

University of Southampton Admissions Policy (2016/17)

A. Purpose of this document

1. This document sets out the University of Southampton's Admissions Policy.
2. It describes the principles and processes followed by the University to select and admit new students.
3. This Policy covers applications for all levels of study and in all faculties of the University.
4. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the University Calendar, Section IV – [Regulations for Admission to Degree Programmes](#), [Procedures for Handling Applications from Students with Previous Criminal Convictions](#), [Regulations Governing Complaints from Applications](#), and the University's policy on the [Recognition of Prior Learning](#).
5. In the case of applications for Postgraduate Research programmes, reference should additionally be made to the University's [Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision](#) contained within Section V of the University Calendar.

B. Responsibility and Monitoring

1. This Policy has been considered and approved by the University's Recruitment and Admissions Sub-committee at its meeting held on 8th September 2016. This Policy is reviewed annually. Enquiries relating to this Policy should be addressed to admissions@soton.ac.uk.
2. This Policy takes note of best practice within the Higher Education sector, the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B2 – Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education), and the good practice guides published by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).

C. The University's recruitment and admissions aims

1. The work of the University in recruiting and admitting new students supports the goals and ambitions set out in its Mission Statement and Strategy (for more information please read [Southampton at a Glance](#)).
2. Our aim is to attract the most talented students, irrespective of background, and prepare them to be confident citizens and potential leaders in an increasingly globalised work environment.
3. Further, we aim to:
 - a. attract applicants who enjoy the challenge of forward thinking, the excitement of research-led teaching, and the high standards of learning and teaching which we set ourselves;
 - b. recruit students from a wide range of backgrounds who we believe have the potential and motivation to succeed on our challenging programmes and who can make a valuable contribution to University life;
 - c. foster a diverse learning community in which our students will meet people from different cultures, thereby enhancing their skills of critical reasoning, teamwork and communication, and thus preparing them for successful participation in their chosen careers and roles.

4. The University is committed to providing an admissions process that ensures fairness, transparency and equal opportunities within the legal framework of the United Kingdom. The University welcomes applications from candidates regardless of their background and aims to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs, religious beliefs or practices, disability, marital status, family circumstances, parental/carer status, spent criminal convictions, age, or any other inappropriate ground.
5. The University aims to provide accurate information and advice to prospective students concerning its opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate study which will help them to make an informed choice regarding the programmes which most suit their interests and skills.
6. The University agrees annually with each Faculty the number of students it can recruit at each level of study from the UK, the EU, and from outside of the EU. Regardless as to where in the world the student originates, the University will apply the same threshold of academic standards. The UK Government may regulate the number of UK and EU students that the University can admit and the University's planning processes take note of such restrictions.
7. The University recognises that making an application for higher education is an important decision and it is committed to providing potential applicants with accurate and clear information from the outset. Such information will include, for example, entry requirements, financial costs, and the availability of financial support.

D. Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

1. Data Protection

- a. The University complies with the provisions of the United Kingdom's Data Protection Act, 1998. As such, the University will not disclose to a third party any details regarding an individual's application without the applicant's permission to do so. This policy of non-disclosure includes family members of the applicant.
- b. However, the aforementioned Act requires the University to release certain information to UK authorities upon request in order to assist those authorities with the prevention and detection of fraud or other crimes. The University will release the requested information upon receipt of an appropriate request from UK authorities such as (but limited to) the police, Home Office (for immigration and related matters), local authorities, and the Department for Work and Pensions.
- c. The University may use anonymised data collected as part of an individual's application for the purpose of fulfilling statistical and reporting requirements.

2. Applicants requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom

- a. In order to comply with the relevant United Kingdom legislation, should an applicant be found not to be in a position to meet all UK visa requirements for the anticipated full duration of his/her programme of study, the University reserves the right to refuse admission.
- b. Where an applicant requires student entry clearance or leave to remain (a visa) to study in the United Kingdom, failure to take up an accepted offer of a place, withdrawal from the programme prior to the stated completion date of that programme, or another change of circumstance, is likely to impact that applicant's permission to come to, or remain in, the United Kingdom. In order to comply with the relevant United Kingdom legislation and immigration regulations, the University will notify the immigration authorities, where relevant, of any non-arrival, or late arrival, of an applicant and of any subsequent changes to a student's enrolment status.

