

## **Admissions Policy**

### **1. Aims, Principles and Scope**

- 1.1 This policy applies to undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research admissions at Newcastle University. The University is committed to equality of opportunity, social justice, and fair access and diversity. 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 is committed to providing a professional admissions service through implementation of clear and transparent policies and procedures. The University's overarching Admissions Policy is underpinned by guidelines issued to undergraduate and postgraduate selectors, together with the following related policies and procedure:
  - Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure
  - Under 18s Policy and Procedure
  - MBBS Admissions Policy
  - School of Dental Sciences Admissions Policy
  - Contextual Admissions Procedure
  - Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure
  - Good Practice Applicant Feedback Procedure
  - Deposit Refund Policy
  - English Language Policy
  - Admissions Fraud Procedure: detection, reporting and response
- 1.4 The University 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 demonstrate a flexible approach and, where appropriate, make adjustments for individual applicants. These approaches are set out in the relevant policies set out above.

### **2. Governance and Responsibility for Admissions**

- 2.1 The Student Recruitment Strategy Committee (SRSC) 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, the QAA's Quality Code and the UUK Code of Practice.

- 2.2 The University welcomes applications from candidates who can demonstrate that they have the potential to succeed on the programme to which they have applied and that they will benefit from and contribute to the learning, research, and social environment at the University. The University sets entry requirements based on evidence of what students need to succeed on the programme, alongside marketing insights. The University's typical academic entry requirements for each programme are set by the relevant Faculty in consultation with the Admissions Service. The entry requirements, academic and non-academic, are then reviewed and approved annually by the Student Recruitment Strategy Committee (SRSC) ensuring these are in line with the University's aim to provide fair and equitable access to all prospective students.
- 2.3 On receipt of an application, the responsibility for applying the agreed entry requirements criteria and making a decision on an application lies with undergraduate and postgraduate Admissions Selectors and with the Admissions Services 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 Faculty Education Deans and the Head of Admissions, in line with the University strategic planning process.
- 2.5 All members of academic and professional services staff with responsibility for the admissions process are given appropriate guidance to fulfil their roles competently and in line with this policy. Structured guidance is given considering 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>. All newly appointed staff to the university are provided with admissions guidance as part of induction to the university.
- 2.6 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 in response to contextual factors when assessing the overall profile of an applicant. Applicants who do not meet the criteria listed in the published entry requirements but have other qualifications and/or experience are encouraged to contact the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Admissions Service. This allows the applicant's individual circumstances, to be considered. Applicants are however expected to demonstrate the ability to successfully study at a progressive and concentrated level.
- 2.7 Some courses will have additional checks and requirements for an applicant to be admitted to a course, particularly those courses which require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks (set out in the Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure) and Fitness to Practise requirements (including any Occupational Health e.g. vaccinations requirements).
- 2.8 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 includes entry requirements, tuition fees, availability of financial support, dates of terms and any additional costs incurred on the programme. The University website will provide the definitive information.

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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 Admissions; in the School of Medical Education; and in the School of Dental Sciences

- 2.9 Where there are any changes to a programme of study, mid application-cycle, the University will notify all applicants in writing as soon as possible, and before a programme's expected start date.
- 2.10 The University makes all reasonable efforts to deliver the programmes of study and research opportunities described on its website and in printed prospectuses. Course content may change periodically to reflect developments in the discipline, the requirements of external bodies and partners, and student feedback. 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.
- 2.11 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.

### **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. Selectors shall make 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 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, gender identity and/or transgender people, marital or family status, sexual orientation, disability, or background.
- 3.5 The University welcomes applications from disabled students. Applicants are strongly encouraged to disclose information about any disability, including mental health, when they apply but this is not considered when assessing their application. If an offer is progressed, information relating to a candidate's disability will subsequently be shared with the Student Wellbeing Service and the relevant Faculty to allow them to engage in further discussion with the applicant and identify appropriate adjustments where applicable to ensure that the applicant is supported effectively on the course.
- 3.6 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 for all programmes**

