Postgraduate Admissions
A Guide for Selectors and School support staff.

Effective from 6 November 2015

Updated November 2015  (Caroline McLean and Amanda Tilley, Postgraduate Admissions Service, Marketing and Student Recruitment)

Originally Prepared by the Student Progress Service (Maggie Donnelly and Nicola Cooper-Harvey) October 2005.

Helpful Hint - to navigate around this document, use the Bookmarks facility.

See Webpage http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/pg-admissions/ for the following information:

- The Postgraduate Admissions Policy
- A set of screen prints for the Applicant portal (Application Form and Application Status)
- A set of screen prints for the Academic Selector portal

Postgraduate Applicant Guidance is available at -
http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply/guide/#gettingstarted

In addition for Instruction notes from the SAP training team on using the Selector portal
https://saptraining.ncl.ac.uk/myworkplace/myWorkplace_portal_website/website/xml/content/aff5b10b5/index.xml
- and reports
https://saptraining.ncl.ac.uk/myworkplace/myWorkplace_portal_website/website/xml/content/aeada4aba/index.xml
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1. **Introduction**

This guide is designed to supplement the day-to-day contacts between Academic Selectors and the Postgraduate Admissions Service and to summarise the key policies and procedures relevant to postgraduate admissions.

Postgraduate admissions encompass both applications for taught programmes as well as applications for research degree programmes. Applications for PGCE programmes are processed via a different operation system to other postgraduate programmes and is supported by the Undergraduate Admissions Team.

The guide has been prepared by the Student Progress Section. Please contact your Admissions Assistant in the PG Admissions Team at pgadmissions@ncl.ac.uk if you have a query on the information provided in this document.

2. **Postgraduate Admissions Policy, Aims and Objectives**

The principles underpinning the admission process are summarised in the University’s Admissions Policy – [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/pg-admissions/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/pg-admissions/)

In addition, there is further elaboration of admission requirements for research applications in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes - [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/)

Adherence to the principles identified in these documents is essential, as they ensure the University meets national standards for admission. On this matter, the University is subject to periodic monitoring by QAA, HEFCE and the research councils and failure to comply with standards can affect funding and also have an adverse impact on the University’s reputation.

The University is committed to ensuring a fair and transparent admissions process which ensures that suitably qualified applicants, with the potential to succeed, are admitted to its programmes of study. In so doing, the University also aspires to meet recruitment targets.

The achievement of these primary aims should also entail:

- Compliance with the principles identified in the University’s Admission Policy.
- Compliance with the principles identified in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes.
- Ensuring decisions are made on the basis of professional judgement of applicants’ individual academic achievement or relevant experience, ability and potential, taking into account all of the information presented in applications and applying established entry criteria in a consistent manner.

3. **Overview of the Postgraduate Admission process.**

3.1 **Applicant view.**

For the majority of applicants, the following is the main admission process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicant applies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University considers application (exceptionally there may be an interview).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer letter sent to applicant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant Accepts / Declines the offer or withholds their application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If any conditions are outstanding the applicant must ensure that these are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicant is sent a Confirmation of Place (COP) when an offer has been accepted and there are no outstanding conditions and, in the case of international applicants, the deposit or a sponsor letter has been supplied.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre-arrival and registration information is sent to applicant.

In addition:

Applicant can apply for University accommodation.
Applicant can apply to study the INTO pre-sessional English Language programme.
Applicant can apply for a University scholarship.
Applicant can arrange to attend the International Welcome.
School should correspond with applicant about an array of matters - e.g. module lists and timetable, induction arrangements, and any changes to the programme the applicant has applied to.

The main steps in the process for an applicant are as follows.

1. Apply on-line
2. Receive University decision
3. Where required, submit supplementary documents to meet University conditions
4. Accept or decline the offer
5. Pay deposit or supply Scholarship letter (where required)
6. Become Unconditional and be sent a COP.

3.2 University roles in the admission process.
Academic Selectors and the Postgraduate Admissions Service have primary responsibility for ensuring a fair and transparent admissions process.

The following diagram summarises the main division of roles between the Academic Selectors and the Postgraduate Admissions Service.
a) The main tasks for the Admission Assistant:

1. Receipt the application and verify the applicant number.
2. Verify key data items on the application – e.g. fee status, disability.
3. Verify evidence of academic qualifications and English Language competency.
4. If required, contact the applicant for further information.
5. Make initial decision on application
   (i.e. Admissions Assistant decision or refer to Academic Selector)
   ↓
6. If appropriate, receive Academic Selector decision.
7. Input University decision – Reject, Conditional Offer, Unconditional Offer.
8. Send the University decision to the applicant.
   ↓
9. Receive applicant reply – Accept, Decline or Withdraw.
10. Monitor when applicant meets conditions.
11. Issue COP to an unconditional applicant.
12. Issue CAS to an international applicant

In addition, the Admissions Assistant is responsible for:

1. Providing advice and guidance to applicants, Academic Selectors and school staff.
2. Responding to an array of applicant queries.
3. Ensuring that admission decisions are made in accordance with University policies and guidelines.
4. Reminding applicants and referees of the need to provide appropriate documents.
5. Maintaining an accurate electronic record of all documents associated with the application.

b) The main tasks for Academic Selectors / Schools:

1. Setting appropriate admission criteria for the Postgraduate Admissions Service and the Academic Selector to work with.
2. Making prompt decisions on applications that have been referred by the Admissions Assistant.

3. Sending applicants regular relevant (personalized) communications from the School, to aid conversion and support applicants to make an informed decision and prepare for their studies. In many cases an applicant has also accepted offers from other institutions.
4. Engaging in marketing and promotion strategies for the programme(s).

Partnership between Academic Selectors and the Admissions Assistant.
An effective working relationship between Academic Selectors and the Admissions Assistants is essential to the success of the postgraduate admission process.

Academic Selectors should ensure that they meet their Admissions Assistant(s) to discuss criteria and reach a mutual understanding of what they expect from each other. Changes to any criteria should be confirmed through the School Manager.
It is critical that the Academic Selector and the Admissions Assistants feel able to discuss issues that arise.

3.3 Targets.

There are two types of targets that are actively monitored as part of the postgraduate admission process.

a) Turn-around times.

The main target that will be measured is how long it takes for the applicant to be sent a decision. The University is committed to ensuring a significant proportion of decisions are made and communicated within 15 working days.

Turnaround times are reviewed on a regular basis - e.g. the average length of time that the Admissions Assistant takes to issue an offer following a decision from an Academic Selector, and the average length of time that Academic Selectors take to make decisions that have been referred to them.

The data for performance monitoring is largely derived from the date-stamping of actions in the SAP Campus Management system, e.g. the date that an application is received is automatically set, when the Admissions Assistant forwards an application to an Academic Selector the date is recorded, as is the date that the Academic Selector replies.

Various performance monitoring reports are available to Academic Selectors et al via the portal.

See also - putting an application 'on hold'. (See 7.2)

b) Admission Targets.

For the majority of programmes there is a need to maximize recruitment in order to meet registration targets for home and overseas applicants. The achievement of these targets is critical to the University’s financial success.

PG Admissions targets are discussed with Schools early in the admissions cycle prior to approval by the faculties in January each year. All staff involved in postgraduate admissions should make themselves aware of the targets relating to their programme / School / Faculty.