- c. All applicants requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom must not currently be, nor have ever previously been, in the United Kingdom for any purpose without valid immigration permissions. If, either during the process of admitting a student or subsequent to that student enrolling upon their programme of study, the University is informed that the applicant/student is (or has previously been) in the United Kingdom without such valid permissions, it may be required to inform the immigration authorities and/or withdraw the offer of a place and/or withdraw its sponsorship of the individual's visa.
3. Applicants requiring Foreign and Commonwealth Office Academic Technology Approval Scheme clearance
 - a. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) manages the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS). This Scheme requires all international non-EEA students seeking to study certain specified subjects at University to receive clearance to do so in advance of their study commencing and prior to submitting an application for a visa.
 - b. The University will inform applicants made an offer for programmes covered by ATAS of the need to apply for clearance and will provide guidance on how to make an application to the FCO.
 - c. Where ATAS clearance is required, the applicant will need to provide a copy of their clearance from the FCO to the University in advance of the University being able to sponsor the applicant for a visa application.
4. Admission of minors
 - a. Successful applicants who will be aged under 18 years at the point of first enrolment should be aware that they are applying to study in an adult environment. As such, the University may be required to apply some limitations to their activities at the University until they reach their 18th birthday. The University Calendar, Section IV – [Regulations for Admission to Degree Programmes](#) provides more information regarding the admission of minors.
5. Changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks
 - a. In the interests of fairness and transparency, the University aims to eliminate making changes to its admissions policy and procedures mid-cycle. However, it may be the case that external agencies (including those of the United Kingdom Government) amend or update their own regulations or guidance. Where it is required to do so, the University will comply with such changes and reserves the right to vary its admissions policy and/or procedures accordingly. In such cases, the University will explain the change it is making, the context of the change, and how the change is likely to affect applicants.

E. Responsibilities for admissions

1. In order to provide a high quality and effective recruitment, selection and admission process, the University fosters a collaborative working approach between faculties and academic units and the various professional services.
2. The University has eight faculties each of which has an Admissions Controller. The Admissions Controllers are senior members of the academic staff of their faculties and are responsible for the admissions-related activities of their Programme Admissions Tutors. This includes the setting of programme entry requirements and assessment processes and, for some programmes, the assessing of applications, and the making of offers.

3. In the case of admission to Postgraduate Research degrees, the Admissions Controllers may opt to delegate some or all of their responsibilities to the relevant Director of the Faculty Graduate School.
4. The Admissions Controllers and their Programme Admissions Tutors and Directors of Faculty Graduate Schools are supported by dedicated recruitment and admissions professional service staff provided by the Student and Academic Administration workstream. The relevant Team Leader, reporting to his/her Faculty Academic Registrar, is responsible for the administration of the faculty's recruitment and admissions processes and operations (such as the provision of advice and guidance to the full range of stakeholders, the assessing of applications, and the making of offers).
5. Admissions strategy and policy is managed by the Head of University Admissions; an Assistant Director role within the Student and Academic Administration workstream. The Recruitment and Admissions Sub-committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), provides overarching governance and may, from time to time, establish working groups to advise it on particular issues. This Group includes amongst its membership all of the Admissions Controllers and a range of professional services staff. The Doctoral College is responsible for the development of the Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision and its Director is also a member of the Recruitment and Admissions Subcommittee.
6. Recruitment and Outreach functions (including, for example, Open Days, school visits, widening participation programmes, UCAS fairs, postgraduate events) are provided by Student Recruitment and International Relations while the Communications and Marketing office provides hard copy and digital materials to promote the University's programmes and related opportunities.
7. A Recruitment, Outreach and Admissions Functional Network exists for the various professional services supporting these activities to discuss and share best practice throughout the University and to assist the development of robust procedures in this area.
8. The University may, from time to time, appoint an agent or agents to work on its behalf. The International Office has responsibility for the selection and appointment of such agents and acts on behalf of the University to manage the relationship with such agents. The International Office's responsibility includes, for example, the training, monitoring and reviewing of agents appointed to work on the University's behalf.
9. The Registry Admissions team within the Student and Academic Administration workstream has responsibility for determining an applicant's fee status (that is, whether the applicant satisfies the eligibility criteria for paying fees at the Home/EU rate or not). Fee status is determined in accordance with the relevant United Kingdom legislation and is consistent with the guidance issued by the United Kingdom Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA; www.ukcisa.org.uk).