- 4.1 Admissions decisions are based, within the constraints of the number of places available, on professional judgement of applicants' individual academic achievement, ability, and potential, considering all of the information presented in applications and applying established entry criteria in a consistent manner.
- 4.2 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. Any unsupported or inaccurate claims within an application may invalidate the application and may lead to the application being withdrawn.
- 4.3 Some programmes have specific criteria for assessment of applicants other than entry grade requirements. Admissions tests, portfolios or auditions are examples. These requirements are set out in the published entrance requirements for individual programmes.
- 4.4 In any given admissions cycle, the terms of conditional offers made to applicants will not normally differ significantly from the academic entry requirements published in advance. Any necessary amendments to typical entry requirements which take place during the admissions cycle will be published on the University's central website.
- 4.5 Where entry requirements for an undergraduate degree programme are expressed as a range of grades (eg AAA-ABB), each offer is based on specific criteria 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.
- 4.6 Admissions selectors 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 circumstances of an applicant.
- 4.7 For certain programmes that require the submission of a portfolio or performance as part of the selection process, unconditional offers may be made to selected students before the outcome of their entry qualifications is known.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 Where an admissions selector 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.
- 4.10 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. Contextual Admissions**

- 5.1 If an application for an undergraduate programme is submitted via UCAS, the Admissions Team use certain contextual data alongside a students' application, to consider challenges that they may have faced in their education and the potential effect this may have had on their qualifications.
- 5.2 When applications for undergraduate degrees are received by the University, any applicant who meets certain criteria will be automatically given a conditional contextual offer that is two A Level grades (or equivalent) lower than the standard offer for the undergraduate programme to which they have applied.
- 5.3 To receive a contextual offer, applicants must meet specific eligibility criteria as outlined in the Contextual Admissions Policy.
- 5.4 As part of our commitment to the Care Leaver Covenant and as a University of Sanctuary, applicants who indicate that they have been in care or are seeking sanctuary will be offered the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues or concerns with a dedicated member of staff when they apply to the University.

## **6. Alternative offers**

- 6.1 As part of Newcastle University's longstanding commitment to widening participation, we also offer a number of programmes that allow eligible applicants to receive an alternative offer:
  - PARTNERS Programme
  - Realising Opportunities

Further information is available in the Contextual Admissions Procedure.

## **7. Specific processes for Undergraduate Applications**

- 7.1 Applicants who do not fully meet the terms of a Conditional offer may nevertheless have a place confirmed when results are received. A decision for results received prior to mid-August may be delayed until August Confirmation and Clearing, when the majority of results will have been received.
- 7.2 Any offer made to an applicant who has not fully met the terms of their offer will be subject to the availability of places once all those who have met their conditions have been accepted. In considering such applicants, admissions selectors may consider factors such as unit grades, overall performance (which may include performance at interview) and personal or educational circumstances which may have affected attainment.
- 7.3 We welcome applicants who wish to apply for deferred entry to the next academic year. Applicants may wish to provide some information about plans for the year prior to entry in their personal statement. Applicants who request deferral or change to year of entry after an offer is made will have their request considered, but the decision may not be confirmed until August when the majority of examination results have been received. Requests are usually only considered for deferral for one academic year. Applicants who receive an offer in Clearing will not normally be eligible to defer their offer to the following year.

## **8. Specific processes for Postgraduate Applications**

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 Where practical, postgraduate research selectors shall interview shortlisted postgraduate research applicants seeking admission to doctoral degree programmes.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 Advice will be available for applicants who request a deferred entry to the programme or who do not achieve the conditions of their offer.

## **9. English Language Requirements**

- 9.1 All applicants to the University whose first language is not English are required to show evidence of the level of their proficiency in the English language.
- 9.2 Teaching, assessment and student support will take place in English, unless otherwise stated. Academic 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.
- 9.3 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) can be found on our webpages. Applicants can view course-specific English requirements on the relevant course web pages.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 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.

## **10. Age and safeguarding**

- 10.1 The University recognises that someone's age (if under 18) or safeguarding position may need to be considered. For certain courses there may be restrictions in place either for the course as a whole or module choice in admitting those under 18; please see the Under 18 policy (listed above) for further information as well as our Safeguarding Policy.