In seeking to meet overall recruitment targets, there is a need to understand the various ratios between

| APPLICATIONS : OFFERS : ACCEPTANCES : REGISTRATIONS |

There is significant variation in the ratios between programmes and applicant types. The ratios are also dynamic and are influenced by national and international factors.

Conversion rates from previous years are available using the AS06 Business Warehouse (BW) report and provide a useful basis from which to determine how recruitment is progressing in the current cycle.

4. The University’s IT systems.

The University’s IT systems to support postgraduate admissions are based on the several components of the SAP R3 enterprise-wide system.

4.1 Overview.

The SAP postgraduate admissions process uses:

- The on-line application form via the applicant portal. The portal does not fully connect to Campus Management until an applicant submits a form - at this point a notification is created. After an applicant has submitted an application, information that s/he sees about the status of
the application on the portal is real-time.

- The SAP Campus Management Workflow. A notification is a unique workflow strand which enables decisions and tracking data to be entered when Admissions Assistants complete tasks in the workflow area of Campus Management. Workflow also enables emails to be generated automatically to applicants.

- The SAP Campus Management Student File and Student Master Data. When the notification is created it generates student master data (e.g. addresses, date of birth) and workflow actions generate postgraduate decision and tracking data. Campus Management users have a user-friendly view of postgraduate applications from the Student File.

- The Document Archive. Any document that is scanned is linked to a Campus Management notification by an index - the document itself is permanently stored on an archive server. This enables the same document to be ‘tied to’ several notifications - e.g. if an applicant has applied for 3 programmes and then submits an IELTS certificate, the IELTS certificate is scanned and stored only once but is linked to all 3 notifications.

- The Academic Selector portal. When Academic Selectors are sent an application to consider, they are directed to the inbox on their portal. From here they can open a particular notification record - this is a real-time view of that record, including the application form and documents. This is a part of the Campus Management Workflow system, so there is automatic tracking data generated by Academic Selector decisions.

- A collection of Business Warehouse (BW) reports. Academic Selectors, School support staff and others have access to a number of BW reports - i.e. data extracted overnight from the Campus Management system for statistical and list reports. It is important to remember that no BW report is real-time, as each is based on data extracted the previous night.

- The SAP Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The Admissions Team and others (e.g. the Interaction Team, International Recruitment and Student Recruitment Office) have access to the SAP CRM system. This is a tool which enables the University to correspond easily, generally with email responses to web enquiries from applicants.

As an applicant can submit multiple applications, in addition to their applicant number, each application they submit for a given academic year and/or programme has a unique notification number - and every notification is counted as an application in BW data/statistics.

A. Imagine, if an applicant applies only for one programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Number</th>
<th>Programme Code</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Notification Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

B. Imagine, if an applicant applies for two programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Number</th>
<th>Programme Code</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Notification Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>160913456</td>
<td>8050F</td>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>40000507896</td>
<td>A unique set of tracking dates and decisions for 40000507896 / 8050F / 2016/17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160913456</td>
<td>5732F</td>
<td>2016/17</td>
<td>40000507898</td>
<td>A unique set of tracking dates and decisions for 40000507898 / 5732F / 2016/17.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Imagine, if an applicant applies for one programme but defers their acceptance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant Number</th>
<th>Programme Code</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Notification Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
4.2 Portal view for applicants.

Applicants apply on-line at www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply

Applicants self-register for the portal, then complete the on-line postgraduate application form in their own time - over several weeks if required. The application is only actioned by the University after an applicant has submitted an application form - and a notification has been generated in Workflow.

Once an application has been submitted, applicants are able to log in to their portal to see the status of their application and to upload documents- this is a real-time presentation of data in Campus Management.

Applicants also use the portal to complete actions - e.g. to upload documents, to accept an offer, to decline an offer or to withdraw their application. When an applicant uses the portal to complete these actions they receive email acknowledgements and updates are sent to the Workflow inbox notifying PG Admissions.

Note - potential applicants, who have registered for the portal but who have not submitted an application after two weeks and six weeks will be sent an automatic reminder.

4.3 Portal view for Academic Selectors.

The Selector portal is available on-line at https://myworkplace.ncl.ac.uk/irj/portal

Academic Selectors must be set up to use the portal. This is arranged via the NUIT Reception (see 13.7 below)

An email is sent to an Academic Selector to advise them that there is an application in their portal inbox. Via the portal, Selectors can see:

- An inbox of current applications referred to them (the application disappears from the Selector in-box when decisions are made or action taken, but remains available in the BW reports.).
- The application form and other documents associated with each applicant/notification.
- A set of statistical summary Business Warehouse reports.
- A set of list Business Warehouse reports, providing lists of all applicants with applications for their programme, including drill down to see conditions, application form, processing dates and other information.

Academic Selectors use the portal to make a decision on each application referred to them by the Admissions Assistant - i.e.

- to accept the applicant with the same conditions suggested by the Admissions Assistant,
- to accept the applicant with alternate decisions and/or conditions, or to make any other comments
- to reject the applicant
- to forward an application to another Academic Selector.
- to return the application with no decision but with comments to request further information.
- to forward a link to the application to one or more colleagues via email.

These actions take the form of messages to the Admissions Assistant via Workflow - Academic
Selector decisions do not feed directly into Campus Management or to the applicant view on the portal. Rather, workflow inbox notices are generated to advise Admissions Assistants of Academic Selector decisions.

**NB** School support staff can be set-up as substitutes for Academic Selectors, which means they can view any items in the inbox of each Academic Selector in their School. They can, if necessary, action items in an Academic Selector’s inbox, e.g. if the Selector is unexpectedly away from work, they can forward the item to another Academic Selector.

An overview of the Academic Selector portal with relevant screen-prints is available at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/academic_ptl_screens3.ppt

### 4.4 What if ........

**a)** An applicant applies for more than one programme?

There is no limit on the number of applications an individual applicant can make - s/he can apply for several programmes in one year or the same programme in subsequent academic years. The only technical restriction is that an applicant may not apply for the same programme (i.e. programme code) in the same academic year.

If an applicant does apply for more than one programme, each application (notification) is handled individually - i.e. a decision is required for each application. This means that the applicant can receive offers for more than one programmes.

When an applicant sends documents to Postgraduate Admissions, the Admissions Assistant will link the document to each application (notification) that the applicant has made.

**b)** The portal / on-line application form is not available?

If for any reason the portal is not available, an alternative PDF form is presented to applicants. Applicants can complete this electronically and email it to the University (to pgadmissions@ncl.ac.uk).

The PDF version of the form is always available to applicants, although the main on-line form is the preferred method.

**c)** An applicant uses the alternative PDF form?

The Admissions Assistants will input key data items into the online Application Portal - e.g. name, address, date of birth. The PDF application form will be attached to the application record and available to Academic Selectors to view via their portal.

### 5. The Application Form and other documents.

#### 5.1 Document Types.

Via their portal, Academic Selectors can see the following document types associated with an applicant / application. These appear as links below the application form.

- **Application Form**: If an application is made on paper, the Postgraduate Admissions Team will scan a copy of the paper application.
- **ATAS Approval**: Used for the ATAS approval confirmation document.
- **Certificate**: This is normally used to indicate a copy of a degree certificate or
another award.

