

ACADEMIC POLICY 1:

Admissions Policy

2013-2014

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Admission Policy and Summary of Practice

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Key Principles:

1. This policy provides prospective students, University staff and partner organisations alike with a guide to our *approach* to the admission of students.

Our priority for admissions is to match prospective students with the course of study that best meets their academic and vocational needs and individual circumstances, while ensuring that our operating objectives are met. In achieving this, we make a commitment that our approach to the admission of students is:

- transparent
- fair
- honest
- consistent
- accessible
- personalised and
- timely.

2. We are clear about who does what in admitting students, including who makes the decision on an application, our partners and the nature of their role. University & partner staff are trained and updated for admissions roles. We also set out the responsibilities of applicants in turn.

3. Our information and support to prospective students is:

- honest, comprehensive and inclusive in coverage
- personalised – identifying target audiences and meeting individual needs,
- accessible - using clear language, appropriate media and alternative formats for prospective students with disabilities or particular needs, without making assumptions about how people get information;

so that prospective students are able to make informed choices based on a thorough and accurate picture of what their time at university will entail in terms of academic & financial matters; student life & support; graduate outcomes and careers.

4. Applications to the University are normally made through UCAS/GTTR for FT UG & PGCE courses, otherwise directly to us. An application passes through clearly defined stages and we commit to making a decision within a specified number of working days.
5. Entry criteria and offer levels are set using defined evidence and published as a general entry requirement in our regulations, as specific criteria in programme specifications and as typical offer levels on the University and UCAS websites. We define the range and relative weights of information we use in assessing applications. When considering applications from prospective students who are disabled, we make reasonable adjustments to the application process and to courses of study. Decisions are recorded on and communicated via our student administration system.
6. We ensure that students are informed as to their academic, financial and general obligations in taking up our offer of a place. We inform students of the enrolment process in advance and ensure that a diverse student body is integrated via an effective induction programme.
7. We are able to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants and have defined grounds and processes for appeals and complaints.

8. We have an annual process and performance indicators for monitoring the effectiveness and fairness of the admission cycle, including the implementation of this policy

These key principles are explained in more depth in the corresponding numbered sections of the Admission Policy and Summary of Practice as follows:

1 Principles and Purpose

This policy provides prospective students, University staff and partner organisations alike with a guide to our *approach* to the admission of students. As such, it is the framework we use to assure best admissions *practice*.

The mission of Kingston University is: **“to promote participation in higher education, which it regards as a democratic entitlement; to strive for excellence in learning, teaching and research; to realise the creative potential and fire the imagination of all its members; and to equip its students to make effective contributions to society and the economy”**

This Policy ensures that our approach to the admission of students: i) is appropriate to our mission; ii) helps us to achieve our strategic aims and operating & equality objectives; and iii) is informed by sector best practice (including that disseminated by the Quality Assurance Agency, UCAS and the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions Programme), relevant legislation, and impact assessment under the Single Equality Scheme. Moreover, it supports Kingston’s development as a *comprehensive* university, with a wide range of subjects taught at all levels, and with a diverse student body. Therefore, except where indicated otherwise, its principles apply consistently to all courses leading to a University award on campus or through franchised or offsite provision at a UK partner, regardless of subject, level, mode or location of intended study, or of the nationality or other characteristics of prospective students. Prospective students for courses at other UK or overseas partners should refer to the partners’ policies on admission.

Our priority for admissions is to match prospective students with the course of study that best meets their academic and vocational needs and individual circumstances, while ensuring that our operating objectives are met. In achieving this, we make a commitment that our approach to the admission of students is:

- transparent
- fair
- honest
- consistent
- accessible
- personalised and
- timely

The remainder of this policy lays out how we and our partners deliver these commitments and what we expect in return from the prospective student.

2 Roles and responsibilities

2.1 Key roles

As a large, multi-faculty University with a devolved structure, offering courses on campus and at a number of partners, a range of staff contribute to our approach to the admission of students; key roles are as follows:

Setting and monitoring of admission criteria and target numbers.

