University of Birmingham

Code of Practice on the Admission of Students

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1. Purpose

1.1 This document sets out the University's Code of Practice for the Admission of Students to all 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 addressed.

2. Ownership and compliance

2.1 This Code of Practice is owned by the Director of Admissions and is reviewed annually ahead of the relevant admissions cycle. It is in accordance with the law of the United Kingdom, as well as the University's Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations. This includes specific compliance with legislation relating to equality, discrimination, data protection, human rights and immigration.

2.2 The University's admissions procedures also adhere to guidance regarding good practice issued by other bodies, including the Quality Assurance Agency's *UK Quality Code For Higher Education*, and such documents and directives as may be issued by the Government, the Higher Education Funding Council (England), and the Research Councils.

2.3 The web addresses included within this document are correct as of 1st July 2015.

3. General principles

3.1 The University's admissions policy and practices assist in meeting the strategic aims of the University and enhancing its position as a higher education leading institution.

3.2 The University is committed to operating admissions procedures that are fair, transparent and consistent, and are also compliant with all relevant legislation and regulations. The University strives to admit only suitably qualified applicants who have the ability to complete their programme of study successfully.

3.3 The University is also committed to Widening Participation and fair access, and encourages applicants from all social and cultural backgrounds

3.4 Admission to the University is solely at the discretion of the University.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 The Admissions Office works closely with academic schools and other sections of the University to deliver a professional and equitable admissions service.

4.2 The Admissions Office is responsible for:

(a) Ensuring that the University delivers a fair, transparent and efficient admissions service
(b) Liaison with applicants throughout the admissions process
(c) Decision making for schools where this has been delegated to the Admissions Office (where detailed admissions criteria are agreed with the relevant academic school)
(d) Processing and communicating all formal admissions decisions to applicants
(e) Issuing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to allow international

applicants to apply for their visa to study in the UK

(f) Providing information, advice and assistance to tutors and colleagues across the University on admissions processes, statistics and targets, and entry requirements including non-standard qualifications

(g) Safeguarding the University from fraudulent applicants

(h) Compliance with internal and external regulations including in relation to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), fee status, Academic technology Approval Scheme (ATAS), data protection, and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

4.3 Academic schools are responsible for:

(a) Allocating suitable members of staff to act as Admissions Tutors for the school and ensuring these staff are appropriately inducted and trained for their role in collaboration with the Admissions Office

(b) Setting entry criteria for all programmes in liaison with their Admissions Office contacts in line with College and University policies

(c) Making decisions on applications. If decision making has been delegated to the Admissions Office the school may still be responsible for decisions on borderline and non-standard applications.

(d) Conducting interviews where one is required, including organising, conducting and documenting all interviews in accordance with section 7

(e) Liaison with applicants throughout the admissions process in collaboration with the Admissions Office and other sections of the University as appropriate

5. Entry requirements

5.1 Admission requirements and procedures for all programmes are detailed in University publications. The primary sources of this information are the printed prospectuses, the University's website, and for undergraduate programmes the UCAS website. As the printed prospectuses are published well in advance of the recruitment cycle, applicants need always to refer to the University's website for the most up-to-date information.

5.2 Some programmes require an interview and/or test as part of their admissions process. This information is published on individual programme information webpages.

5.3 The University has general entry requirements including a minimum of GCSE grade C in Maths and English (some programmes require higher grades), or equivalent, for entry to undergraduate degrees, and evidence of English proficiency from all applicants whose first language is not English. Further details can be found on the University's website:
for undergraduate:
http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/undergraduate/requirements/international/index.aspx
for postgraduate:
http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/requirements-pgt/international/index.aspx .

5.4 All applications must normally have at least one satisfactory reference. If this is not supplied through UCAS for undergraduate applications then the application may be rejected. If, for postgraduate applications, it is not supplied at the application stage it will be made a condition of the offer.

5.5 The University accepts a wide range of country-specific qualifications. A list may be found at http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/country/index.aspx.
If an applicant is unable to find advice on the acceptability of their qualification/s they

should contact admissions@bham.ac.uk for further guidance before applying.

5.6 Some programmes also have non-academic requirements, for example Fitness to Practise, DBS check, Health and Immunisations, and ATAS. These are stated in the prospectus and website entries where appropriate to specific programmes and will be added as conditions of an offer where required.

6. The application process

Application routes and deadlines

6.1 Applications for most undergraduate programmes of study and the MA Social Work must be made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) at http://www.ucas.com/apply/undergraduate.
An application fee is charged by UCAS, which will vary depending on the number of programmes being applied for. Medicine and Dentistry applicants must submit their application by 15 October and all other applicants by 15 January in order to be guaranteed equal consideration for their chosen programme.