**Concession**
Concessional approval received from the PG Dean.

**Correspondence**
Used to attach any written correspondence between the University and applicant that has an impact upon the assessment of the application, e.g. Email correspondence providing additional info.

**CV**
This is normally used to indicate a copy of a CV (curriculum vitae) or resume.

**Fee Assessment**
Fees assessment decision with Fees Assessment Form and any associated documentary evidence.

**Language Qualification**
This is normally used to indicate a copy of an English Language test certificate, such as the IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge or Pearsons tests.

**Manual Letter**
Manual Offer letter produced in word by the Admissions Assistant.

**Open Reference**
This is normally used to indicate a copy of a reference submitted by the applicant with their application form.

**Other**
This is normally used to indicate a miscellaneous document from the applicant.

**Personal Statement**
This indicates a personal statement document has been provided rather than completing the personal statement section of the online application form.

**Passport or Identity Document**
This is normally a copy of the photo page of the applicants passport

**Portfolio**
This is normally used to indicate a copy of evidence submitted by the applicant as evidence of their subject-specific skills – e.g. design drawings

**Reference received**
This is normally used to indicate a copy of a reference received directly from the referee. This is confidential and cannot be seen by the applicant.

**Reject Letter**
Letter sent to an unsuccessful applicant.

**Research Proposal**
For an applicant applying for a research degree where a research proposal is required.

**Scholarship Letter**
For a formal letter of sponsorship/scholarship provided by the applicant e.g. to waive the deposit payment.

**Transcript**
This is normally used to indicate a copy of a transcript of marks. (Overseas candidates are asked to include copies of the entire transcript including explanations of the marks schemes used etc.)

**Translated Certificate**
This is normally used to indicate a certified translation in English of a degree certificate or another award.

**Translated Transcript**
This is normally used to indicate a certified translation in English of a transcript of marks.

In addition, the following further document types are visible to applicants and Academic Selectors.

**Uni Gen Letter – COP**
This is a copy of the formal Confirmation of a Place of Study (COP) document issued by the University to the applicant.

**Uni Gen Letter – CAS**
This is a copy of the formal Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) document issued by the University to the applicant for their Tier 4 visa application.

**Uni Gen Letter – Offer**
This is a copy of the formal offer letter issued by the University to the applicant.
University Documents (Reference/Rej.)

This includes a copy of the reference request sent to the referees nominated on the application form and/or a copy of the rejection letter sent to the applicant by email.

Academic selectors will need to ensure that they have viewers (e.g. Adobe Acrobat Reader) to enable them to read common file formats. This has been installed on all Common Desktop PCs, but Academic Selectors viewing applications from home, or using MAC computers will need to logon to the portal via RAS to ensure they have the correct viewer to see documents.

5.2 Verified documents.

In many instances, regardless of the documents attached to an initial application, an offer to an applicant may be conditional upon receipt of certified evidence of their qualifications or English Language competence. This means that the applicant is required to upload these documents to their Applicant Portal for verification.

The Admissions Assistants can verify IELTS, Pearsons and TOEFL online. Dealing with several thousands of such documents per year enables Postgraduate Admissions Team staff to acquire some expertise in assessing authenticity.

5.3 Other notes about documents.

Once scanned, any paper documents are stored in date order and will be destroyed after a period of one year. The SAP / portal set of documents is therefore the primary record for all applicants.

The Admissions Team seek to upload the majority of documents. Only in exceptional circumstances will documents containing extremely personal information, e.g. confidential notes about criminal convictions, be held centrally and not attached to the record.

Very occasionally the Admissions Team receive documents when no application has been submitted. Ordinarily, an application is received after a number of weeks. These documents will be held electronically – and if no applicant can be identified that matches the documents, the electronic documents will be ‘parked’. Periodically, the Admissions Team review these ‘parked’ documents, and attach them to applications if possible.

6. Admission criteria.

6.1 University regulations

The following points summarize the University’s requirements with regard to admission to postgraduate programmes.

- It is required that entrants to postgraduate programmes are ‘a graduate of this or another approved University or degree-awarding body or holds other qualifications approved by the relevant dean of postgraduate studies’. (See University Regulations: Postgraduate Taught Progress Regulations, regulation C.5.; and Research Degree Programme Regulations, regulation B.E.; and Doctor of Philosophy Progress Regulations, regulation B.4.; and Master of Philosophy Progress Regulations, regulation B.3.). [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/docs/)

- Within the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes ([http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/PGR/)) this if further specified as: ‘normally an Upper Second Class Honours degree in a relevant subject or a relevant Master’s degree.’

- Applicants whose first language is not English are required to provide a recognised English language test or qualification. There are some exemptions from this requirement for nationals of certain countries or applicants who have completed studies in certain English speaking countries. Refer to the University’s English
Language Policy: [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/programmes/requirements.htm](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/programmes/requirements.htm)

- Under the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes,
  'All applicants are required to submit the names of two recent academic referees or one academic and a professional employer who can comment knowledgeably upon their suitability for research in the relevant field'.

(Other University good practice relating to the recruitment and selection of research students are detailed in the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes)

### 6.2 Selection criteria

Selection decisions must be based on objective criteria.

All Academic Selectors for masters’ programmes are asked to prepare/review selection criteria. Where appropriate, this is to enable Admissions Assistants make decisions on behalf of Academic Selectors. Selection criteria should also be used to inform decisions taken by Academic Selectors.

Admissions Assistants and Academic Selectors must familiarize themselves with the criteria before they make a decision on an application.

### 6.3 The criteria database

The selection criteria are stored in a database - [https://internal.ncl.ac.uk/selectors/pgcourses.php](https://internal.ncl.ac.uk/selectors/pgcourses.php).

This can be viewed by internal users of the University’s intranet - the International Recruitment Team, Academic Selectors, et al. This is intended only as an internal reference file - but all Academic Selectors should be aware that the data could be subject to a Freedom of Information request.

The Admissions Assistant and the Academic Selector should discuss criteria, to ensure that they both understand the course’s requirements. It is important that the Admissions Assistant and the Academic Selector periodically review their understanding of the selection criteria, perhaps based around discussions of borderline cases, and amend/expand the criteria as necessary. There is a clear need for the Admissions Assistant and the Academic Selector to develop an effective working relationship.

Academic Selectors own the selection criteria, but it is the responsibility of the Admissions Assistants to update the criteria database.

It should be noted that changes to academic entry requirements should be approved by the relevant Board of Studies and changes to English language entry requirements require Faculty approval. The Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (FLTSEC) Graduate School Committee (GSC) periodically reviews entry requirements for programmes within the Faculty.

The Admissions Assistant must confirm any changes with the School Manager before updating the criteria database.

Within the criteria database, it is detailed whether the Postgraduate Admissions Team’s Admissions Assistants have authority to make selection decisions on behalf of Academic Selectors for masters’ programmes. Postgraduate Admissions Team decision-making authority is one the following options.

1. "All decisions" - Full decision-making delegated to the Postgraduate Admissions Team. That is, the Admissions Assistant can make both offer and reject decisions.

2. "Offer only" - Decision-making for offers only is delegated to the Postgraduate Admissions Team. That is, the Admissions Assistant can make offer decisions, but all possible reject decisions need to be referred to the Academic Selector.