The Vice-Chancellor sets an annual target for the number of places available on courses leading to a University award, while Student Targets and Recruitment Committee (STAR) monitors overall recruitment against target. Academic Board approves award regulations and (via delegated powers of validation) programme specifications, which, in the context of the University's requirements, lay out the minimum academic and English language criteria for entry to the award and the specific course, respectively. The Admissions Policy & Practice sub-Committee (APPc) advises on the general acceptability and equivalence of a range of entry qualifications, supporting consistency of practice across the University.

Within Faculties, in context of the above framework, course-specific target numbers and standard offer levels are proposed on an annual basis by the Admission Tutor and brought to the Faculty Management Group (FMG) for final approval prior to the start of the relevant admission cycle, and for ongoing monitoring. Professional, regulatory or accrediting bodies also help determine admissions criteria and target numbers for courses closely associated with a particular career, as do our partners for courses taught off-campus.

Assessing and communicating with applicants

Our Applicant Services department receives all applications. The Operations Manager (Applicant Services) is the University's UCAS correspondent.

Full time undergraduate courses

For those courses where assessment is based on application alone, the decision to offer a place is normally taken by Applicant Services, using criteria supplied by the Faculty. In exceptional cases, where achievement against the criteria is not certificated or is otherwise unclear, an application may be referred to the Faculty.

Where further assessment activity is required (e.g. interview, tests, portfolio, or audition), the Faculty organises this and makes the subsequent decision to offer a place.

In either case our decision is communicated by Applicant Services.

All other courses

Decisions are made and communicated to the applicant directly by the relevant Faculty. Decisions may be based on application alone or following further assessment activity. Prospective students for postgraduate research courses are assessed first by the potential supervisor, with final decision made by the Faculty and University Research Degrees Committees.

For courses at partner institutions, responsibility for admission is laid down in the Institutional Agreement between the partner and the University, as agreed by Quality

Assurance Committee. Typically, responsibility for assessing and communicating with prospective students is either i) devolved to the partner or ii) undertaken as above with partner staff contributing to the Faculty role.

Prospective students from outside the European Union may choose to apply through one of our approved representatives overseas who will provide them with information and communicate on their behalf with the University. In addition, certain representatives undertake assessment of applicants and recommend to us where an offer is appropriate. We only work with those representatives approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor and monitored by the International Development department.

Publication of Information and outreach

In a co-ordinated approach, our Student Recruitment Teams, supported by the Communications department, publish information for prospective students in University-wide and external media, represent the University at sector recruitment events and co ordinate cross-University open days, on campus and online; while Faculties are responsible for additional Faculty or subject-specific publications and open days. A range of further outreach activity is undertaken either by staff in the Widening Participation Unit for specific groups of prospective students or by Faculty academic staff in relation to specific subject areas.

Appeals and complaints

Appeals and complaints relating to the admission of students are handled by the Dean of Students and the Operations Manager (Applicant Services) respectively.

Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review of the admission cycle for each course is undertaken by Faculties within the Annual Review and Development process. Admission Policy and Process sub-Committee draws on the outcome of this to review the cycle University-wide and consider the wider effectiveness of the Admission Policy and its implementation as practice.

The Admissions Tutor

The role of Admissions Tutor is fundamental to admission policy and process. There is an Admissions Tutor for each course or group of courses; in some cases this is undertaken within another role, for example a Director of Studies. Key responsibilities, in conjunction with other colleagues, include:

- Definition, monitoring and review of intake targets, entry criteria and offer levels
- Mapping and reviewing the “fit” of new and established entry qualifications with the University curriculum
- Monitoring of recruitment against target
- Management of the assessment of prospective students, including definition of selection activity; recruitment, training and staff development of other academic staff (“selectors”); moderation of decisions

- Oversight and co ordination of processes for the assessment of prior certificated and experiential learning prior to admission
- As part of Annual Review & Development and Internal Subject Review, undertaking an assessment of the effectiveness and fairness of the admissions cycle, using appropriate measures and including reference to groups specified in the single equality scheme

2.2 Training and Support for Staff

When taking up an academic or administrative admissions role, University and partner staff participate in a programme of preparation, professional updating and sharing of good practice, including relevant components from the following:

- internal admissions conferences and development days - to update academic, administrative and partner staff on emergent issues and developments from University and sector practice, including input from UCAS, Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, awarding bodies and the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- faculty Admissions Tutor and interviewer briefings, mentoring and role shadowing for new appointments to these roles, including opportunities to participate in discipline-specific events, sector-wide
- training for administrative staff, with the opportunity to take units of the UCAS CPD programme, and with potential to progress to the AUA Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice (higher education administration and management) with a specialist admissions route.
- international briefing events on key countries and associated entry qualifications
- briefings on development and progress with our Compact scheme
- external development and updating events
- addressing the potential for bias through:
 - i. an online equality awareness package,
 - ii. “Equality Skills for Success” workshop
 - iii. specific components of the PG Cert HE, and
 - iv. referral from APP’s annual evaluation of the admission cycle and the participation of specific groups, including those identified in our Single Equality Scheme and Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA).