6.2 No material supplied after the application deadlines (see 6.1) will be considered except in response to a specific request from the University.

6.3 Applications for Teacher Education must be made through the UCAS Teacher Training (UTT) process and are charged an application fee by UCAS. Details on how to apply are available at http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/teacher-training#.
Offers are made on a first-come, first-served basis and therefore early application is advised.

6.4 Applications for postgraduate programmes and those undergraduate programmes not applied to through a clearing organisation or UCAS must be made directly to the University using the online application form. Information on how to apply can be found at http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/apply-pg/index.aspx.
The University may levy an application fee for certain postgraduate programmes. Applications to these programmes will not be considered until the application fee has been received.

6.5 Postgraduate applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible as popular programmes may close during the admissions cycle if sufficient applications to fill all of the available spaces have been received.

6.6 Applicants requiring a visa to study in the UK are strongly advised to apply as soon as possible and by no later than mid-August in order to ensure that admissions processes are completed in sufficient time to allow for visa processing before the beginning of the academic year.

6.7 Applications for distance learning programmes should apply using the online application form (see 6.4). However, applicants will be subject to additional assessment criteria in order to ensure that their chosen study mode is suitable for their learning needs. The Code of Practice on Distance Learning can be found at http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/distance-learning.pdf .

6.8 Applicants for postgraduate research programmes to be undertaken in Split Locations should still apply via the online application form. However, applicants will also need to meet the additional requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Split Location Study

for Postgraduate Research Students Section 3 at http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/split-location-postgraduate-study.pdf

6.9 There are a number of programmes where a non-standard admissions route applies (e.g. Birmingham International Academy, pre-sessional English programmes, Birmingham International Summer School). Information on how to apply is detailed on the programme information pages on the University's website.

6.10 All applicants should receive an email acknowledgement from the University once their application has been received. Further communications will be sent during the application process.

6.11 Once an application has been received the information will be treated confidentially and data will not be released to any third party without the express agreement of the applicant, except in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

6.12 It is the duty of applicants to inform the University promptly of any change of address, any change of name, or any other change in circumstances which may affect their application.

6.13 For details on how an application will be assessed see section 7.

Communicating decisions

6.14 The University aims to process applications as quickly as possible, and once a decision has been made the Admissions Office will communicate this decision to the applicant. Applicants should be aware that some competitive programmes operate a "gathered-field" approach to decision making in order to ensure that equal consideration is given to all applications. This will mean that decision making will be delayed until after the published "due consideration" date. When an offer of a place is being made a formal offer letter will be issued to the applicant. Typically an offer letter will include:

- programme title (and research area for relevant applicants)
- fee information and fee status
- start date and the duration of study
- any conditions to be satisfied before admission and deadlines where applicable (this may include a non-refundable deposit)
- the name(s) of the member(s) of staff provisionally appointed as the supervisor(s) and proposed title of the thesis (research only)
- terms and conditions
- information on how to respond to the offer

6.15 The University operates a policy of verifying qualifications before an applicant can be admitted and therefore if qualifications have not already been verified this will be a condition of the offer.

6.16 Some programmes have non-academic requirements, which will be detailed as conditions of the offer when applicable. For example, if the applicant will come into unsupervised contact with children and/or vulnerable adults during their programme, they will be required to show evidence of a satisfactory check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The applicant is responsible for paying all the fees necessary to obtain the required level of DBS check. Further information can be found on the University website: http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/professional/external/admissions/dbs/index.aspx

6.17 Successful applicants will have their place confirmed and Registration and Welcome details will be sent before the start of their programme. If the applicant requires a visa to study in the UK a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies will be issued to allow them to apply for a Tier 4 visa.

6.18 Applicants who are unable to meet all the conditions of their offer cannot be admitted to their chosen programme. In some circumstances, for example if an academic condition has been marginally missed, the Admissions Tutor will be consulted to establish if the applicant can be accepted. If admission to the originally chosen programme is not possible and a suitable alternative is available, this may be presented to the applicant as an option.

Fee status

6.19 The University will classify applicants as Home/EU, Islands or Overseas for fee purposes in line with Home Office guidance. An applicant may appeal to the Director of Admissions against their tuition fee classification. The University will consider such appeals in a timely manner, with a view to providing a response within 10 working days of written appeal reaching the Director of Admissions. Where a response is not possible in that timeframe, the Director of Admissions will write to inform the applicant, giving reasons for the delay.

6.20 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 fee classification will be confirmed and any overpayment will be refunded. Once an applicant becomes a registered student the fee status will only be reclassified in exceptional circumstances.

Feedback

6.21 If an applicant is unsuccessful and wishes to receive feedback they should email or write to the Admissions Office requesting this. The Admissions Office or Academic School will then provide written feedback as soon as possible.