3. "No decisions" - No decision-making delegated to Postgraduate Admissions. That is, the Admissions Assistant can make no reject or offer decisions, and all applications need to be forwarded to the Academic Selector.

4. "Reject only" - Reject only decision-making delegated to the Postgraduate Admissions Team. That is, the Admissions Assistant can make only rejection decisions - generally when the
applicants fail to demonstrate minimum entrance requirements for a highly competitive programme - and all other applications need to be forwarded to the Academic Selector.

If there are exceptional reasons why a taught programme should not be considered for Postgraduate Admissions Team decision-making, the Academic Selector should make a case to the Dean. The Dean must approve any rationale to exempt a programme from Postgraduate Admissions Team decision-making.

The criteria database is also used to record important details about research programmes – e.g.

- Second approval selector information,
- which staff are approved to accept a research applicant,
- ATAS requirements.

See below.

6.4 Country Database

International Recruitment Team colleagues maintain a database of information for the main countries that we recruit from [https://internal.ncl.ac.uk/international/resources/engagement/qualifications/](https://internal.ncl.ac.uk/international/resources/engagement/qualifications/). The database is intended to provide general information about the qualifications system in each country and to provide affirmative lists, i.e. lists of institutions deemed by the International Recruitment Team to offer undergraduate degrees that are equivalent to UK degrees.

International Recruitment Team colleagues are happy to be consulted on specific queries about countries – in the first instance you should contact the member of staff with responsibility for a particular country/region.

6.5 Language information.

The University’s policy on valid English Language qualifications is available at: [http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/programmes/requirements.htm](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/programmes/requirements.htm)

The policy is briefly as follows:

In general, students who have not achieved IELTS 6.5 are likely to be at risk of failing their academic programme because of inadequate English. Students of English Language, Literature and Linguistics, Speech, Law and Medicine may require at least IELTS 7.0. Students with less than IELTS 5.5 overall or in any sub-skill cannot be admitted.

INTO Newcastle colleagues are happy to be consulted on specific queries about English Language.

6.6 Other sources of help and guidance.

a) NARIC

The UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) provides information about the education systems in individual countries and equates school and higher education qualifications with UK equivalents. However, it is no longer regarded as up-to-date for many countries, so the Country Database should be used where possible. If the International Recruitment Team have not prepared information for a particular country, NARIC can be used as a guide.

If you wish to become a user of this system, you will need to contact Caroline McLean at Caroline.McLean@ncl.ac.uk (or on extension 83759).

b) Other

See also – information about the Disability Service.
7. Initial Postgraduate Admissions Team Decisions / Actions.

7.1 Key non-academic information about applicants.

When an Admissions Assistant receives a new application, they must review the application. Key items considered at this early stage are the following.

a) Fee status.

Fee status rules are set by the Home Office and DfE - and each institution is duty-bound to follow the rules, although each institution can reach a different decision on some cases. The need for consistency, within the University, in fee status decisions cannot be over-emphasized. The rules are complicated and the fees themselves usually change every year. Detailed instructions are issued as changes occur. Responsibility for determining fee status resides with the Postgraduate Admissions Team and Academic Selectors must never seek to give applicants advice about fee status.

If there is any doubt about the fee status, in the first instance, the applicant will be asked to complete a detailed fee questionnaire.

b) Criminal convictions.

On the application form an applicant is asked to declare relevant criminal convictions. See the University’s Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/PGCriminalConvictions.pdf

Applications declaring relevant criminal convictions shall be forwarded to Academic selectors in the usual way for an academic decision, with a request not to make contact with the applicant at this stage and a reminder that the conviction is to have no bearing on the admissions selector’s academic decision.

If an admissions selector decides to reject an applicant on academic grounds, no further action in respect of the criminal conviction shall be taken and the reject decision shall be processed in the usual way.

If an admissions selector decides that an offer should be made on academic grounds or wishes to interview an applicant in order to make the academic decision, the application will then be placed on hold and further information will be requested from the applicant following the University’s Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure.

If, following the conclusion of the procedure, the outcome is that the applicant should be rejected on the ground of the criminal conviction, the Senior Postgraduate Admissions Manager will write to inform the applicant of the decision.

If the applicant is to be made an offer, the Head of School will be asked to decide whether anyone else within the School needs to be informed about the conviction. The Senior Postgraduate Admissions Manager will let the applicant know who else is to be informed.

c) Non Standard Qualifications

If an applicant does not meet the standard entry requirements, the Admissions Assistant must check the full application in particular the personal statement and any references for any information/evidence that may support an Admissions Concession for a non-standard offer.

For example work experience, voluntary work, extenuating personal circumstances.

Such cases must be referred to the Academic Selector for their decision and are referred to the PG Dean for a concession if the applicant does not hold a Bachelor degree or recognised equivalent. See below
d) Exchange students.

An exchange programme is a recognized agreement with a partner institution in another country, and it generally means that the student intends to study at Newcastle for one semester or one year. Ordinarily there is no fee paid by the student to Newcastle. A list of partner institutions is available at: https://internal.ncl.ac.uk/international/partnerships/agreements.htm

The Postgraduate Admissions Service only supports the processing of incoming non-EU exchange applicants, these are administered in the same way as any other application.

Erasmus EU exchange applications are processed by the Erasmus School co-ordinators and the Mobility Team in the Student Wellbeing Service: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/exchange/

The current list of exchange programmes is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in AFRD</td>
<td>2010E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in BIOL</td>
<td>2020E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in CEAM</td>
<td>2030E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in CIVG</td>
<td>2040E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in COMP</td>
<td>2050E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in EECE</td>
<td>2060E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in NAST</td>
<td>2070E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in MATH</td>
<td>2080E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in MECH</td>
<td>2090E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in CHEM</td>
<td>2100E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SAPL</td>
<td>2160E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SACS</td>
<td>2170E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in ECLS</td>
<td>2180E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SELS</td>
<td>2190E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SSCI</td>
<td>2200E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SHIS</td>
<td>2210E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SMLS</td>
<td>2220E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SLAW</td>
<td>2230E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in NUBS</td>
<td>2240E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in SCMS</td>
<td>2330E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in BMS</td>
<td>2310E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Exchange Students in PSYC</td>
<td>2290E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why are exchange students on different programme codes?

- HESA and HEFCE require the University to report on exchange students - and the funding regime for exchange students is different to non-exchange students.
- As exchange students are only here for a short period they need to be on a separate programme code so that they do not adversely affect performance statistics for the main programme.
- Identifying the exchange student separately will reduce any issues at registration with regard to fee payment etc

e) Occasional students.