2.3 Responsibilities of Applicants

In order to operate the admission process in a fair, effective manner, we place certain obligations upon the applicant, namely:

- to provide complete and accurate information as required on the UCAS, GTTR and University application forms, so that the application can be properly assessed
- to participate in further assessment activity, where relevant to the course concerned
- to update us as soon as possible if personal details or study intentions change
- when offered a place, either directly or through UCAS/GTTR, to reply promptly to positively accept or decline the offer within the required timescale (see 4.2 below).
- to provide any additional information required in a complete and accurate form prior to enrolment, including details relating to nationality, entry to the UK, eligibility to pay tuition fees and verification of entry qualifications.

2.4 Confidentiality and Disclosure

All applications are created as an electronic record on our student administration system. Subject to the provisions of data protection and FOI legislation, the information provided by applicants is only shared with those University and partner staff directly involved with processing the application or undertaking related management activity such as the administration of surveys and market research, compilation of statistics and the provision of further information about the University. It is implicit that where referees are named, we have the applicant's permission to approach these; however where we need to undertake further checks involving a third party (e.g. DBS checks), we will seek the applicant's permission beforehand, whilst noting that we may not be able to proceed with an application without such permission.

3 Dissemination of information and support to prospective students

Our information and support is:

- i) honest, comprehensive and inclusive in coverage
- ii) personalised – identifying target audiences and meeting individual needs,
- iii) accessible - using clear language, appropriate media and alternative formats for prospective students with disabilities or particular needs, without making assumptions about how people get information

so that prospective students are able to make informed choices based on a thorough and accurate picture of what their time at university will entail in terms of academic & financial matters; student life & support; graduate outcomes and careers.

We prioritise the following *topics* in our information and support to prospective students:

course content, teaching and assessment methods and subsequent employment opportunities – summarised in the personalised prospectus and postgraduate subject guides, with downloadable programme specifications and module descriptors for full information

selection criteria – academic, language and experience prerequisites and typical offer levels, including key overseas entry qualifications, are summarised on the University website, in the personalised prospectus, and published in external guides, including by UCAS for FT undergraduate study.

the role of accrediting, regulatory or partner organisations – where such a body is involved in course design, delivery or selection criteria/activity, this is made clear in the above

fees and financial support – on receipt of our offer the prospective student is also directed to the “Money Matters” section of the University website

The following are our priority *media* for delivering information and support:

- The University website - including the “Personalised Prospectus”, “Getting Ready” portal and key country pages, tailored to the individual prospective student, UK and international
- External listings services, especially those provided by UCAS.
- Selected external publications
- Programme specifications, module descriptors and other course-specific University literature
- Open days
- Printed publications to support applicants through the process, including Offer and Getting Ready guides
- Reach out activity and opportunities to find out more – including as a priority work within the Compact scheme and with Care Leavers
- The national “Unistats” website for data on student entry, satisfaction, progression, achievement and employment

All publication and dissemination of information on our courses, including by/at partner organisations and representatives, must adhere to our published guidelines.

4 The Admission Process

4.1 Application to the University must be made through one of the following routes, as appropriate:

- a. UCAS – for entry to any level of a full time undergraduate course. This includes:

Extra – an applicant who has received no offers or who has declined all offers from their original applications can make further applications, one at a time, for courses which still have vacancies (end of February to end of June)

Clearing – a UCAS applicant holding no current offers of a place can apply for a place at the University (July onwards);

Adjustment - an applicant holding an existing place through UCAS firmly and unconditionally, who exceeded the conditions for that place, can look for a preferable place at the University (A level results day to end of August);

Adjustment and Clearing are normally initiated by a telephone enquiry from the applicant, but can only be completed through the UCAS process and for entry that year.