6.22 If an applicant wishes to request a review of the decision they should refer to section 8 of this document for the correct procedure.

Disability

6.23 If an applicant has declared a disability on their application form this will have no bearing on determining their academic suitability for the programme. If an offer is made the applicant will be strongly encouraged to complete a self-assessment form and return this to the University's Student Support Team in order to ensure that appropriate support arrangements can be put in place before studies commence. For programmes that are subject to Fitness to Practise procedures, all students, including those with disabilities, must meet the competency thresholds set by the professional registering body/council for that particular profession.

Criminal convictions

6.24 For programmes which do not require DBS clearance, all applicants are required to declare any relevant unspent convictions at the point of application. If a criminal conviction is declared this will be considered before the offer of a place is made and if thought appropriate more information will be requested from the applicant. A criminal conviction

does not preclude an applicant from studying at the University. However, the University has a duty of care to its students and staff and the decision will depend on the nature of the conviction and the programme applied for.

Fraudulent, misleading and incomplete applications

6.25 The University of Birmingham will pay particular attention to the following when considering applications to study at the University:

- an application with false or misleading information/statements
- an application where relevant information has been omitted
- submission of fraudulent or falsified documents
- plagiarism
- collusion (where the content of the application submitted is not the work of the applicant)
- refusal by an applicant to provide additional information when requested

6.26 It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the information they provide is accurate and complete, and does not contain false or misleading information. It is also the applicant's responsibility to provide additional information when requested to do so. The University will check an applicant's academic history, qualifications, references, personal statements, research proposals, and anything else provided as part of an application for accuracy.

6.27 The University reserves the right to:

- investigate any application suspected of including false, misleading or fraudulent information or appearing to be incomplete
- request additional information to verify an application
- put the application process on hold pending completion of such investigation

6.28 In the event that the University finds evidence that the applicant has submitted a false, misleading, fraudulent or incomplete application as referred to above, the University reserves the right to:

- reject, withdraw or cancel the application before a decision is made
- withdraw any offer of a place that has already been made
- withdraw registration if an applicant has already been accepted onto a programme of study and registered as a student

Accreditation of Prior Learning

6.29 Postgraduate applicants may request recent prior learning and experience to be taken into account, such that they may be granted an exemption from certain parts of the programme for which they are applying. Details of the process to be followed can be found on the University's website at http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/professional/external/admissions/Admissions-Services.aspx.
Undergraduate applicants wishing to apply for advanced standing (i.e. direct entry into year 2 or 3) should indicate this on their UCAS application form.

Re-admission policy

6.30 Applicants are required to declare all previous periods of study regardless of whether a qualification was awarded; this includes previous study at the University of Birmingham. The University reserves the right not to consider an applicant for entry if the applicant has previously been withdrawn or excluded from the University on any grounds.

Deferral policy

6.31 The University may consider applications for deferred entry and will also normally consider requests to defer after an application has been received. The University only allows applicants to defer their offer for one year, after which time the applicant is required to re-apply.

Programme amendments and withdrawals

6.32 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. Such changes may 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 collaborative 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

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

7. Assessment of applications

7.1 Applications are assessed on the basis of information provided by the applicant in their application and the supporting documentation. The assessment will take into account the following:

- Academic performance to date
- Predicted grades for qualifications not yet completed (where applicable)
- References (all applications must normally have at least one satisfactory reference. If this is not supplied at the application stage it will be made a condition of offer)
- Personal statement
- Research proposal (research programmes only)

7.2 For some programmes one or more of the following will also form part of the assessment process. Where this is the case it will be stated within the programme information:

- Formal interview (some taught programmes, all research programmes)
- Test or audition
- Work experience or other professional requirements

7.3 All applicants are considered against the same criteria for the programme for which they have applied.

7.4 A formal interview is defined as a meeting for the sole purpose of determining the eligibility of the student for admission to a programme of study at the University. It can take place face-to-face, by telephone or through electronic means (e.g. Skype). The interview will normally be conducted by two members of the University, at least one of whom will be an academic (with other (lay) panel members present as appropriate). The offer of a place will be dependent on the applicant's performance at this interview. All interviews for the same taught programme of study will follow a similar format and similar questions will be asked. It will be the responsibility of the interviewer(s) to keep comprehensive and contemporaneous notes of the discussion that takes place during the interview.

7.5 For the Multiple Mini Interviews used to assess applicants for undergraduate Medicine and Dentistry programmes, there will usually be only one interviewer at each interview station. However, the applicant will normally be seen by at least two clinicians or academic members of staff involved in teaching on the programme. Notes are not required to be kept for the Multiple Mini Interviews as applicants are assessed according to a formal and defined scoring system. This scoring system will not be provided to applicants.