An occasional programme is an individual non-credit bearing study - i.e. the student is not studying a full programme and may only be doing one or two modules - and may or may not take assessments for those modules. Ordinarily, occasional students need to be charged fees as they are rarely part of a recognized exchange programme. An occasional student must be a registered student at their
home higher education institution.  Care should be taken to ensure that occasional students are not confused with visiting/guest members of staff. The definition of guest and visiting members of staff is available on the HR website at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/hr/recruitment/visiting.php

The current list of occasional programmes is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in AFRD</td>
<td>25100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in BIOL</td>
<td>25200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in CEAM</td>
<td>25300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in CIVG</td>
<td>25400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in COMP</td>
<td>25500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in EECE</td>
<td>25600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in MAST</td>
<td>25700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in MATH</td>
<td>25800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in MECH</td>
<td>25900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in CHEM</td>
<td>26000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SAPL</td>
<td>26100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SACS</td>
<td>26200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in ECLS</td>
<td>26300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SELS</td>
<td>26400</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SSCI</td>
<td>26500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SHIS</td>
<td>26600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SMLS</td>
<td>26700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SLAW</td>
<td>26800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in NUBS</td>
<td>26900</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in NMS</td>
<td>27000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in CALS</td>
<td>27100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SCMS</td>
<td>27200</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in DENT</td>
<td>27300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SME</td>
<td>27400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SNIP</td>
<td>27500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in IHS</td>
<td>27600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SARS</td>
<td>27700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in ICMB</td>
<td>27800</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in IAH</td>
<td>27900</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in IHG</td>
<td>28000</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in PSYC</td>
<td>28100</td>
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<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in SFAC</td>
<td>28200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in INE</td>
<td>28300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in NICR</td>
<td>28400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in FMS</td>
<td>28500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in ICM</td>
<td>28600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in HESSO</td>
<td>28700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Occasional Students in NIRS</td>
<td>28800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why are occasional students on different programme codes?

- HESA and HEFCE require the University to report on non-credit bearing students - and the funding regime for these students is different to other students.
- As occasional students are only here for a short period they need to be on a separate programme code so that they do not adversely affect performance statistics for the main programme.
- Identifying the occasional student separately will reduce any issues at registration.
Occasional applications are processed by the Academic Selector and the Postgraduate Admissions Team in the same way as any other application.

f) Disability.

The primary decision to be made on any applicant is whether they are able to meet the academic requirements of the programme. This applies equally to disabled applicants as to any other. In the vast majority of cases a disability presented by the applicant does not affect their ability to study at the University. However, in some areas and for some disabilities there is a need to consider carefully whether the adjustment an applicant will need can be accommodated. In the event of a disability being identified from the application form, the University’s procedure should be implemented.

In summary: **where there is a declared disability other than dyslexia, Disability Support should be contacted BEFORE** either:

- The Admissions Assistant makes a selection decision, or
- The Admissions Assistant forwards the application to an Academic Selector. (If the application is forwarded to an Academic Selector, the Admissions Assistant will highlight the disability in the forwarding message).

The Academic Selector must consider the advice from Disability Support carefully, to check whether any adjustments need to be made to accommodate the applicant’s needs. If necessary a case conference can be called.

Disability Support offers advice and support to all staff involved in recruitment and selection. The full policy and useful resources is available at:

http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/assets/documents/AdmissionsPolicyandprocedure2010-2011.pdf

Attention is particularly drawn to the normal adjustments that may be made to accommodate a student’s needs.

g) ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme)

The Government (FCO) requires students applying for undergraduate and postgraduate study in certain subject areas to apply for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate before they can study in the UK. This can include both taught and research postgraduate courses, and predominantly in the science, engineering and medical subject areas. [https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/](https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/)

If an applicant requires ATAS, this will be stated on their offer letter. ATAS is only valid for 6 months from issue and can take up to 20 working days to obtain. The Degree Programme Director is responsible for providing the Postgraduate Admissions Team with accurate text and module list about their taught programme for applicants to use in ATAS applications. Research supervisors are responsible for providing the Postgraduate Admissions Team with an approved summary of the applicant’s research project, to be used in the ATAS application.

FCO will send a copy of the ATAS certificate to the University and to the applicant.

In addition, the following points are relevant to administering arrangements for applicants requiring ATAS.

1. Where required, ATAS is included as a condition of the applicant’s offer.

2. The Postgraduate Admissions Assistant will send the applicant information about how to apply; and the text/module list about their taught programme or an approved research project summary for a research programme. The applicant MUST use the same text provided by Postgraduate Admissions in their ATAS application.
3. The CAS will only be issued when all conditions have been met, including a valid ATAS certificate and payment of the deposit (or proof of sponsorship)

7.2 Request more information - put the application on hold.

The Postgraduate Admissions Team has the ability to put an application ‘on hold’. The following are examples of circumstances when this may happen.

- A declared relevant criminal conviction. See above.
- A disability other than dyslexia where Disability Support advice is sought. See above.
- The applicant has not provided sufficient detail on their application form or provided copies of their academic transcripts – to enable a decision to be made about suitability for study at the University.
- The Academic Selector / School routinely require that applicants are asked further questions before their application is considered.
- A request for the applicant to provide a portfolio of evidence.
- The course has a closing date before which applications are not considered.

(The latter requirements need to be specified by the Academic Selector and recorded in the criteria database.)

If an application is put ‘on hold’, the period of time ‘on hold’ is excluded from performance statistics.

The Postgraduate Admissions Team will:

1. Email the applicant if necessary to request further information/documents, providing a deadline by which to respond (normally within 4 weeks). (NB - by formal letter for criminal convictions)
2. Ensure that the ad hoc communication to/from applicants is stored on the CM record.
3. Periodically review the list of applicants ‘on hold’ and, where appropriate, remind applicants that they need to provide further information, or reject the application if the applicant has not responded.

8. Academic Selector decisions.

8.1 Decision options.

PG Admissions Assistants will forward an application to an Academic Selector as required. Generally, this will include a note about possible conditions and/or a comment about the application.

Academic Selectors will receive an email to advise them when a decision is required on an application. The email will be to the normal @ncl.ac.uk email and will direct the Academic Selector to the portal at https://myworkplace.ncl.ac.uk/irj/portal

Having received a notification/application, the Academic Selection must do one of the following.

1. Accept the application (Accept button). NB - this action means acceptance of any provisional conditions. This action sends a message to the Postgraduate Admissions workflow inbox.
2. Accept the application with some comments on conditions, or supervisor/ fee band etc (Accept with Comments button). This action sends a message to the Postgraduate Admissions workflow inbox. This could also be used to send a message back to the Postgraduate Admissions Team - e.g. request concession, put application on hold while requesting more information etc.
3. Return the application to the Postgraduate Admissions Team with no decision, but with comments
requesting further information.

4. Reject the application (Reject button). This action sends a message to the Postgraduate Admissions workflow inbox.

5. Forward to another Academic Selector with a comment (Forward button). This sends an email to the second Academic Selector, similar to that received by the original Academic Selector. (This can also be used for Admission Concession requests to the Postgraduate Dean).

6. Select to send emails with links to the application to multiple colleagues (for example to consult on a PGR application with a number of potential academic supervisors). This option means that the application remains in the Academic selector’s PG portal inbox.

6. For research programmes, the second/third Selector may or may not send the application back to the Director of Postgraduate Studies or directly back to the Postgraduate Admissions Team, in accordance with School procedures.