- b. GTTR - for entry to PGCE courses
c. Central Applications Board – for full time entry to Postgraduate Diploma in Law
d. Online application form on the University website – for entry to all other postgraduate courses (taught and research) and to part time undergraduate courses.

The only exceptions to the above being:

- i. Courses delivered at those partner organisations which have delegated responsibility for admissions
ii. Prospective students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) who choose to apply through our educational representatives overseas.

4.2 Milestones and service levels

Once a prospective student applies to us, the following summarises i) the main stages through which the application progresses; and ii) our commitment to inform the applicant within a given timescale:

On receipt of an application, we make the following initial checks:

- provisional assessment of a prospective student's eligibility to pay tuition fees at the home or overseas rate, and if home whether at the normal rate or the higher rate for students with existing qualifications at an equivalent or higher level to the course they have applied for (ELQ);
- where an applicant declares a disability, this is referred to our Disability and Dyslexia Support Service who work with the applicant and the Faculty to determine the appropriate level of support to be provided by the University and the course, and that this is achievable with reasonable adjustments. Where appropriate support cannot be provided even with reasonable adjustments, this will be discussed with the applicant and, where relevant, alternative courses explored. We also ensure that any reasonable adjustments to the applicant assessment process are put in place.

- where an applicant declares a criminal record, this is considered by the Operations Manager (Applicant Services) with appropriate professional input and in relation to the course applied for, to decide whether we can proceed with the application;
- Whether the applicant has previously applied or is a current or past student: the outcome of previous applications to or periods of study at the University may be relevant to the outcome of the current application.

Invitation to selection activity - where a course requires applicants to participate in further selection activity (e.g. attend an assessment day or submit a portfolio), we send the applicant an invitation and details of the selection process normally within fifteen working days of receipt of their application and not less than ten working days before the date or deadline of the activity.

Decision – our initial decision will be one of the following:

- to offer a place without conditions; or
- to offer a place conditional on the results of i) academic assessments and/or ii) English language tests and/or iii) satisfactory background checks, or
- not to offer a place

Applicants should normally receive our initial decision within twenty-five working days of receipt of application for courses that select on application alone, or within fifty working days where further selection activity is used. Applicants are informed either through UCAS/GTTR or directly by us, in line with how they applied.

Reply – applicants who are offered a place must tell us, by a given date, whether they intend to take up the place. This date is determined either by the UCAS/GTTR system, or in the case of direct applications to us, applicants must reply within ten working days of issue of our initial decision. In any case where an applicant has not positively accepted the place by this date, it is assumed that they have turned down our offer, which is then withdrawn. UCAS candidates may accept our offer either as their firm or their insurance choice, in all other cases acceptance can only be on a firm basis and, unless relating to part time courses that can be studied together, no prospective student may accept more than one offer of a University place firmly for a given year.

Fee status – we ensure that prospective students know the rate at which they will pay fees prior to enrolment, providing they in turn supply us with the necessary information as and when we require. Within ten working days of accepting our offer of a place, a prospective student is normally provided with a provisional assessment of whether they will pay tuition fees at the Home, Home ELQ (see above) or Overseas rate and asked to upload a copy of their passport via the applicant portal. We normally confirm that fee status with ten working days of receipt of this. In exceptional cases UK nationals without a passport may provide evidence via national insurance number and birth certificate instead. A student may not complete enrolment until final fee status has been determined and we have received the required payment.

Confirmation - if the applicant accepts our offer of a place, made conditionally on the results of academic and/or English language assessments yet to be taken, the applicant is told our final decision normally within fifteen working days of our receipt of the complete results for those assessments.

Sponsorship under Tier4 of the Points Based System – upon request by a prospective full time student from outside the EEA, we assign a Certificate of Acceptance for Studies (“CAS”) normally within ten working days, once our unconditional offer is accepted firmly and we are provided with a useable image of the relevant page(s) of their passport and any

financial information relevant at this stage. Prospective students from outside the EEA who do not request Tier4 sponsorship are required to provide us with evidence of their right to enter and remain in the UK.

Enrolment and joining instructions – applicants who have accepted our unconditional offer firmly or whose conditional place has been confirmed will normally receive joining instructions from us, at least twenty working days before the start date of the course or within five working days of accepting our offer or receiving confirmation if this is within twenty working days of the course start date.