7.6 If the interview is not part of the formal selection process and does not have a bearing on the decision to make an offer, the applicant will be informed that this is the case.

7.7 Interviews will be conducted in a manner that is fair, consistent and transparent. If necessary, special arrangements will be made to allow an applicant to attend an interview.

7.8 The University currently uses contextual data for the undergraduate MBChB programme in order to identify applicants from schools where GCSE and/or A level performance is below an identified threshold value. This is taken into consideration when considering their applications.

7.9 Undergraduate applicants from state schools and colleges in our Access to Birmingham (A2B) Scheme also supply additional contextual information in order to be considered eligible to take part in the Scheme and, where appropriate, secure an alternative offer. The requirements to be fulfilled to be considered for this Scheme include:

- no parental experience of higher education
- main income earners in the family are not in professional occupation
- household income is less than the threshold published from time to time
- home address is in an area of low levels of progression to higher education

Applicants being considered through the A2B Scheme are required to undertake a series of activities, including a work assignment, in order to qualify for an alternative offer (which

would typically be two grades below the standard offer for the course for which they have applied).

7.10 Home undergraduate applicants who have an exceptional academic profile and have A-level predictions of at least AAA (or equivalent), may be eligible to be considered under the University's Unconditional Offer scheme. Through this scheme, applicants who make the University of Birmingham their Firm choice will have their place confirmed unconditionally.

8. Investigation of complaints and requests for review of decisions

8.1 If an applicant believes that they have any grounds for complaint with regard to the process by which their application was considered or if they wish to ask for a review of the process which led to their application being unsuccessful, they should contact the Director of Admissions with full details of their complaint or an explanation of why they would like a review of the decision.

8.2 However, applicants should be aware that 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.

8.3 The Director of Admissions shall investigate the circumstances surrounding the request for an investigation of a complaint or a review of a decision in consultation with the relevant academic lead and/or with other appropriate persons.

8.4 When making a request for an investigation of a complaint or a review of a decision, the applicant must include the grounds for requesting the investigation or review (i.e. 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.

8.5 The University will consider requests for an investigation of a complaint or a review of a decision in a timely manner, with a view to providing a response within 10 working days of written request reaching the Director of Admissions. Where a response is not possible in that timeframe, the Director of Admissions will write to inform the applicant, giving reasons for the delay.

8.6 The outcome of the investigation or review will be sent in writing to the applicant at the correspondence address which has been provided. If an address is not provided with the written request, the address provided with the original application will be used.

8.7 If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation or review conducted by the Director of Admissions, they may referral of their case to the appropriate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (normally the PVC Education), who will conduct a further investigation. The applicant will again be required to submit their case in writing. This request will be considered in a timely manner, with a view to providing a response within 10 working days of the written request reaching the Pro-Vice-Chancellor. Where a response is not possible in that timeframe, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor will write to inform the applicant, giving reasons for the delay. The decision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall be final.

9. Collaborative programmes

9.1 The University is involved in a number of collaborative provision arrangements with other

organisations. Information concerning admission to these programmes, and other regulations, may be obtained from the relevant Programme Director of from the Collaborative Provision team in Registry.

9.2 The decision as to whether to admit a student to a programme that is part of a collaborative provision with another organisation shall normally rest with the university.

10. Students seeking to Transfer Registration from another Higher Education Institution within the United Kingdom

10.1 Students seeking to transfer their registration on a taught programme to the University of Birmingham from another higher education institution within the United Kingdom should apply for admission normally, requesting prior learning to be taken into account as under 6.28 above.

10.2 Students seeking to transfer their Registration on a research programme to the University of Birmingham from another Higher Education Institution within the United Kingdom must submit an application with references, supporting documents and their reason for requesting a transfer. Normally, at least one reference should be from the current supervisor(s) and should contain information about the applicant's progress to date. They must also provide, where appropriate, confirmation that funding from an external sponsor will be transferred should an offer be made by the University of Birmingham.

10.3 If the relevant School supports the application, the Head of School or nominee must:

- ensure that an appropriate supervisory team is available;
- be satisfied that the applicant has been progressing satisfactorily at their previous institution; and
- 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.

10.4 Once the recommendation to permit the transfer has been made by the Head of School or his or her nominee, Admissions will:

- check that regulations have been met regarding the required period of registration in order to obtain a University of Birmingham degree;
- check the student's qualifications in order to ensure that they meet the entry requirements for the University of Birmingham
- 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);
- seek assurance that the existing supervisory team and the previous institution are in agreement for a transfer to be made to this institution; and
- if appropriate, obtain confirmation from the external sponsor for the transfer of funding;

10.5 The formal offer of admission shall be issued to the applicant by the Admissions Office and shall include details as outlined in 6.14 above.