

## Admissions Policy

### 1. Aims, Principles and Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all admissions at Newcastle University. It is intended to set out for all interested parties our position on matters relating to admission to our undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Where there are variations for undergraduate and postgraduate this will be clearly explained in the relevant section.
- 1.2 The setting of admissions requirements plays a key role in maintaining academic excellence and inclusivity throughout the process of admission. Our policies and practice are driven by the belief that the life of the University is enriched by having a body of students which reflects the community at large and includes students from all parts of the UK and overseas.
- 1.3 The University of is committed to providing a professional admissions service through implementation of clear and transparent policies and procedures. The policy is underpinned by procedural guidelines issued to undergraduate and postgraduate selectors.
- 1.4 The University is committed to widening participation and fair access. It wishes to encourage able, highly-motivated and enthusiastic students of all ages, and from all backgrounds and contexts, to apply to its degree programmes. In providing fair and equitable access to all prospective students who have the potential to benefit and contribute to academic life, the University may need to demonstrate a flexible approach and, where appropriate, make adjustments for individual applicants. This includes, but is not limited to, the widening access initiatives outlined in the University's Access and Participation Plan.

### 2. Governance and Responsibility for Admissions

- 2.1 The Student Recruitment Management Group (SRMG) has responsibility for the development and review of the University Admissions Policy, and for ensuring that policies and procedures comply with relevant discrimination legislation, consumer rights legislation and the QAA's Quality Code.
- 2.2 Responsibility for setting the criteria against which applications are to be considered lies with Boards of Studies for each individual degree programme. English language entry requirements for all programmes are reviewed and confirmed annually by Faculty Committees.
- 2.3 Responsibility for applying those criteria in order to make decisions on applications lies with undergraduate and postgraduate selectors appointed by Heads of Academic Schools, or by delegation to nominated school or central admissions staff.
- 2.4 Responsibility for determining the number of offers to be made to applicants relative to the number of places available on programmes of study rests with undergraduate /postgraduate selectors (appointed by Heads of Academic Schools) in consultation with Taught Programme and Research Deans of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies.

- 2.5 All members of academic and professional services staff with responsibility for the admissions process are given appropriate guidance in order to fulfil their roles competently and in line with this policy. Structured guidance is given in light of any national or institutional changes to admissions policy or procedures and ongoing training and information is provided to all admissions staff in the Admissions Services<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.6 Academic and non-academic entrance requirements are reviewed annually in line with the University's aim to provide fair and equitable access to all prospective students who have the potential to benefit from and contribute to a quality education on their chosen course, regardless of background.
- 2.7 All applicants are required to meet certain minimum academic and non-academic standards for entry, however the University recognises that how these requirements are met may vary by individual applicant. Flexibility may be exercised where appropriate in response to contextual factors and when assessing the overall profile of an applicant. Applicants who do not meet the criteria as listed in the published entry requirements, but who may meet the requirements via other qualifications and/or experience are encouraged to contact the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Admissions team. This allows the applicant's individual set of qualifications, and the context in which these were attained, to be considered. Applicants are however expected to demonstrate the ability to study at a progressive and concentrated level.
- 2.8 Some courses will have additional checks and requirements for an applicant to be admitted to a course, in particular those courses which require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and Fitness to Practise requirements.
- 2.9 Every effort will be made to ensure that all published material and statements are accurate and provide information which will enable applicants to make informed decisions. This information shall include tuition fees, availability of financial support, dates of terms and any additional costs incurred on the programme.
- 2.10 Applicants holding an offer will be notified in writing as soon as possible before a programme's expected start date if there are any significant changes to the programme of study.
- 2.11 The University makes all reasonable efforts to deliver the programmes of study and research opportunities described on its website and in printed prospectuses. It may be required on occasion to suspend, discontinue or combine programmes of study (for example because a key member of staff leaves the University or there are too few applicants for a programme). In such cases, applicants will be informed in writing at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.12 It may sometimes be necessary to close a programme to new applications if the programme has too many applicants. In the case of undergraduate programmes, this will not be before the relevant UCAS 'equal consideration' deadline.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this policy, 'central Admissions Service' includes staff who process undergraduate and postgraduate applications in the Student and Academic Services Directorate; in the School of Medical Education; and in the School of Dental Sciences

