UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

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UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Code of Practice: Admission of Postgraduate Research Students

1. Introduction

1.1 Where a question of interpretation arises reference should be made to the University Regulations on Research Degree Programmes, which take precedence.

1.2 It is recognised that the unit responsible for certain aspects of the admission of research students varies for good reason across the University and may be either the Department or the School. For the sake of brevity the following Code of Practice refers only to the School (except when referring to those aspects of the procedures which are clearly a University-level responsibility). All references to the School should therefore be interpreted as referring to Department or School in accordance with practice in the particular part of the University concerned. The term "Head of School" should be interpreted as referring to "The Head of School or nominee".

1.3 The term "student(s)" in this Code should be interpreted as referring to students registered for qualifications that are designated as research degrees under the University's Regulations for Research Degree Programmes.

2. Admission

2.1 Admission requirements and admission procedures detailed in University publications should include an indication whether and at what stage an interview and/or qualifying examination is normally required.

2.2 Applicants resident in the United Kingdom will normally be required to attend for interview before a decision to recommend admission is taken.

2.3 In the case of applicants from overseas, whom it is not possible to interview, special care will be taken in assessing the candidate's suitability to undertake the research programme proposed in the light of study previously undertaken and qualifications obtained.

2.4 Applicants whose first language is not English shall be required in accordance with the Regulations, to provide evidence satisfactory to the University that they have adequate knowledge of written and spoken English of a standard sufficient to undertake their research and also such taught courses as are a required part of research training. A listing of evidence acceptable to the University is attached as an Appendix to this Code of Practice.

2.5 It shall be made clear to such applicants that they will be required to submit their thesis in English unless formal permission to use another language is given before the candidate is admitted to the University.

2.6 The recommendation to admit an applicant to a programme of research shall in all cases be made by the Head of the School concerned or his or her nominee for approval under procedures approved by the Senate or delegated authority.

2.7 Before making a recommendation to admit, the person responsible for making the recommendation shall be satisfied:

a. that the candidate is appropriately qualified for the proposed programme of work;
b. that, on the information available, the proposed programme of work should be capable of being studied to the depth required to obtain the degree to which the candidate aspires;
c. that the proposed programme of work can reasonably be expected to be completed within the maximum time permitted in the regulations for the degree to which the candidate aspires;
d. that appropriate necessary resources (eg library, computing, laboratory facilities, technical assistance) are available and are likely to remain available throughout the expected period of research;
e. that proper supervision can be provided and maintained throughout the likely period of research, including during any periods of study leave by the supervisor or time spent abroad by the student and that satisfactory contingency plans exist for adequate supervision in the event of the discontinuation of the arrangements originally made. In making this judgement, account will be taken of the fact that supervision can best be provided by persons active in research and with a research interest related to that of the student.

2.8 Should an applicant seek to transfer their registration from another UK University to the University of Birmingham

(a) The applicant must:

i. Submit an application with references, supporting documents and reason for requesting a transfer. Normally, at least one reference should be from the current supervisor(s) and should contain information of the applicant's progress to date.
ii. Provide, where appropriate, confirmation that funding from an external sponsor will be transferred should an offer be made by the University of Birmingham.

(b) The relevant School must:

i. Ensure that an appropriate supervisory team is available.
ii. Be satisfied that the applicant has been progressing satisfactorily at their previous institution.
iii. Recommend the period of registration that the School wishes the applicant to transfer and thereby confirm the minimum period of registration to be completed at the University of Birmingham.

(c) Admissions will:

i. Check that regulations have been met regarding the required period of registration in order to obtain a University of Birmingham degree;
ii. Check the student's qualifications to ensure they meet the entry requirements for the University of Birmingham;
iii. Obtain confirmation from the previous institution of the official date of the student's registration and of the progress of the applicant to date (for example, the reference from the supervisor);
iv. Seek assurance that the existing supervisory team and the previous institution are in agreement for a transfer to be made to this institution;
v. If appropriate, obtain confirmation from the external sponsor for the transfer of funding;
vi. Provide a formal written offer letter to the student, stating any appropriate conditions;
vii. Provide a copy of this letter to the Student Records Research Team and the School.