- The training guide for using the Selector portal is available - https://saptraining.ncl.ac.uk/myworkplace/myWorkplace_portal_website/website/xml/content/af5b10b5/index.xml

8.2 If you do not make a decision.
Mechanisms for (a) escalating decision-making and (b) sending automatic 'keep-warm' messages to the applicant are summarized as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PGT Applicant</th>
<th>PGR Applicant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 7 days:</strong></td>
<td><strong>After 14 days:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reminder email to Academic Selector</td>
<td>• Reminder email to Academic Selector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep warm message to Applicant.</td>
<td>• Keep warm message to Applicant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 21 days:</strong></td>
<td><strong>After 28 days:</strong></td>
<td><strong>After 35 days:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As 7 days</td>
<td>• As 14 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 28 days:</strong></td>
<td><strong>After 35 days:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Application returned to Postgraduate Admissions Team.</td>
<td>• Application returned to Postgraduate Admissions Team.</td>
<td>• Keep warm message to Applicant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Keep warm message to Applicant.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The University can only make 3 decisions on any application:

- Rejection.
- Conditional Offer.
- Unconditional Offer.

9.1 Rejection.

a) Reasons for rejection.
If an applicant is not to be offered a place for the programme/year to which they applied, then they are rejected. Sometimes, academic colleagues refer to this as withdrawing an application or deferring
an application, but the result is the same - an unsuccessful application. Whenever a rejection is recorded, we must also record a reason for rejection. Reasons for rejection are:

1. Unrecognized University
2. Not suitably qualified – poor degree
3. Reference/s unsatisfactory
4. Poorly completed application form
5. Candidate appointable, but place offered to a stronger candidate
6. Research candidates only: Project not available in area of interest
7. Inadequate standard of English
8. Performed poorly at interview
9. Research candidates only: No-one available to supervise project
10. Candidate appointable, but place offered to a stronger candidate
11. Other
12. Change course offer
13. Change year of offer
14. Reject offer INTO Grad Dip – where a student is not eligible for direct entry to the PG Programme but can gain entry via the Graduate Diploma.

b) Rejection documents.

Occasionally, Admissions Assistants can customise the standard reject letter. We do not routinely advise the applicant of the rejection reason, unless the applicant specifically requests the information. One ‘standard’ adjustment to the reject letter relates to suggesting an alternative programme that the applicant is qualified for.

When the Postgraduate Admissions Team process a rejection, ordinarily:

- The applicant is sent a brief email with a letter attached.
- The applicant can see a note of their status on the portal (but no reason).
- An electronic copy of the reject letter is attached to the application record.

c) Change course offer.

When, an applicant is rejected for one programme, it may be possible for them to be offered a place on another programme (including the diploma course of a Masters, or an MPhil rather than PhD). This is referred to as a change course offer. Generally this happens when the original course is full, or the applicant is not sufficiently qualified for the original course. When this happens the Admissions Assistant will do the following.

- Record a rejection decision and enter the reject reason ‘Change course offer’ for the initial application;
- Send the reject letter via email - customising to advise that the original application is unsuccessful but they are being considered for an alternative course.
- Add a new system record for the new programme.
- Produce an offer for new application.

d) Change year of offer.

On occasion, an application is unsuccessful for the year for which they applied (for instance, they applied after the closing date or too close to the start of term) so is considered by the University for the next. When this happens the Admissions Assistant will do the following.
- Verify that a deferral is possible.
- Record a rejection decision and enter the reject reason 'Change year of offer' for the initial application;
- Send the reject letter/email - customising to advise that the original application is unsuccessful but they are being considered for the following year of entry.
- Add a new system record for the programme for the new academic year.
- Produce an offer for deferred application, this may change to a conditional offer e.g. on a valid English Language certificate, ATAS clearance.

9.2 Conditional Offers.

a) Conditions

The most common decision is a conditional offer - i.e. the applicant is able to study at the University provided that they meet certain requirements - generally an English Language standard or a required mark in a first degree. Often this is because applicants are still studying elsewhere. The conditions are generally set with reference to the University and programme criteria.

Conditions are recorded on the system by using a brief code – but the full text is displayed on offer letters to applicants and on the applicant portal. For the latest version of the condition list refer to: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/ConditionsText.pdf

It must be remembered:
- That the full text associated with each condition is limited to 255 characters.
- That any change to the text would affect all records for whom the code was previously used.

Exceptionally, a free text (non-standard) condition can be added to a particular applicant’s offer letter. If the text is frequently required a request should be made to have the text added as a coded condition, in order to aid future reporting as well as reduce the opportunities for data input error.

b) How to set conditions.

The steps involved in this process are summarized in the following diagram.
c) What if you do not agree with standard conditions?

It is possible for an Academic Selector to seek an Admission Concession from the Dean if they have good reason why they think the University standard conditions should not apply to a particular applicant. For example, relevant work experience, ability, potential and exceptional individual circumstances.

Arrangements for seeking and approving concessions vary by Faculty, but generally there is a requirement for the Academic Selector to give a brief rationale/statement of support for the request. There should be no assumption that a concession is automatic - Academic Selectors should be able to assure the Dean and others that the applicant is qualified for the programme and will be able to succeed. It is unacceptable for unqualified applicants with a poor chance of success to be admitted. Where possible, the concession request should be forwarded to the Dean using the inbox forward option.

d) Information for research applicants

In addition, before an offer is sent to a research applicant, the Academic Selector must provide information on the following.

- The name of the main supervisor.
- The fee band (i.e. if the fee band is likely to be non-standard).
- Title of Research
- HESA subject area of study.
- For ATAS subjects - agreed project summary text to be used in the ATAS application.

These items of information are essential as they affect the offer letter.
e) **Offer letter.**

Admissions Assistants normally generate the offer letter automatically from the Campus Management system. This is programmed to apply ‘standard’ customisation of the letter depending on:

- Whether the text relates to a UK or overseas applicant.
- Whether the offer is conditional or unconditional.
- What, if any, conditions have been set for the applicant.
- The tuition fee for the programme.
- Whether the text relating to the alumni discount should be included.
- Whether a NUIPS scholarship offer is to be made.

The letter is generated on screen and the Admissions Assistant must check the letter. When the Admissions Assistant indicates that the offer letter is correct it is automatically emailed to the applicant in PDF form and appears in the applicant portal. The offer letter is a contract, so any errors in this (e.g. the fee) should be honoured by the University.

Exceptionally, and generally only where there is something unique about the programme or applicant status, an Admissions Assistant can generate an offer letter manually - i.e. using Word. However, this is discouraged as it is very time consuming and errors can occur.

f) **Requesting references.**

**Responsibility for requesting references resides with the Postgraduate Admissions Team.**

When a reference is set as a condition and an offer letter generated, the Admissions Assistant will immediately send a request for a reference directly to the referee(s) with a template reference form.

For some programmes references may be requested prior to a decision being made on the application. Where this is required it should be detailed in the programme selection criteria.

Note that for taught programmes the general requirement is for one reference only but Schools can decide not to request any references. For research programmes the compulsory requirement is for two references. If an applicant submitted a satisfactory open reference with their application, this should be accepted if possible.

9.3 **Information sent to offer holders**

The CRM Marketing Team co-ordinates a range of core communications emails to offer holders through the Hobsons EMT connect system:

- 4 days after they received their offer
- 30 days after their offer – if they have not yet accepted the offer
- Information on applying for Accommodation – sent in March
- Pre-arrival information
- A chase up reminder to applicants that still have outstanding conditions to meet – sent in July
- UKVI Visa advice

In addition, school, subject and/or programme specific information is sent out by Schools. See below
Registration instructions are prepared by the Student Progress Service. A bulk email shot is sent to all students holding a UF (unconditional offer, firmly accepted) place at the end of July. After this date registration emails are issued on a rolling basis as applicants become unconditional, firmly accepted. This provides students with the details required to access their new university email account where they will receive a further email with an S3P login and password with instructions on completing their online registration in S3P.