4.3 Requests to defer a place

Whilst the majority of prospective students apply during the year running up to their proposed start date, some may wish to apply from the outset to start a year later, whilst other may choose to defer their place to the following year once after they have received our offer. In most cases, intended year of entry is not taken into account in assessing an application; this is, however, at our discretion. A prospective student can only defer a place by one year, regardless of whether this was determined before or after offer, while deferral is not permitted at all for some courses and prospective students are advised to check with the relevant Faculty before applying. Places secured through Clearing or Adjustment are only valid for entry that year and may not be deferred.

Prior to their intended start date, we contact applicants holding a deferred place to check that they will take up that place. If we do not receive positive confirmation within ten working days of our enquiry, we reserve the right to withdraw that offer.

4.4 Use of Changed Course Offers

If we cannot offer a place on the course applied for, we may offer an alternative course instead. This can happen at the initial application stage or at confirmation (see above) for prospective students who have not met the conditions of their offer. Where this happens at initial application, the appropriate member of staff normally contacts the prospective student to discuss the alternative before the offer is processed, within the decision timescale specified in 4.2 above.

4.5 Changes to courses during the admissions cycle

We take all steps to avoid changes to a course after it has opened for applications for a given entry year and, in particular, suspension of a course, alteration of intended professional recognition or exemptions, or variation to published study mode or duration within 3 months of intended start date. However, when changes do occur, the Admission tutor provides written details and options to each active applicant.

Where an applicant already holds an active offer for the course/year concerned, we do our best to ensure that the applicant's study intentions can be met. In this case the Admission Tutor discusses the options directly with the applicant and offers one or more of the following options as circumstances allow:

- entry to the original course/year as planned
- deferring our offer by one year
- transferring our offer to an alternative course for the original year of entry
- transferring the offer to the same or similar course at another University;
- or if all of the above options have been exhausted, cancelling our offer.

normally within the decision timescale specified in 4.2 above. The applicant will also be advised and supported through the necessary UCAS procedure, where relevant.

4.6 Credit transfer and entry with advanced standing

We welcome applications from prospective students who wish to enter at a later stage of a course or gain exemption from specific modules, subject to any specific requirements of an accrediting/regulatory body.

Such entry can be assessed on the basis of existing qualifications (APCL) and/or experience (APEL), but the upper limit for this is two thirds of the credit required for the award (e.g. typically for a FT 3 year UG hon. course, entry to start of final year) while the minimum exemption considered is 15 credits (i.e. typically one module).

Application is via the normal route and the usual processes for assessing the application apply. In addition, where applicants wish to enter directly to the start of the second or subsequent year, they should make this clear on the application, citing whether this will be on the basis of existing qualifications and/or experience. All such applications are referred to the Faculty APL Co-ordinator, who maps general and specific credit from any appropriate existing qualifications against the curriculum from which exemption is sought. In the case of exemption based on experiential learning, the applicant is interviewed by the Admissions Tutor and the APL Co-ordinator; where an applicant for entry with advance standing is then accepted on the basis of APEL, our offer is conditional on them preparing a satisfactory portfolio of evidence, with the support of the APL Co-ordinator. We normally charge a fee to assess the portfolio.

Where a prospective student wishes to seek exemption from specific module(s) rather than or in addition to direct entry into a later year, this should be sought, once an offer of a place has been made, via the Operations Manager (Applicant Services) who refers the matter to the above procedure.

Students who are registered for a PhD at another comparable institution may apply for admission with advanced standing. To be eligible for consideration by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee, the applicant must be prepared to register at Kingston University for at least one year (or two years, if part-time) prior to the date of the final submission of the thesis. Admission may be subject to the completion of an agreed programme of research training.

The University makes all decisions on entry with advanced standing, credit transfer or module exemptions to courses leading to a University award.

Full details of APL procedure are detailed in our Academic Quality and Standards Handbook.

5 Assessment of prospective students

5.1 Our approach to setting and monitoring entry criteria

By entry *criteria*, we mean a minimum threshold of achievement that every prospective student must be expected to meet for their application to be considered; for example, to pass two A level subjects, or reach a certain standard of competency in English language, or have had a specific level of related work experience.