2.9 The formal offer of admission shall be issued to the applicant by the Academic Registrar, or his/her nominee, acting on behalf of the University authority responsible for taking the decision to admit. It shall include the following information:

a. the field of study;
b. the start date and likely duration of study and the minimum and maximum times permitted;
c. any conditions to be satisfied before admission;
d. any conditions affecting progress to successful completion of the proposed work (including any qualifying thesis or other work required for formal assessment);
e. any preparatory courses which the student may be required to take on or before arrival and, if appropriate, their effect on the overall period of study;
f. the fees for the first year of the programme including information on the level of any bench fees, and a statement of the date by which payment is required;
g. (for full-time students not receiving a British Academy or Research Council Scholarship), the current estimated annual cost of maintenance;
h. the name(s) of the member(s) of staff provisionally appointed as the supervisor(s);

2.10 A copy of the formal offer letter will be sent to the applicant's sponsor (if any) if this is requested by either the applicant or the sponsor or is otherwise thought to be appropriate.

2.11 Further information, as specified in the Code of Practice on the Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students, shall be sent to the applicant, either with the formal offer of admission or at some other date before initial registration.

2.12 Applications for admission should be dealt with as expeditiously as possible by all concerned in the process and any valid reasons for delay recorded. The progress of applications will be monitored by the Academic Office. Brief reasons for a rejected application should be recorded with the application form.

3. Choice of Research Topic

3.1 The field of study will be determined in at least general terms before admission. A final choice and definition of the research topic may be taken before or after admission according to circumstances. Decisions shall be taken in consultation between the applicant/student and supervisor as soon as possible in the light of what is appropriate for the discipline concerned. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that delay in determining a topic is kept to a minimum and that the Head of School is kept informed.

3.2 The choice of research topic may in practice be determined by the research in progress in the School or by an external funding body. Industrial needs may in appropriate circumstances influence the choice of research fields.

APPENDIX

Proficiency in the English Language

1. University Regulation 5.1.7 requires that:
   In addition to satisfying all other requirements for admission to first-degree or postgraduate courses, overseas candidates whose native language is not English must provide evidence satisfactory to the University that they have an adequate knowledge of written and spoken English of a standard sufficient to comprehend the teaching of a University course.

2. The following list of qualifications is considered to meet the University's requirements at the level shown. This is not an exhaustive list of qualifications and others of equivalent level may be accepted, subject to the provisions outlined below.

GCSE English	Grade C or better
Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English	Grade B or better
Cambridge University Certificate in Advanced English	Grade A
Graduate Management Admissions Test	500 or above
International Baccalaureate first or second language English, Higher or Subsidiary level	Grade 5 or above
NEAB (Northern Examinations & Assessment Board – formerly JMB) Test in English for Speakers of other Languages	Pass
TOEFL test (Test of English as a Foreign Language) Test	
Schools of Science and Engineering	550/213 plus TWE 4.0
Business, Social Sciences, Humanities, Historical Studies, Health Sciences	580/237 plus TWE 4.0
Law, Medicine, Dentistry	600/250 plus TWE 4.0
IELTS (International English Language Testing Service)	
Schools of Science and Engineering	6.0 with no less than 5.5 in any band
Business, Social Sciences, Humanities, Historical Studies, Health Sciences	6.5 with no less than 6.0 in any band
Law, Medicine, Dentistry	7.0 with no less than 6.5 in any band
Warwick English Language Test	BBB

3. Where a selector considers that a candidate is offering an equivalent qualification the decision on whether to make an offer on the basis of this qualification must be taken by the Dean or his or her deputy. The English for Overseas Students Unit and the

Directorate of Admissions Liaison and International Affairs can either provide or seek advice on the suitability of that qualification.

4. Where a School or Department considers that there is a case for increasing the requirement for a particular course this may be done with the agreement of the Dean or his or her deputy. This information must subsequently be amended in course brochures and the appropriate prospectus and notified to the Directorate of Admissions Liaison and International Affairs so that enquirers may be informed.

5. Where applicants have narrowly missed the Requirement for Proficiency in the English Language, they may still be accepted for entry provided they attend a Pre-sessional English Course at the English for International Students Unit as follows and this may be included in a conditional offer.

IELTS score	5.0	10 week course
TOEFL score	~500	
Other marginal result		
IELTS score	5.5	5 week course
TOEFL score	Between 500 and 550	
Other marginal result		

6. Where an applicant has been educated in English, for example by attending a University course in an English-speaking country or attending an International School where the International Baccalaureate or other curriculum is taught in English, they may be exempted from the Requirement for Proficiency in the English Language. Where a selector is unsure about this, advice should be sought from the English for International Students Unit or International Office.

7. The requirement for IELTS may be reduced to 5.0 for research students if a selector requests it of a Dean or his or her deputy, and can confirm that the students case has been carefully considered and that measures are being taken to ensure that additional English Language support is obtained from the English for International Students Unit.