## **11. Applicants with Criminal Convictions**

- 11.1 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). The requirement for a DBS check is set out in the entrance requirements for individual degree programmes provided in Prospectus<sup>1</sup> and other publicity documents. The Newcastle University central website will have the most up to date information at any given time.
- 11.2 All applicants will be asked to make a criminal conviction declaration when accepting an offer.
- 11.3 The Criminal Conviction Policy and Procedure sets out full information for applicants

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

- 12.1 All individuals involved in the admissions process are to observe the relevant regulations and principles of ethics, confidentiality, and data protection.
- 12.2 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>2</sup> provides full details of the data the University collects and how this data is used.
- 12.3 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.
- 12.4 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 Admissions.

## **13. Fraud, Omission, Plagiarism**

- 13.1 The University takes the issues surrounding fraudulent applications very seriously and follows anti-fraud procedures to detect and prevent fraudulent applications.
- 13.2 Applicants may not omit any requested or relevant information, make any misrepresentation (for example, through plagiarism) or give false information at any point of the application process including after an offer is made. Should this occur the University reserves the right to cancel the application or withdraw an offer of a place. The University may also, in accordance with its obligations, notify external organisations about any suspected misrepresentation.
- 13.3 Application fraud includes, but is not limited to:
- **Incorrect information:** Knowingly providing details in an application that are incorrect, including data provided by a third party (human or AI) that has not been checked.
  - **Fabricated documentation** Such as counterfeit, doctored or AI-generated certificates or

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<sup>2</sup> [GDPR Student Privacy Notice \(ncl.ac.uk\)](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/privacy-notice)

transcripts.

- **Plagiarised content.** Submitting the work of others as your own, whether from another applicant or another source (e.g. personal statements, admissions essays, portfolios of work, research proposals etc.). This includes the third-party provision of application materials, whether by other individuals, AI or commercial writing services.

**13.4 Postgraduate Applicants only:** Where an applicant is suspected of submitting a fraudulent application the University will put the application on hold, and will carry out an investigation which may include one or more of the following steps:

- Contact the applicant to request further information and any supporting documentation to verify their application.
- Request certified copies of supporting documents if not already received.
- Seek confirmation from a third party, such as an awarding institution, to confirm the applicant's grades or attendance.
- Contact the referee to confirm the information provided, or to check the authenticity of the reference.
- If no response is received from the applicant by the required deadline the University will withdraw the application.

**13.5 Undergraduate Applicants only:** Where an applicant is suspected of providing, or found to have provided, false information shall be referred to UCAS if their application was originally submitted through that service.

**13.6** Any Applicant who submits an application(s) which are deemed fraudulent will not be considered for any future application.

**13.7** 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.

**13.8** No appeal against this decision will be considered.

## **14. Applicant Feedback**

**14.1** The competitive nature of admission to many of the University's degree programmes means that good applications are unsuccessful. The University has developed a Good Practice Applicant Feedback Process.

**14.2** Applicants may submit a request for feedback to the Admissions Service (Undergraduate or Postgraduate).

**14.3** The University maintains an Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

**14.4** Applicants must have requested feedback prior to submitting a complaint or appeal.

**14.5** Appeals cannot be made against a selector's academic judgement.



- 14.6 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.

## **15. Queries about this Policy**

- 15.1 Any queries about the policy and procedures set out in this document should be directed to:

Undergraduate – [ug-admissions@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:ug-admissions@newcastle.ac.uk)

Postgraduate – [pgadmissions@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:pgadmissions@newcastle.ac.uk)

### **Document Control:**

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Related Policies:	Criminal Convictions Policy and Procedure Under 18s Policy and Procedure MBBS Admissions Policy School of Dental Sciences Admissions Policy Contextual Admissions Deposit Refund Policy English Language Policy
Related Procedure and Guidance:	Criminal Convictions Declaration Process Under 18 Process Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure Good Practice Applicant Feedback Procedure Admissions Fraud Procedure: detection, reporting and response
Lead contact:	Annie Shuker, Deputy Director Recruitment and Admissions