By *offer level*, we mean an approximate indication of the level of achievement we require in practice for entry to a specific course from prospective students holding or expecting to hold specific entry qualifications. Where applicable, this can be expressed in terms of UCAS tariff points accumulated from a minimum number of separate subjects; or as a pass, specific grade or classification in a qualification and/or its constituent subjects. Unless indicated otherwise, this is expressed as a single *typical* offer (rather than a range); an approximate indication, but allowing for some variation, of the likely level of our offer to a prospective student yet to achieve these entry qualifications,

General criteria for entry to each award are set by Academic Board; while course-specific criteria are proposed by Admission Tutors, initially laid down at original validation in the programme specification, and updated and elaborated upon in the annual publication of typical offers on the University website and through UCAS and other listings services.

In setting entry criteria and defining typical offers we use the following evidence:

- criteria and offer levels used by similar courses at the University and elsewhere in the sector
- involvement of peers, regulatory and professional bodies, and external assessors to inform the setting of entry criteria at initial validation of courses and ongoing offer levels at subsequent monitoring and review
- at Annual Review & Development and Internal Subject Review, reflection on past student performance vs. entry criteria, offer levels and contextual information, drawing on quantitative and qualitative measure of student achievement and opinion, with appropriate benchmarks
- consideration over time of the changing characteristics of prospective students and levels of preparedness in relation to the University, school and post-compulsory curriculum
- available places vs. demand: places are limited by a number of factors and when coupled with high demand, entry to some courses will be competitive and offer levels set to admit the *best* prepared candidates

In order to link major new entry qualifications into entry criteria and offer levels, each Admissions Tutor undertakes a curriculum mapping exercise to determine how preparation for University study can be demonstrated. This is taken in turn to APPc for collective moderation and recommendation of the overall acceptability of the qualification to the University, along with appropriate offer levels, equivalences and exceptions. Within its monitoring brief, APPc then considers how well the qualification has subsequently prepared new entrants for study at the University.

5.2 The Entry Criteria

Entry criteria are expressed in:

- i) a general entrance requirement for study towards a particular University award within the Undergraduate Regulations , or Postgraduate Regulations, or a Research Course , as laid out in the Academic regulations and summarised below; and
- ii) specific entry criteria and offer levels for each course.

General entrance requirement:

All applicants should normally be aged 17 years or over at the start of their proposed course.

Applicants whose first language is not English and for whom the majority of their education has not been in English, will also need to demonstrate proficiency in English language by formal academic qualification, with the minimum level of attainment required being 6.0 (UMS), 6.5 (PCF) or 7.0 (Research Course) in a British Council IELTS Academic English Test, normally taken no earlier than two years before entry to the University course applied for. We have approved and will accept a number of alternative qualifications to IELTS and have established equivalencies. Information on these is maintained by Applicant Services.

At the University's discretion, an applicant who does not meet this English language requirement may still be admitted providing that they undertake an agreed course of English language instruction before admission; for example, as part of a programme offered by the Kingston University London International Study Centre ("KULISC").

Undergraduate Regulations:

All applicants should have achieved at the point of entry a GCSE grade C in Mathematics and in English Language, or equivalents acceptable to the University.

Postgraduate Regulations

All applicants to a course in the Postgraduate Regulations should normally have achieved at the point of entry a UK Bachelors degree with first or second class honours, or an overseas or other qualification deemed equivalent by the University. For some courses, an applicant may be admitted without such a qualification, if evidence of an adequate academic background combined with substantial experience in a relevant field can be shown. In certain instances, such applicants may be required to pursue the course over an extended period of time and/or pass a qualifying assessment before being admitted to the course.

MA/MSc by Research, MPhil and PhD:

The normal minimum requirement for admission is a postgraduate Masters degree or first or upper second class honours degree or equivalent in a subject appropriate to the proposed course of study or research. Admission to PhD will be provisional and subject to confirmation at the initial monitoring stage.

Exceptionally, an applicant without these minimum qualifications may be considered for entry. For example, the Head of School and potential Director of Studies may consider for admission an applicant with relevant professional qualifications and experience, where these provide sufficient evidence of potential to complete the degree course satisfactorily. In such cases, the application for registration must be approved by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee and referred to the University Research Degrees Committee for ratification.