F. Admissions criteria and selection

1. Academic admissions criteria
 - a. The University's general entry requirements are as set out in the University Calendar, Section IV - [Regulations for Admission to Degree Programmes](#).
 - b. The University will publish annually the typical academic admissions criteria for all of its programmes of study. This information will be included in both its print and digital prospectuses and also on the relevant Faculty web site. Where applicable, this information will also be published on via the UCAS Course Search service.
 - c. Typical academic admissions criteria are set by the relevant Faculty Programmes Committee. The Recruitment and Admissions Sub-committee will additionally consider the strategic and cross-faculty implications which may arise as a result of a proposal to alter typical academic admissions criteria.
 - d. Faculties will periodically review these criteria in consultation with relevant members of professional service staff. Such criteria will not normally be changed

during an admissions cycle. The criteria published on the University web site will be the most up-to-date and will always take precedent over that contained in hard copy publications, and/or third party web sites.

- e. Typical academic admissions criteria represent the usual level of academic attainment an applicant is expected to achieve prior to being admitted to that programme. These criteria are not intended to provide a guarantee that all applicants who satisfy the criteria may be offered a place, nor that all applicants to be made an offer will receive an identical offer to one another.
 - f. Admissions Controllers/Tutors and the Directors of the Faculty Graduate Schools have the discretion to vary the weight they give to examination results and other indicators of achievement and potential (for example, extra-curricular activities, motivation for the subject, work or voluntary experience) and, therefore, to vary the offer they make provided this remains consistent with the principles of fair access and with this policy.
 - g. The University is committed to giving full and fair consideration to all relevant academic qualification information presented by each applicant. Whilst the University expresses its typical academic admissions criteria in the terms of a range of the most commonly presented qualifications, the University welcomes applications from candidates who have (or who will) achieve an equivalent standard in a range of other qualifications, including those offered internationally. The Student Recruitment and International Relations office publishes on its website broad qualification equivalency guidance for a substantial range of qualifications available worldwide.
 - h. The University receives many more applications than it has places available and as such, the admissions process is competitive. Achievement (or predicted achievement) of relevant qualifications does not itself guarantee an offer of admission. The University may take into account any, or all of, the applicant's personal statement, research proposal, references, performance at interview (or similar), and test results.
2. Use of contextual information
- a. The University may consider the context in which an individual's academic attainment to date has been achieved and may take into account other social contexts.
 - b. In the case of applications for undergraduate study from UK nationals (other than in the faculties of Medicine and Health Sciences), the University will consider the following additional contextual factors provided to it on the applicant's UCAS form:
 - i. Time spent in local authority care;
 - ii. The relative performance of the applicant's school or college;
 - iii. Whether the individual is applying from an area of low participation in higher education.
 - c. The University additionally recognises the value of access and widening participation programmes in supporting potential applicants with the development of study skills. As such, the University will take into account attendance and completion of such programmes, whether offered by the University of Southampton, by another institution or group of institutions, or is a national programme (such as Pathways to Law).
 - d. Each Academic Unit will set out the extent to which these additional contextual factors will be used. As a minimum, individual applicants who meet at least one of the criteria set out above will have their application receive additional consideration. Some Academic Units may guarantee all applicants who meet at least one of the above criteria an interview, and some may use these criteria to vary the conditions of any offer that it makes.

- e. The use of contextual information was introduced University-wide for the 2015 admissions cycle and as such the University is committed to undertaking a review of the impact of the introduction of this policy.
 - f. In the case of applications to the degree of Bachelor of Medicine (Widening Access) programme, the University will consider the following additional factors from which successful applicants will provide evidence that they satisfy not fewer than three:
 - i. Be a first generation applicant to higher education;
 - ii. Have a parent/guardian in receipt of a means-tested benefit or personally be in receipt of such a benefit;
 - iii. Be a young person looked after by a Local Authority;
 - iv. Be in receipt of the 16-19 bursary or equivalent grant;
 - v. Be in receipt of free school meals in school years 10 to 13.
 - vi. Live in an area with a postcode which falls within the lowest 20 per cent of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (authenticated by the University), or be a member of a travelling family.
3. English language proficiency
- a. All programmes at the University are delivered in the medium of English (except those managed jointly with Dalian Polytechnic University which are delivered in English and Mandarin Chinese).
 - b. The University requires successful applicants to demonstrate that their ability to understand and to express themselves in English (including in reading, writing, speaking and listening) is sufficient to enable them to achieve the full benefit from studying at the University.
 - c. The University will publish annually its minimum English language proficiency criteria for all of its programmes of study along with a list of those tests of English which it recognises as satisfying (when passed at the appropriate level) this requirement. This information is set out in the separate document, [English language proficiency requirements](#). The criteria published on the above web page will be the most up-to-date and will at all times take precedent over that contained in hard copy publications, and/or third party web sites.
 - d. The published information identifies the minimum level of proficiency in English that successful applicants must demonstrate in advance of being admitted to the University. The selection process is competitive and individual offers may be made which require an applicant to achieve a standard higher than the minimum.
 - e. The University's Centre for English Language Studies provides a range of English language courses designed to support applicants whose English proficiency is below the required standard.
4. Assessment and selection
- a. Admission to the University of Southampton is a competitive process with the University receiving many more applications than it has places available.
 - b. In the interests of fairness and transparency, all applications are assessed on their own merits, in competition with each other, and according to the relevant criteria for the programme applied to, by designated staff of the University.
 - c. Wherever possible, the University aims to acknowledge receipt of applications within 24 hours.
 - d. Admissions Controllers/Tutors (or their authorised nominees) will take into account all of the information provided on the application form in order to assess the application against the relevant criteria. This assessment will normally include, but not be limited to, existing academic achievements and the context in which they have been achieved, any predicted academic achievements, English language proficiency, the applicant's personal statement and/or research proposal, and academic/professional references.

