

Birmingham City University

Admissions Policy – Effective from 2017/18

Introduction

This Policy sets out the University's approach to and arrangements for the admission of students. It reflects relevant legislation and takes account of the Code of Practice for Admissions published by the Quality Assurance Agency and good practice disseminated by other national bodies concerned with admissions. It also reflects the procedures of the clearing houses UCAS, CUKAS and GTTR.¹

The Policy applies to all programmes offered by the University as well as collaborative programmes delivered by the University's partner organisations, except where it has been agreed that a partner institution's own Admissions Policy will apply.

The Policy reflects the University's Mission and informs its admissions regulations and the Admissions Handbook provided for staff involved in the admissions process. The Policy is made available to applicants on the University's website and is disseminated to staff of the University and its partners by the Academic Registry.

Mission and Context

The University's Mission is to be a powerful force for learning, creativity and enterprise, promoting economic, social and cultural wellbeing. We aim to provide an educational experience of the highest quality with a strong commitment to employability and to flexible and practice-based learning. Programmes are informed by our engagement with business, the professions and the community and the University's centres of excellence in research and investigative practice. Our vision includes being recognised regionally, nationally and internationally as a force for equality and inclusion. Therefore, we are committed to admitting students who have the potential and motivation to succeed and benefit from higher education and to contribute positively to the University community. To achieve this aim we will:

- welcome applications from prospective students from a diverse range of backgrounds who have the potential to complete their chosen programme of study successfully;
- work with other institutions and schools to develop progression routes for applicants;
- meet the changing needs of applicants through the continuous development of our portfolio of activities and our delivery methods;

¹ UCAS is the University and Colleges Admission Service, CUKAS is the clearing house for UK Conservatoires and the GTTR is the Graduate Teacher Training Registry.

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- use the University's planning processes to ensure that we continue to provide learning opportunities in a range of subjects, through a variety of modes of study and at a range of levels;
- ensure that no prospective student is excluded from the University on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or beliefs or other form of unfair or illegal discrimination;
- provide opportunities for applicants to visit the University and meet staff. International applicants will receive comprehensive information about studying and living in the UK.

Principles

The overriding principle of admission is that there should be a reasonable expectation that the applicant will be able to fulfil the objectives of the programme and achieve the standard required for the award. Because admission to the University is competitive and limited by the number of places available for each programme, admission decisions are based on the qualifications, experience, needs and aspirations of applicants and the likelihood of them being able to fulfil the objectives of the programme they wish to take.

Therefore our admissions procedures are designed to ensure that:

- clear, accessible and current information and guidance about programmes and their admissions requirements and procedures is provided for applicants, their advisers and parents and agents;
- each programme's admission requirements are fair, transparent and consistently applied;
- admission requirements are published to applicants in entry profiles and/or through the University's website, its prospectuses and other publicity materials;
- admission requirements are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to take account of national guidelines on qualifications and the prior learning and experience of applicants;
- applications are considered individually against the relevant programme's published admissions requirements;
- applications from people with disabilities are welcomed and assessed against the published admission requirements for the programme. The University's Student Services are available to discuss applicants' needs and the support that may be offered;
- applicants receive timely responses to enquiries and applications and appropriate information throughout the application process. Once an offer has been made this information will include the deadline for responding to the offer, programme specific information, financial information and information about becoming a student (including induction and enrolment arrangements);

- programmes that enter Clearing use the published admission requirements to select applicants recruited at that time unless a variation to these requirements has been specifically authorised by the relevant Executive Dean or his/her nominee;
- staff involved in admissions decisions deal fairly and consistently with applications;
- admissions staff and tutors have access to regular updates about changes in policy, procedures, legislation and new external qualifications as well as good practice.

Regulations governing the admission of students

The University's regulations governing the admission of students are set out in Section D of the Academic Regulations and Policies (available on the University's digital library website (JAWS) or by request from Academic Registry). These regulations set out the normal minimum entry requirements for each of the University's awards and give guidance on requirements for international students in relation to English Language qualifications. They also govern the procedures for granting academic credit for prior learning and arrangements for admitting students partway through a programme.

Each programme has detailed admissions requirements which:

- must be approved and reviewed and re-approved through the University's procedures for the approval and review and re-approval of programmes;
- define the knowledge and skills required for entry and admission to subsequent stages of the programme;
- explain how evidence of applicants' abilities, relevant educational and professional experience will be obtained;
- define the criteria and process through which applications will be considered and admissions decisions made. This should clearly explain the admissions process for each category of applicant, for example, international, home and EU and part-time applicants;
- where programmes have additional selection methods such as interviews, auditions and the review of portfolios etc, the information published about these programmes will detail the nature of these requirements.

Implementation

All Faculties are required to implement this Policy in relation to their programmes. Detailed arrangements are set out for admissions staff in the Admissions Handbook (available from Academic Registry) or the Research Degrees Handbook for programmes of study that lead to a research degree (available from Academic Registry). Faculties are responsible for ensuring that:

- recruitment targets are set for each programme and agreed with the Directorate as part of the annual Faculty planning process and that any

changes to these targets are communicated to relevant staff as soon as possible;