### **3. Application Process**

- 3.1 The University accepts a broad range of qualifications and combinations of qualifications for entry to its programmes of study, including vocational and Access qualifications and a wide range of qualifications offered by international applicants. Typical requirements are published on the University webpages and prospectus materials.
- 3.2 All applications received by the relevant deadline (UCAS or University) are to be given equal consideration. Where no deadline exists selectors shall make conditional, unconditional or reject decisions at the earliest opportunity
- 3.3 Some subjects, because of limits to the number of places available, may hold applications until after the relevant deadline for consideration in a 'gathered field'.
- 3.4 Offers of places to applicants are to be made, within the constraints of the number of places available, on the basis of individual academic achievement, ability and potential to succeed on their chosen programme of study. This is regardless of age, religion or belief, race, ethnicity, gender, being trans gender, marital or family status, sexual orientation, disability, or offending background.
- 3.5 The University welcomes applications from disabled people. Applicants are strongly encouraged to disclose information about any disability, including mental health, that would help the University to identify and provide help with support needs. However, applicants who choose not to declare their disability should be aware that, without the knowledge it may be more difficult, or in rare cases impossible, for the University to provide support and/or make the reasonable adjustments. Exceptionally, it may not be possible to make offers to applicants with a disability in cases where the adjustments needed to make a programme of study accessible to a particular applicant compromise the programme competency standard or, where it would not be practicable for the University to make a reasonable adjustment within the terms of the Equality Act 2010.

### **4. Application Assessment**

- 4.1 Admissions decisions are to be based, within the constraints of the number of places available, on professional judgement of applicants' individual academic achievement, ability and potential, taking into account all of the information presented in applications and applying established entry criteria in a consistent manner.
- 4.2 It follows, therefore, that it is the responsibility of applicants and referees to provide full and accurate information in an application and to notify the University of any changes or corrections to the original application.
- 4.3 Some degree programmes have particular criteria for assessment of applicants other than entry grade requirements. Admissions tests, portfolios or auditions are examples. Such requirements will be set out in the entrance requirements for individual degree programmes.
- 4.4 A range of contextual information may be considered in assessing an application. For Undergraduate UK domiciled applicants contextual data will be received from UCAS as part of the application. Newcastle uses the following data when making an offer:

- a) Applicants' postcodes of domicile are used to identify applicants who live in a neighbourhood which has a low rate of participation in higher education.
  - b) Information, where available, about average public examination performance in a given year of the school(s) or college attended by an applicant is provided to show the relative performance of the school(s) or college against the national average and to set the individual's predicted grades in context.
  - c) Information about any disability.
  - d) Information about applicants who have spent any time in Social Care.
- 4.5 Admissions tutors may also take account, when making a judgement about achievement, ability or potential, of other contextual factors that are disclosed and have affected or could affect an applicant's attainment. These include personal circumstances, opportunities for extra-curricular activities and personal development, parental experience of higher education, disabilities and involvement in special schemes or programmes (such as the University's PARTNERS Programme and the Realising Opportunities Project).
- 4.6 As part of our commitment as an accredited Buttle UK institution, applicants who indicate that they have been in care will be offered the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues or concerns with a Student Recruitment Officer in advance of their arrival.
- 4.7 In assessing individual applications, admissions tutors are to follow the specific procedures which apply to specific groups (eg. applicants with disabilities, PARTNERS applicants etc.) as set out in the relevant documents (see 1.3 above). For example, they are to ensure that appropriate adjustments are made to enable disabled applicants to engage in the same or equivalent application procedures as other applicants without disadvantage.
- 4.8 In any given admissions cycle, the terms of conditional offers made to applicants will not normally differ significantly from the entry requirements published in advance in respect of the admissions cycle concerned. Any necessary amendments to typical entry requirements which take place during the admissions cycle will be published on the University's central website.
- 4.9 Where entry requirements for an undergraduate degree programme are expressed as a range of grades (eg AAA-ABB), each offer will be determined on specific criteria applied on an individual basis, taking account of an applicant's profile. Subjects and qualifications being taken, predicted grades, contextual data, and information in the personal statement and reference all contribute to an individual's profile.
- 4.10 Admissions tutors have discretion to make conditional offers which differ from the typical entry requirement, if in their judgement the typical entry requirement would not be appropriate because of the particular circumstances of an applicant.
- 4.11 For certain programmes, unconditional offers may be made to selected students before the outcome of their entry qualifications is known.