9.4 Unconditional Offers.
Unconditional offers are very similar to conditional offers, except that they do not include any conditions. They are prepared, checked and dispatched, as above.

9.5 Research applicants receiving a stipend.
Where an applicant is to receive a stipend, this must be formally documented as part of the admission process. Normally the applicants receive a supplement to the offer letter and are asked to sign an IPR release. To make sure that this process is put in place, Schools should ensure that a Post Graduate, Collaborative Training Account & CASE Studentship Form is completed and sent to the Research Student Support Team or FMS Graduate School as soon as it is known which applicant is to receive funding.


10. Applicant Decisions.
Having received an offer from the University, applicants can make 2 responses.
- They can Accept the offer.
- They can Decline the offer.

Also, they can Withdraw their application. This is generally done before an offer is made - when an offer is made this is recorded as a Decline.

10.1 Acceptances
Having received an offer of a place, applicants can accept that offer:
- By pressing the Accept option on their portal.
- By signing the reply page on their offer letter and scanning and emailing it to the Postgraduate Admissions Team, to process and attach the reply to the notification.
- By emailing the Postgraduate Admissions Team with a written confirmation of acceptance – which should then be attached to the notification.

Acceptance of an unconditional offer prompts the production of a Confirmation of a Place to Study if any deposit or ATAS requirements have also been met. See below.

10.2 Declines
The input of a decline decision (by staff or applicants using the portal) will generate an acknowledgement email to the applicant. See sample documents at www.ncl.ac.uk/spo/ipaa/pg_admiss_docs.pdf.

When an applicant declines via the portal they are prompted to provide a brief reason for declining
the place. The list of reasons must be kept brief, and are the same list of reasons used when an applicant withdraws. The current list of reasons is:

- Decided against postgraduate study
- Taking up a place elsewhere
- Unable to meet the conditions
- Unable to obtain a visa
- Unable to obtain accommodation
- Dissatisfied with the University admissions processes
- Dissatisfied with other aspects of the University’s provision
- Lack of Funding
- Deferral
- Other reason
- Unknown

10.3 Withdrawals
Applicants can withdraw their application before an offer is made.

The process for withdrawals is identical to that of declines. See above. The input of a withdrawal decision (by staff or applicants using the portal) will generate an acknowledgement email to the applicant.

10.4 Deferrals
Applicants can seek to defer their application to the next academic year before an offer is made, or can seek to defer the acceptance of an offer. In each case, agreement is sought from the Academic Selector. If approved, the Postgraduate Admissions Team close down the original application and create a new application for the next academic year. The application form and any relevant documents are copied to the new academic year, and an offer letter/confirmation of place dispatched if relevant. See above.

10.5 What if ....

a) An applicant declines an offer then asks to attend?
This or other variations relating to an applicant’s change of mind can be accommodated. These changes need to be handled outside of the main portal systems – e.g. by the applicant contacting the Postgraduate Admissions Team directly. The Postgraduate Admissions Team will adjust the system records and issue revised documentation if required.

b) An applicant has accepted offers for more than one programme?
Applicants can apply for more than one programme and they can accept offers on more than one programme.

At the point of issuing the Confirmation of a Place to Study the Admissions Assistant / PG Admissions Manager will contact the applicant to ask them to confirm one programme.

c) The applicant does not reply?
It is recommended that Schools take responsibility for reminding applicants of the need to accept their
offer. This can be done using the CRM tools available to School support staff, and is an important part of School conversion tasks.

11. **Confirmation of Place and Conversion Tasks**

A confirmation of a Place to Study is a document that confirms that the applicant has accepted an unconditional offer.

In addition, for International applicants only, a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) is issued which is essential for applicants who need to apply for a Tier 4 Student Visa for entry clearance to the UK. It is emailed to applicants when they have met all the conditions of their offer and either paid their deposit or provided acceptable proof of sponsorship. For further information see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/international/visa/

A Confirmation of Place is not strictly required for home applicants, but should be used for closure – it is useful for applicants to have their UF status verified, particularly if they originally had a conditional offer.

11.1 **Reviewing documents / proofs**

An essential part of the Admissions Assistant’s job is to review documents received from the applicant to decide whether they meet conditions or not. In most cases the Admissions Assistants will review documents on behalf of Academic Selectors – only rarely (where academic judgement seems appropriate) should an Academic Selector be asked to consider a document.

Some documents can be received in a scanned/photocopy version and still be acceptable to the University – e.g. IELTS, Pearsons and TOEFL IBT certificates can be verified online.

Admissions Assistants use judgment in determining whether a document is bona fide. Fraud is rising, and this is a national problem. There is no fool-proof way of detecting fraud. The Postgraduate Admissions Team have developed experience of viewing original/certified evidence; however they will be unable to eliminate all fraud.

When documents are received and are deemed to be bona fide, Admissions Assistants will decide whether the document meets the required condition.

- If the condition is MET, the applicant will automatically be sent an email when the condition status is changed.
- If the condition is MET and it is the last outstanding condition – and the applicant has accepted the offer - the Admissions Assistant will also send the Confirmation of a Place to Study document. Checking first that if the applicant is an international student, they have paid their deposit or provided acceptable proof of sponsorship.
- If the condition is NOT MET, the Admissions Assistant cannot change any flags on Campus Management.

If the matter is borderline, the Admissions Assistant may consult with the Academic Selector to determine whether the condition may or may not be deemed to be met. This may apply, for example, to unusually phrased references or pass-marks one or two points below that specified.

If the condition remains NOT MET, the Admissions Assistant will correspond with the applicant to advise that the document has not met the condition.

11.2 **Following up outstanding conditions.**

Responsibility for chasing outstanding conditions resides with the Postgraduate Admissions Team. This means that the Postgraduate Admissions Team will:
Send reminders to referees who have not provided references after 3-4 weeks.
Send reminders to applicants that they have outstanding conditions.

12. Finance Aspects

12.1 Alumni Discounts.
The University offers a 20% reduction on tuition fees to all self-funding alumni. The terms and conditions of this discount are detailed at http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/funding/sources/ourstudentsgraduates/atfd.html

To receive this discount the Admissions Assistant must update the applicant’s record with the academic year from which they became eligible for the discount.

12.2 University Scholarships
The University has a wide range of scholarships available to home and overseas applicants. See http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/funding/guide/#findingfunding for more information.

12.3 Deposits
International applicants are required to pay a £1500 deposit or provide acceptable proof of sponsorship before they can be issued with a CAS. A small number of programmes require a deposit as a condition of the applicant’s offer for an applicant to confirm their acceptance of their offer of a place at the University.

The application deposit is off-set against the tuition fees for first year of study at the University - i.e. the tuition fees for the first year will be reduced by the amount of deposit pre-paid by the applicant.

An application deposit is non-refundable. Applicants who are fully sponsored for their tuition fees (e.g. embassy sponsorship) will be exempt from the deposit – provided that they provide proof of sponsorship.

An international applicant makes their deposit payment via their applicant portal. For Home UK/EU students with a deposit condition to their offer, or an international applicant who is unable to make their payment via the portal acceptable alternative methods of payment are cheque, bank transfer etc.

