgraduate programmes, when the number of applications received will, in the opinion of the Admissions Tutor and / or the Director of Admissions, meet the number of available places on that programme, any further applications received may be rejected.
- 5.8 In the event that no offer of admission is made and the reasons for this decision were failure to meet non-academic criteria, the University will endeavour to assist the applicant by providing for their consideration details of any alternative programmes which may be available at this University. "Alternative programmes" in this context includes non-clinical alternates of clinical programmes, alternative but related research projects, and alternative research groups / supervisors. While the University will provide assistance in this context, it is under no obligation to offer admission if no appropriate alternative programme of study is available.
- 5.9 Where an applicant, having received a conditional or conditional and deferred offer, fails to meet the criteria specified by the University for admission within the specified time scale, the University shall be under no obligation to admit the student to the original or to an alternative programme. A contract does not come into existence until all of the conditions are fulfilled. The University shall be under no further obligation to the applicant.
- 5.10 Notwithstanding the statement above, the University may, at its discretion, offer admission to a different programme, offer admission at a different level, or offer admission subject to different conditions (including a deferred or deferred and conditional offer), which, if accepted, shall be subject to the conditions specified in the new offer.
- 5.11 The University aims to provide the programmes that have been advertised in the prospectus or elsewhere. However, if there is any significant change to the programme between the time at which an offer is made and the point at which registration is complete, the University will inform relevant applicants promptly and advise them of the options available to them. Factors which may be included in this category include:
- The impending withdrawal of a programme, where the decision to withdraw the programme had not been made at the time when the programme was advertised.
 - A substantial change to the duration or content (syllabus) of a programme.
 - A change to the work experience/placements/practical elements or in the standing of the programme (e.g. professional recognition).
 - A significant change to the programme requirements, tuition fee, or approved supplementary fees.
 - A decision to run the programme at a different institution or geographical location.
 - A substantial change to the pattern of attendance (e.g. with a different start date, on different days for a part-time programme, or with a different pattern of study at Birmingham / a partner institution / abroad / in commerce or industry).
 - A change to the award which will be made to students by the University on successful completion of the programme.

Applicants should note that the above list is indicative. If there is any doubt as to whether an anticipated change is “significant”, the default will be to inform applicants.

6 Review of Decisions

- 6.1 The University seeks at all times to operate its admissions policies and procedures fairly and transparently. However, on occasion an applicant may request a review of a decision or may seek clarification as to the reason for the decision.
- 6.2 The University will not review an admissions decision where the grounds for requesting a review are simply that the applicant disagrees with the academic judgement that has been applied, and where there is no evidence that the correct procedures have not been followed.
- 6.3 If an applicant believes that the correct procedures have not been followed, they are encouraged, in the first instance, to address their request for clarification or review to the Admissions Tutor in the relevant School or to the Director of Admissions. If the applicant is not satisfied with the response, a request for a formal review of the decision should be made in writing and addressed to the Director of Admissions, who shall investigate in consultation with the relevant Head of School and / or with other appropriate persons, with a view to seeking a solution. If the decision which is the subject of the review was made by the Director of Admissions, then the review process will be managed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students).
- 6.4 When making a request for a review of a decision, the applicant must include the grounds for requesting the review (ie any alleged procedural irregularities) and any supporting evidence including, where available, copies of any relevant documentation. Applicants shall not normally be permitted to add further material or grounds after their request for a review has been submitted for consideration by the University.
- 6.5 The University will consider requests for a review of a decision in a timely manner, with a view to providing a response within two weeks of the date on which the written request reaches the Director of Admissions. Where a response is not possible in that timeframe (for example, if someone from whom a response is required is away from the University), the Director of Admissions will write to inform the applicant, giving reasons for the delay.
- 6.6 The outcome of the review will be sent in writing to the applicant at the correspondence address which they have provided.
- 6.7 If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the review conducted by the Director of Admissions, they may present their case to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students), who will conduct a further review. The applicant will again be required to submit their case in writing. The decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students) shall be final.

Roderick Smith
Director of Admissions
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Useful web addresses

Fitness to practice <http://www.studserv.bham.ac.uk/sca/fitness/index.htm>

Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students
http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/Code10_0607.pdf

Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University
<http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/legislation/index.htm>