- 4.12 Admissions tutors are responsible for ensuring that prospective students are appropriately qualified for the degree programmes to which they are admitted. This may sometimes mean that it is not possible to include certain subjects, or a combination of subjects, in an offer of a place where the admissions tutor considers that they do not provide an appropriate preparation for the degree programme concerned.
- 4.13 Where it is judged that an applicant is not appropriately qualified for the programme applied for, an application may be considered for entry to an alternative programme or stage. For Postgraduate Admissions this may be deferred entry conditional on achieving the required grade on an INTO Newcastle International Graduate Diploma course.
- 4.14 Applicants who do not fully meet the terms of conditional offers may nevertheless have a place confirmed during Confirmation, subject to the availability of places. In considering such applicants, admissions tutors may take into account factors such as unit grades, overall performance (which may include performance at interview) and personal or educational circumstances which may have affected attainment.
- 4.15 Where an admissions tutor decides, after taking all relevant factors into account, that an applicant should not be made an offer, the reason or reasons for the decision are recorded. This information is used for audit and monitoring purposes.
- 4.16 Postgraduate applicants will be informed promptly of an offer of a place at the University with information on how they notify the University if they wish to take up their place. For certain programmes offer holders will be asked to pay a tuition fee deposit or provide proof of sponsorship to secure their place. The deposit is non-refundable except under the circumstances outlined in the Postgraduate Applicant Deposit Refund Policy.
- 4.17 Where practical, postgraduate research selectors shall interview shortlisted postgraduate research applicants seeking admission to doctoral degree programmes.
- 4.18 Final offers of a place made to postgraduate research applicants shall be made with the involvement of more than one member of academic staff who have relevant experience and for whom training in selection shall be available. Offers of places for postgraduate research at the University shall only be made where appropriate resources are available to support the proposed programme of study.
- 4.19 Advice will be available for applicants who request a deferred entry to the programme or who do not achieve the conditions of their offer.
- 4.20 The University reserves the right to correct errors where they have been made in the communication of decisions and offers, but will treat each case on its merits.

## **5. English Language Requirements**

- 5.1 Teaching, assessment and student support will take place in English, unless otherwise stated. Schools must be confident that candidates have the proficiency in English language necessary to succeed on their chosen course and that, where relevant, they meet the UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) minimum requirements to obtain a Student visa.

- 5.2 The University requires that all applicants to courses at degree-level and above meet our minimum requirements for English, however many courses will have requirements which are higher than this minimum in order to ensure candidates are appropriately prepared for their chosen course. Acceptable English qualifications and the University's minimum requirements (including validity periods) for these can be found on our webpages. Applicants can view course-specific English requirements on the relevant course web pages.
- 5.3 Applicants who do not meet the relevant English requirements at the point of application may be made an offer which is conditional on successful completion of one of the approved tests.
- 5.4 Where an applicant has already satisfied the English language requirements but subsequently provides further evidence that falls below the University's or the UKVI's requirements, the offer must be revised.