When payment has been confirmed, a flag is set in the applicant’s record to indicate that payment has been made.

Responsibility for handling deposit payment resides with the Finance Office – i.e. applicants are given clear instructions as to how to pay their deposit and this goes directly to Finance.

It is important to realize that within Campus Management there is no link between acceptance of an offer and payment of a deposit. There are separate data items. An applicant can accept without paying the deposit.

12.4 Finance Holds at registration.
Finance holds are set automatically for all postgraduate applicants. Where sponsorship if clearly identified during the admission process (e.g. sponsorship by an embassy, AHRC etc) Finance should be advised in order to remove the Finance hold and make the registration process easier for the applicant.

Through the reports on the staff portal, the Finance Office can view text information from the application form relating to sponsorship, and can also see any attached documents relating to sponsorship. A report of sponsor details is also available.
13. Miscellaneous items

13.1 PGR Applications

The handling of applications for research programmes is rather more complex than PGT applications, due to the need for two members of academic staff to be involved in approving the decision to make an offer, and the need for several supervisors to view the application.

As a general model, the PGR Director in the School should be responsible for the handling of PGR applications.

There are two models currently being used:

All applications for PGR programmes in the School are forwarded to the PGR director for the School. The PGR Director is also responsible for returning decisions to the Postgraduate Admissions Team, including information about fee band, research area, supervisor etc. Any applications received back in the Postgraduate Admissions Team from other members of staff are returned to the PGR Director for approval.

Or

All applications for PGR programmes in the School are forwarded to the PGR director for the School. If the PGR Director approves in principle, s/he forwards the item to potential supervisors. Any member of staff in the School can return decisions to the Postgraduate Admissions Team. The Admissions Team will then send the application back to the PGR Director for final approval.

The first model is strongly recommended, as it ensures the PGR Director is aware of all decisions, and avoids offers being made without explicit approval.

The information regarding who is authorised to returned decisions to the Postgraduate Admissions Team is recorded on the criteria database.

Some Directors of PG Studies require several potential supervisors to view and comment on an application. Each application can only be sent to one potential supervisor at a time. This can be handled in one of two ways:

The Director of PG Studies keeps the items in his/her inbox, and emails the relevant potential supervisors to ask them to view the application and attached documents through report AL01, and return comments by email. The PGR Director will receive reminders for the period the application is in his/her inbox

Or

The Director of PG Studies forwards the application to the first potential supervisor, including instructions to insert any comments and forward to the next supervisor. The application is passed among the potential supervisors, and the last on the list is asked to forward it back to the PGR Director, who can see all comments typed. The reminders about the application will be sent to whoever has it in their inbox at the 7, 14 and 35 day deadlines.

It is not at present possible to ‘switch off’ the automatic reminders to Academic Selectors.

13.2 Agents

The International Recruitment Team have reached financial agreements with various agents in order to support the recruitment of overseas students to the University. A list of these agents is maintained by the International Recruitment Team, who are also responsible for ‘setting-up’ agent lists on Campus Management.

Via a password-protected portal, authorized Agents have a read only view of the summary detail and status of applicants associated with their particular agent code. I.E. they should see key database
fields, but not the application or any associated documents.

Agents are normally expected to provide general guidance and support to their clients as they complete an application to the University. However, the Agent is NOT allowed to complete an application form on behalf of an applicant. The applicant is expected to assume full responsibility for the accuracy of the application. Similarly, under no circumstances is an Agent allowed to accept an offer of a place on behalf of a candidate.

13.2 If an applicant dies

In the event of an Academic Selector receiving notice of an applicant’s death, it is critical that the Campus Management record is immediately updated. This will ensure that deceased applicants are excluded from the reports used by academic Schools et al to correspond with applicants. If an Academic Selector is aware of the death of an applicant, they should immediately inform the Admissions Assistant.

13.3 If a new programme is added or a title is changed.

New programmes and title changes can only be added to the Campus Management system when a notice has been received from the Faculty’s Quality Team.

Note - a title change will need planning and thought to determine whether it should/should not affect current/former applicants/students. Some consultation with NUIT Business Analysts et al is required in advance of any necessary change.

13.4 If a programme is withdrawn or suspended.

If a programme is withdrawn or suspended approval is required by FTLSEC. However, as soon as possible the Admissions Assistant should be advised - who will then liaise with NUIT to ensure that the programme is excluded from the list available to applicants.

13.5 Late applications.

Late applications should be handled in the normal way. An application form must be completed and a conditional offer made if certified transcripts/degree certificate, references and English results are not included. If everything required is available an unconditional offer may be made in the normal way.

13.6 Programmes with closing dates.

The handling of applications for programmes with closing dates can be done in one of two ways:

All applications for that programme are put on hold as they arrive, with a note of ‘closing date XX’. The applicants are emailed, to explain that no decisions will be taken until after the closing date. The items remain in the Postgraduate Admissions Team inbox, on hold, until the closing date passes. During this period, the Academic Selector and School secretaries can view the applications through the reports if required. When the closing date passes, all applications are forwarded to the School for consideration.

Or

Applications are forwarded to the School as they are received. The items remain in the Academic Selector’s inbox until a decision is made. NB the Academic Selector will receive email reminders for each application, after 7, 14 and 28 (PGT) or 35 (PGR) days. It is important to note that after 28 days (PGT) or 35 days (PGR), the applications are automatically returned to the Postgraduate Admissions Team, who will need to forward them back to the Academic Selector.

The first model is preferred. It is not at present possible to 'switch off' the automatic reminders to Academic Selectors.
13.7 New Academic Selectors

If a new Academic Selector is appointed (including those who may consider applications from research applicants), the following is required.

NUIT need to set the Academic Selector as a Selector within the SAP system, set permissions to enable access to BW reports and applicant data, and also create a portal login. In addition, the PG Admissions Team need to ensure that new Academic Selector is added to the Academic Selector list in SAP and that School Support staff are set up as substitutes for the new Academic Selector. Unless these tasks are completed, the new Academic Selector will be unable to consider applications. New Academic Selectors should therefore ensure that they complete the NUIT system user processes as soon as possible.

In order to be set up as an Academic Selector, the relevant staff member should log a Helpdesk call on 85999, requesting a ‘Selector Access Form’. This form needs to be completed with details of the new Academic Selector, and an example of a current Academic Selector in the same School (this will make sure NUIT can attach the correct substitutes). When the completed form is received, NUIT will set up the Academic Selector’s account, and send out login, password, training document details etc.

The Postgraduate Admissions Team should add them to the list of Academic Selectors in SAP and also add the Academic Selector to the relevant details on the criteria database.

The new Academic Selector should familiarize themselves with procedures and guidelines relating to postgraduate admission. Particularly if an Academic Selector takes over responsibility for a masters programme, the new Academic Selector should review the selection criteria.

14. School Conversion Tasks

As noted above, academic Schools have a prime role in assisting the conversion of applicants to registrations. One of the key areas of activity for schools will be in communicating with applicants on a regular basis throughout the year. School support staff have access to communication tools which enable the dispatch of personalized emails (or letters if required) to applicants, through the Hobsons CRM system. It is expected that Academic Selectors and School support staff will work closely to ensure that regular and appropriate communications are dispatched to aid conversion.