Course specific:

Entry criteria are published in the individual programme specifications and summarised on the University website, which also carries *typical* offer levels for courses within the UMS. UCAS entry profiles also give details of acceptable entry qualifications, tariff points/grades and required volume/depth of study at entry. For qualifications outside of the UCAS tariff, including those taken outside of the UK, equivalence will be determined at the discretion of the Director of Student Services and Administration, or nominee.

Applicants are normally expected to meet these entry criteria. However, the University may also admit individuals who can demonstrate the same academic potential as applicants with conventional qualifications, whilst noting that there are a number of courses where the entry criteria are not flexible. In order to gain admission, the University will require evidence of substantial experience in a field related to the course to which admission is sought.

We reserve the right to vary actual offer levels from those published but actual offer levels will be set before the start of the admissions cycle, adhered to during it, and applied equally to all applicants. Prospective students are not guaranteed a place because they meet or are expected to meet our criteria and offer levels. Where places are limited and demand is high, we may use the information below to select the *best* prepared candidates:

5.3 The range of information and activities we use in assessing prospective students

The range of information and activity used to assess prospective students varies significantly by level and method of study, faculty and course, and may encompass one or more of the following:

1. Actual and predicted entry qualifications (from initial application and subsequent verification)
2. Personal statement (from initial application)
3. Reference (accompanying initial application)
4. Work Experience (demonstrated at initial application and, where applicable, interview)
5. Portfolio
6. Attendance at an Open Day or online participation in a virtual event
7. Interview
8. Selection tests or written work set (during selection day or completed before interview)
9. Audition
10. Research proposal (accompanying application for postgraduate research study)
11. Academic and research skills (demonstrated at initial application, in existing qualifications and, where applicable, at interview)

In addition, courses associated with health, teaching, law and other regulated professions may have specific requirements before offering a place, for example in respect of residential status, occupational health clearance or criminal convictions or include the need for a satisfactory DBS check by the Faculty prior to commencement of the course. Where, in our judgement, a DBS check reveals a conviction which impacts upon a prospective student's suitability for the course, the place may be withdrawn, before or after the student has completed enrolment and started the course.

For the majority of courses, the greatest weight is attached to **actual/predicted entry qualifications**, either to offer a place outright or to shortlist candidates for further assessment activity.

Where a specific course uses **interviews, selection tests, auditions or portfolios** as a matter of course, these are applied equally to all shortlisted applicants for that course and

will carry an equal weighting to entry qualifications in assessing a prospective student. Courses that do not normally use such activity may still invite specific applicants to interview or to prepare written work where there is insufficient information within the initial application on which to base a decision.

Personal statements and work experience assume increasing importance for candidates without the usual entry qualifications or with qualifications not related to the proposed course, and for creative, vocational or heavily oversubscribed courses. In some cases professional, accrediting or regulatory bodies may require specific work experience prior to entry to the course. Significant emphasis is also placed on **references** for applicants to professional courses, including those in health and education.

Some courses may invite prospective students to an **on-campus open day or online event**; whilst not always mandatory, prospective students are encouraged to participate, as they may be asked to reflect upon their visit in subsequent assessment activity.

At **postgraduate** level, increasing importance is attached to the **level of achievement, breadth and depth of specific study from entry qualifications**, along with relevant **work experience** for many applied courses. Application for a postgraduate research course in particular may be considered as similar to a job application, especially if a studentship is involved, and particular weight is given to existing qualifications in detail, **references** and demonstrated **academic and research skills**, along with the **research proposal** itself and potential **supervision**.

5.4 Variations and Adjustments for specific groups of applicants.

Use of contextual information – contextual information may be taken into account to adjust our entry criteria. In view of the work we undertake with students at school or colleges in our “Compact” scheme, where we subsequently offer them a place on the basis of entry qualifications within the UCAS tariff, we may lower our normal offer by up to 30 points for entry to participating courses.

Disability – where necessary in taking forward an application, reasonable adjustment is made to the applicant assessment process. Implicit in our decision to offer a place is confirmation, following assessment by the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service, that we are able to provide the prospective student with appropriate support through reasonable adjustments.

5.5 Recording and Communicating Decisions

Where assessment of a prospective student involves an interview or other activity, this can include colleagues from partner or stakeholder organisations and may involve interview teams or panels and/or a colleague playing a moderating role at the conclusion of an assessment event.