## **6. Age and safeguarding**

- 6.1 The University recognises that someone's age (if under 18) or safeguarding position may need to be taken into account. For certain courses there may be restrictions in place for module choice or admission for those under 18; please see the school policies for further information as well as our Safeguarding Policy and our Information for Under 18 Applicants.
- 6.2 Parental/Guardian consent forms must be submitted before a place can be confirmed.
- 6.3 UKVI guidance states that students on a Student visa must be 16 or over. Accordingly, the University cannot assign a CAS for anyone under 16 and those requiring a Student visa must be aged 16 or over in order to be considered for sponsorship.

## **7. Criminal Convictions and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)**

- 7.1 Applicants seeking admission to courses involving work with children or vulnerable adults will be required to undergo an enhanced disclosure check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). This type of disclosure is designed to check the background of individuals who will have a high degree of contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- 7.2 The requirement for a DBS check will be set out in the entrance requirements for individual degree programmes provided in Prospectus' and other publicity documents. The Newcastle University central website will have the most up to date information at any given time.
- 7.3 Applicants to courses that require an enhanced disclosure check may be asked to make a criminal conviction disclosure in advance of a DBS check. This information is considered in accordance with the University's Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions.
- 7.4 Applicants seeking admission to courses that do not require a DBS check will not be required to declare a criminal conviction at application. The University may ask applicants to declare a relevant unspent criminal conviction as part of the process of accepting an offer which is made. Applicants on licence will be required to discuss their application with their probation/supervising officer and take their advice on whether to inform the University of any

licence conditions. Any disclosure of licence conditions should be directed to the Head of Undergraduate Admissions, or Head of Postgraduate Admissions, Student and Academic Services.

## **8. Confidentiality and Declaration of Interest**

- 8.1 All individuals involved in the admissions process are to observe the relevant regulations and principles of ethics, confidentiality and data protection.
- 8.2 The University complies with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and with the Data Protection Act 2018. On submission of their application, applicants give permission to the University to process their personal data. The University's Prospective Students Privacy Notice<sup>6</sup> provides full details of the data the University collects and how this data is used.
- 8.3 Any member of staff who has personal connection with or other interest in an individual applicant is to declare that interest to his or her line manager who will determine how the application is to be considered.
- 8.4 Representations on behalf of candidates made other than in the application will be given such weight, if any, as is appropriate under this Admissions Policy. Any perceived improper pressure from any person, whether employed by the University or not, will be disregarded and reported in the first instance to the Head of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Admissions.

## **9. Fraud**

- 9.1 Applicants suspected of providing, or found to have provided, false information shall be referred to UCAS if their application was originally submitted through that service.
- 9.2 The University reserves the right to cancel an application and withdraw any offer if it is found that the application contains false or misleading information.
- 9.3 The Academic Registrar may exclude from the University students who are found to have gained admission through the provision of false or misleading information, or through failing to disclose information that would have materially and adversely affected the determination of the application for admission. A student so excluded shall not have an automatic right to a full refund of tuition fees.

## **10. Feedback**

- 10.1 The competitive nature of admission to many of the University's degree programmes means that many good applications are unsuccessful. For most subjects, the University does not provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants automatically, but will provide written feedback to unsuccessful applicants who submit a request in writing.
- 10.2 Feedback will be provided to an applicant only, not to any third party, unless an applicant has given specific permission in writing for the third party to act on his/her behalf.
- 10.3 The University will not enter into discussions with applicants about the academic

judgement behind decisions on applications.

10.4 The University maintains an Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

10.5 No applicant who requests feedback, or complains about or appeals against the decision of an admissions tutor, shall be disadvantaged in any way in any future applications to the University as a result of the feedback request, complaint or appeal.

## **11. Queries about this Policy**

11.1 Any undergraduate queries about this policy should be directed to the Head of Undergraduate Admissions , [dawn.bell@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:dawn.bell@ncl.ac.uk)

11.2 Any postgraduate queries about this policy should be directed to the Head of Postgraduate Admissions, [caroline.mclean@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:caroline.mclean@ncl.ac.uk)

11.3 The policy will be reviewed annually.

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