- e. Admissions Controllers/Tutors (or their authorised nominees) may request examples of candidates' written work, may also choose to interview candidates, and may also set admissions tests in order further to assess their suitability for the programme applied to. In the case of applicants for research degrees, such an interview may additionally be used to discuss in detail the applicant's suitability for their chosen project.
- f. Admissions Controllers/Tutors (or their authorised nominees), when assessing applications for research degrees, will only make an offer to an applicant where a suitable supervisor/supervisory team can be identified for the full period of enrolment (taking account of any study leave or other temporary absence which are already known to the University). In some cases it will also be necessary for Admissions Controllers or Directors of Faculty Graduate Schools (or their authorised nominees) to satisfy themselves that appropriate other resources are in place to support the applicant's research project.
- g. The University permits faculties to recognise credit gained from other institutions or from experiential learning and to exempt suitably qualified applicants from modules of study in their chosen programme if it is deemed to be of equivalent standard. Faculties are therefore encouraged to include details of any opportunities for progression from work-based learning pathways in their information to applicants. For further information, please refer to the University's policy on the [Recognition of Prior Learning](#).
- h. Admissions Controllers/Tutors (or their authorised nominees) will seek to ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged by participating in the selection process.
- i. Admissions Controllers/Tutors (or their authorised nominees) may, at their discretion and in accordance with the relevant criteria, make a candidate an offer for a different programme to the one applied to. Such decisions may be made where it is determined that the applicant would be better suited to the alternative programme, or where the applicant has already covered some of the content of the programme originally applied to.
- j. Where an applicant is made an offer by the University, the offer will set out clearly if it is conditional upon the applicant achieving a stated academic or other standard, and/or on the provision of suitable references, and/or on evidence demonstrating the applicant has satisfied all non-academic conditions. In all cases, where evidence required by the University to inform its decision whether or not to admit an applicant is written in a language other than English, the applicant will be responsible for providing a notarised translation of the same into English and for arranging the submission of both the original and translated copies to the University.
- k. Applicants made an offer will be informed as to how they should accept or decline the offer, and by when.
- l. Applicants made a conditional offer may not enrol with the University, nor embark upon their programme of study, nor commence any research in connection with their programme of study, until all conditions have been satisfied in full and the applicant is in receipt of an unconditional offer and not until the stated commencement date of the programme of study.
- m. An offer is not a guarantee of funding.
- n. Applicants in possession of an offer of a place may request that it be deferred to the next intake. Such requests should be submitted in writing to the Faculty responsible for the programme of study. No guarantee is made that such a request will be approved with consent normally be given where the applicant presents compelling evidence in support of his/her request. The University does not permit more than a single deferral. The decision of the Admissions Controller/Tutor (or their authorised nominee) in relation to requests to defer is final.

G. Applicants with a disability and/or additional support needs

1. The University welcomes applications from candidates with a disability or additional support needs. Such applicants will be considered against the same criteria as all other candidates following the process outlined in section F of this policy.
2. In the event that a candidate with a disability or additional support needs is deemed qualified and eligible for an offer of a place, the University's Enabling Services staff will contact the applicant to discuss the additional support the applicant is likely to require in order to manage their circumstances. Applicants should be aware that in cases requiring physical works, it may not be possible to implement such adjustments in time for the beginning of the academic year for which the application has been made.
3. Where the needs of the applicant are complex, the University may issue an offer based on academic and other eligibility criteria which remains subject to investigation as to whether suitable adjustments can be implemented. Notwithstanding any offer made based on academic and other eligibility criteria, in the unlikely event that the University decides that the adjustments required to support the applicant could not reasonably be made, the University reserves the right not to make such adjustments. In such a case, the University will contact the applicant directly to confirm this decision.
4. Further information for prospective students regarding disabilities and additional support needs may be found online at www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport.