All decisions are entered onto our student administration system and communicated via a system-generated standard letter to the candidate and additionally through UCAS/GTTR for FT undergraduate and PGCE courses and via the Central Applications Board for the FT Postgraduate Diploma in Law.

6 Joining the University

6.1 Offering a place

When offering a place, we ensure that a prospective student understands:

- the obligations involved in taking up their place
- the opportunities for further advice and guidance before they join the University
- how to enrol

Our offer is accompanied by:

- a link to the University website and “Getting Ready” portal through which the prospective student is advised to access the relevant award regulations; plagiarism, conduct and intellectual property policies; programme specification and module descriptors
- A printed Offer Guide with information to help inform choices and detailing the support available
- a course-specific welcome pack including reading lists and outline timetable
- telephone number and e-mail address for a named enquiry contact in the relevant Faculty or partner organisation
- if our offer is conditional, details of what to do if conditions are not fully met

Once the prospective student accepts our offer, they are invited to activate their University IT account and receive personalised information on preparation for/dates of enrolment via the “Getting Ready” portal.

6.2 Effective Induction and Integration

We offer an effective introduction to the University for all our new students through:

- A “Welcome Week” of events at start of academic year
- Postgraduate induction events
- Meet and greet service and Orientation Week for international students
- Orientation to course curriculum, organisation, teaching and assessment methods during the assessment of prospective students or at the offer stage
- Inclusive curricula designed to meet the needs of students from a wide variety of backgrounds and entry routes
- Completion of pre-entry projects

7 Feedback, Appeals and Complaints

7.1 Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

We provide basic feedback using standard coded categories to all unsuccessful candidates for full time undergraduate courses, normally within the decision timescale in 4.2 above. Specific courses may also provide feedback or further detail, to all unsuccessful applicants. Where a prospective student with a disability is unsuccessful because it is not possible to support them adequately, even with reasonable adjustment and after exploring alternative University courses, the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service will provide feedback, including on potential options elsewhere.

7.2 Appeals against the outcome of an application

We only consider appeals which are:

- i) against our final decision on an application;
- ii) made by the applicant in writing and received within twenty working days of the date of that decision; and
- iii) made on the following grounds:
 - 1. relevant and material information was not made available to us at the time of application, through no fault of the applicant; or
 - 2. the way we dealt with the application differed significantly from our written policy and procedure.

Appeals are considered on the understanding that, should the appeal be upheld, any offer of a place will be either for the entry year originally applied for or the following year, at our discretion.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Dean of Students, who acknowledges the appeal within five working days, investigates and makes a decision, responding to the appellant within twenty working days of receipt. The appellant and any staff associated with the decision on the application may be asked to attend an appeal hearing meeting. The decision of the Dean of Students is final and no further appeals will be considered.

7.3 Complaints

We consider complaints relating to admission where these: i) relate to a submitted application; ii) are made in writing by the applicant within twenty working days of the events concerned; and iii) concern the way an application has been handled, the subsequent dissemination of information, and/or the conduct of a member of University or partner staff directly involved in processing the application. The complaints procedure cannot be used to appeal against the outcome of an application.

Complaints must be made in writing to the Operations Manager (Applicant Services) who acknowledges receipt within five working days, investigates and communicates the outcome to the complainant within twenty working days. If the matter cannot be resolved at this point, the complainant has the option to take the complaint, in writing, to the Dean of Students, whose decision will be final. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator does not investigate complaints relating to Admissions.

8 Implementation, dissemination, monitoring and review

Following approval by Academic Board, this policy will be disseminated to University and partner staff and made available to prospective students via the University website and appropriate links in admissions correspondence.

Adoption of the policy has implications for some aspects of admissions practice to date; it is acknowledged that we will not necessarily be fully compliant with all aspects of this policy from the outset. However, the policy will have been adopted in full by the close of the academic year following approval.

Admission Policy and Practice sub-Committee (APPc) has an overall brief for the annual and periodic monitoring of the admission cycle: reporting to STAR, informed by the development of a series of key performance indicators and with reference to specific groups identified in the Single Equality Scheme. As part of this brief, APPc is responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation and further development of this policy and related practice and will draw up an appropriate implementation plan with targets, milestones and key performance indicators.