- clear, accurate and current information and guidance is produced and published about each programme, its entry requirements and procedures in accordance with corporate guidelines. The University's Agreements with its partners are designed to ensure that the materials produced by partner organisations about collaborative programmes meet the University's expectations in this regard;
- each programme's admission requirements are reviewed annually by the Board of Studies as part of the annual monitoring process. Where necessary changes should be approved by the Board of Studies and the relevant senior Faculty manager (see below);
- an entry profile is prepared in conjunction with the Marketing Department for each programme offered through UCAS, CUKAS or the GTTR. The content of this entry profile should be reviewed annually as part of the Faculty's annual monitoring procedures and in the light of guidance provided by the Marketing Department and Academic Registry about good practice in relation to these profiles;
- a named senior manager in the Faculty will be responsible for disseminating to relevant Faculty staff information about:
 - new external qualifications;
 - changes to national and University policy and procedures;
 - changes to the entry requirements and/or procedures for Faculty programmes. S/he will also ensure that relevant central departments are informed of these changes;
- s/he will also ensure that Faculty admissions staff participate in sessions provided by the Faculty and central departments to update them on changes to policy, procedures and legislation related to admissions and that these staff know how to obtain advice when this is necessary to help them deal with particular enquiries and applications.

The Academic Registry's responsibilities in relation to admissions include:

- advising ASQEC about revisions to this Policy and the admissions regulations, including when changes are made to relevant legislation or external requirements, and ensuring that any changes approved by ASQEC are published to staff and applicants;
- working with Faculties and the University's Research Degrees Committee (URDC) to ensure that the admissions regulations and procedures for research degree students meet the expectations of this Policy and are reviewed and updated when necessary by URDC;
- updating and re-publishing the Admissions Handbook annually;

- maintaining the University's UCAS entry in line with the University's procedures for the approval and re-approval of programmes;
- managing all communications with UCAS, CUKAS and the GTTR about applications and ensuring that decisions are processed and transmitted to agreed deadlines;
- providing support and guidance for Faculties and the International Office on all aspects of the admission process from the checking of non-standard qualifications to queries related to the admissions function on the student record system;
- publishing statistics regularly throughout the admissions cycle about full-time and part-time admissions to inform the University's strategic planning and recruitment processes;
- providing regular reports to the University's Research Degrees Committee and the Faculties about applications, offers and acceptances for research degree programmes;
- communicating information about new qualifications to the appropriate Faculty contacts.

Admission with Academic Credit

The University's procedures for considering applications for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) are available on the University's digital library (JAWS) or available from Academic Registry on request.

Competence in English Language

All the University's programmes are taught in English. Therefore, each student's command of English must be sufficient to meet all the requirements of their programme. The University's admissions regulations specify the English language requirements that international applicants must meet in order to be admitted to the University. Additional support for English language can be provided for eligible candidates.

Applicants with Criminal Convictions

Applicants are required to declare unspent relevant criminal convictions. A relevant conviction is defined as "offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, or offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking". Convictions that are spent, as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, are not considered to be relevant. However, certain programmes, for example teacher training, do not come under this Act. All applicants to such programmes are required to provide criminal record disclosures (see below).

An unspent relevant criminal conviction will not necessarily preclude an applicant from being offered a place at the University. The University assesses all applications from individuals with unspent relevant criminal convictions in order to ensure that other students, staff or the applicant will not be put at risk if s/he is admitted. Such applications are considered in accordance with the University's Procedure for

considering Applications from Applicants with Previous Criminal Convictions (available from Academic Registry).

An applicant's failure to advise the University of a relevant unspent criminal conviction may lead to an offer of a place being withdrawn or disciplinary action if the student has been enrolled.

Criminal Records and Occupational Health Checks

Some of the University's programmes involve working with children and/or vulnerable adults. Applicants to these programmes will be required to undertake checks before they can be enrolled as a student of the University. Where a programme requires these checks this will be made clear in the information published about the programme. Advice about the procedures for these checks will be sent to relevant applicants during the admissions process.

Care Leavers

Applicants who indicate they are leaving care are contacted by the University's Student Services and offered appropriate, individual support and advice. The University is developing its provision in this area and is aiming to acquire the Frank Buttle Quality Mark.

Programme Transfers

Students who have commenced study at the University or another higher education institution may be able to transfer to an alternative programme or a programme at the University provided they satisfy the admission requirements for the programme in question and places are available. Decisions about admittance to the programme with credit will be taken in accordance with the University's procedures for APL (see above).

Unsuccessful applicants

Wherever possible unsuccessful applicants will be invited to apply for alternative programmes which may be more suitable for them.

Feedback on individual applications will be provided on request. Requests should be sent to the Admissions Officer who communicated the decision to the unsuccessful applicant. Feedback will only be provided to the applicant and not to a third party, unless specific permission has been granted by the applicant.

Closure of Programmes

Exceptionally, a decision to close a programme may be taken after the recruitment process has started, for example due to low numbers of applications. The Academic Registry will advise affected applicants at the earliest opportunity and wherever possible will recommend alternative programmes that may be of interest.

Monitoring

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC), a sub-committee of the Senate, to ensure that it remains current and continues to reflect good practice and relevant legislation.

Monitoring of the entry requirements and procedures for individual programmes is undertaken annually at Faculty level. This monitoring takes account of statistical analyses published by the University about applications, offers, acceptances and applicants and if necessary will seek to address issues of under-representation. The outcomes of this monitoring will be reported annually to the ASQEC and will inform reviews of this Policy.

Admissions Complaints

Where, exceptionally, an applicant believes that s/he has valid reasons for complaining about how her/his application has been treated **the complaint will be heard under the University's Concerns & Complaints Procedure** (www.bcu.ac.uk/misc/acp.html). An applicant cannot appeal against the outcome of a selection decision because this is a matter of academic judgement.

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator does not consider complaints relating to admissions applications.