H. Applicants declaring a criminal conviction

1. The University has a responsibility to its students, staff and visitors to provide a safe community. In accordance with this responsibility it reserves the right to deny admission to applicants whose prior (unspent) criminal conviction(s) suggest that they might pose a danger to the community.
2. Additionally, all institutions which offer programmes of study requiring students to work with children or with adults in vulnerable situations must ensure that such students provide a satisfactory Disclosures and Barring Service (DBS; formerly the Criminal Records Bureau) enhanced disclosure before being permitted to commence such a programme of study.
3. The University is obliged to refuse admission to applicants for certain programmes which are regulated by the Department of Health, Health Care Professions Council, National College for Teaching and Leadership, Nursing and Midwifery Council, General Medical Council, British Psychological Society, or other relevant Government agencies and bodies, where the applicant's enhanced DBS check reveals prior criminal behaviour giving rise to concern for the protection of the groups identified in paragraph H2.
4. In some instances, admission to certain programmes may be exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974).
5. Further information regarding the handling of applications from candidates with a criminal conviction is set out in the University Calendar, Section IV – [Procedures for Handling Applications from Students with Previous Criminal Convictions](#).

I. Consideration of occupational health assessments

1. The University has a responsibility to the general public and to individuals. It therefore reserves the right to deny admission to applicants who are unable to supply a satisfactory occupational health assessment for those programmes which require such an assessment as a condition of entry.
2. Where such an applicant is deemed unacceptable as a result of an occupational health assessment, feedback will be provided to the candidate to this effect. All information provided by an applicant relating to his/her occupational health assessment remains confidential between the applicant and the designated occupational health assessor.
3. The University reserves the right to deny admission to students in accordance with contracts established with the National Health Service.

J. Fraudulent and misleading information

1. The University expects that applicants will have provided full, honest, and accurate information on their application form and in all subsequent communications with the University. Where the University has reason to suspect that this may not be the case, it reserves the right to investigate the matter fully.
2. Cases referred to the University by the UCAS Fraud and Verification Unit will be investigated.
3. If, in the course of such an investigation, the University finds that an applicant has made fraudulent or misleading claims in their application, the University reserves the right to withdraw any offer it has made. Where an applicant has omitted to provide all relevant information on their application form (including, but not limited to, qualifications commenced but not completed, qualifications resulting in a fail grade, exclusions) it similarly reserves the right to withdraw any offer it has made. In the event that an offer is withdrawn for the reasons set out above, the University may also, where appropriate, inform any other relevant professional bodies and/or third parties about the withdrawal.
4. In cases where the fraudulent and/or misleading information is discovered at any time after the applicant has enrolled as a student of the University, the University reserves the right to carry out its own investigations. If, after the completion of the investigation, it is found that there has been a deliberate attempt to use fraudulent and/or misleading information, or relevant information was withheld, in order to obtain a place on one of the University's programmes, the University may take action to permanently exclude the student. In the event that a student is permanently excluded for the reasons set out above, the University may also, where appropriate, inform any other relevant professional bodies and/or third parties about the exclusion.

K. General Right to refuse admission

1. The University reserves the right to reject an applicant or withdraw any offer made based on an applicant's behaviour during any part of the application process, if such behaviour is deemed to be unacceptable in accordance with the University's Equal Opportunities or Dignity at Work and Study Policy or any other relevant policy of the University or the University values.

L. Feedback, Complaints, and Appeals

1. The University of Southampton is committed to providing applicants with appropriate feedback within resource constraints upon request. Each Faculty will document appropriately the decision it has reached on each application and will respond to requests for feedback in that context. Such requests should be directed to the relevant Faculty. Requests for feedback must be submitted by the applicant. Requests for feedback from third parties on the behalf an applicant are not permitted.
2. The regulations governing complaints from applicants may be found in the University Calendar, Section IV - [Regulations Governing Complaints from Applications](#).
3. Applicants do not have the right to appeal against the academic or professional judgement made in respect of their application.