

Durham University Admissions Policy

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Introduction

Scope

This policy applies to all applications for undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT), postgraduate research (PGR), and PGCE courses at Durham University. This policy is intended to provide guidance to university staff, applicants, parents, and advisors on the University's procedures relating to the admittance of students.

Principles

Durham University welcomes students from all backgrounds. It is committed to recruiting talented students globally by identifying merit and potential through a fair, transparent, and inclusive admissions process. This policy ensures equal opportunity for all individuals, fostering a diverse and inclusive student body.

Durham University's Admissions Policy is aligned with the [University's Strategic Plan \(2017-27\)](#) and all relevant legal and regulatory requirements along with recognised good practice in fair admissions to Higher Education.

Policy review and monitoring

This policy is the responsibility of the Head of Admissions. It is reviewed annually and ratified by Education Committee (responsible for ensuring compliance of policies with University standards).

University roles and responsibilities

The Student Recruitment and Admissions office (SRA), academic departments, schools and faculties, and other key areas of the University, work collaboratively to ensure the delivery of a fair, effective and professional admissions service.

Target numbers for admissions are determined through the University's Integrated Planning Process.

Responsibilities of the Student Recruitment and Admissions service include:

- ensuring the Admissions policy and associated policies and procedures are maintained and implemented effectively and consistently across the Admissions cycle.
- handling all enquiries relating to the recruitment and admission of applicants, providing expert information, advice and guidance, to promote the University, its departments and its courses
- assessing applications against University-agreed entry criteria (academic level required for entry) in order to accomplish fair and consistent decision-making across all courses (excluding PGR)
- working with departments to set and review selection criteria (conditions required to receive an offer) and offer targets, ensuring that they strategically align with agreed student intake targets, in collaboration with departments and faculties.
- undertaking assessments of fee status and delivery of CAS for visa purposes
- confirming that applicant qualifications meet the terms of their offer and identifying potential fraud/plagiarism for further investigation

- managing the confirmation of A Level (and equivalent) results and clearing (if required) for undergraduate courses
- finalising applications to ensure that students are able to successfully register and enrol on their course
- monitoring admissions data and identifying any areas of concern and action required in consultation with relevant departments, including providing feedback on future targets.
- monitoring admissions and recruitment activity and providing accurate and timely statistical and management information to the University
- using various recruitment tools, activities and materials to promote the University and its courses

Individual departments are responsible for:

- developing and reviewing its portfolio of courses to ensure that wherever possible, courses appeal to a diverse range of applicants
- reviewing and proposing entry criteria to Education Committee, in consultation with Student Recruitment & Admissions, and in the context of relevant policies.
- assessing applications and making decisions on PGR applicants.
- ensuring that any departmental developments or constraints that affect recruitment and admissions to courses are identified and communicated effectively to Student Recruitment & Admissions and other departments of the University as applicable
- participating in recruitment events for the department including open days and post offer visit days.
- providing welcome and induction information to help facilitate the enrolment of new students.
- developing and delivering conversion activity.

[Responsibilities of applicants and students](#)

Durham University seeks to provide a respectful and inclusive environment where all staff and students can thrive.

Applicants are expected to uphold the values and behaviours outlined in our [Equality Diversity and Inclusion policy](#) and [Student Conduct policy](#). The University reserves the right to withdraw an application or offer of admission, if it discovers an applicant displaying behaviours that contravene this policy. Such behaviour or language used could be deemed inappropriate whether expressed verbally, in writing or on social media.

[Training and support](#)

The University adheres to all relevant legal and regulatory requirements along with recognised good practice in fair admissions to Higher Education. All admissions decisions are made by those equipped to make the required judgements and competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

How to apply

Undergraduate: For the majority of our courses, applications should be submitted via UCAS and received by the Equal Consideration Deadline (defined annually by UCAS). Where additional places are available, some courses may recruit beyond this deadline, through UCAS Extra and/or Clearing. Once submitted, applicants will receive access to the Durham Applicant Portal.

Postgraduate taught/research: Applications are made directly to the University via our online application form, on the [Durham Applicant Portal](#). Specific course deadlines will be advertised in advance on the relevant course pages. Some postgraduate courses charge an application fee. Applications for these courses will only be considered once the required fee has been received. Applicants are expected to check their applicant portal regularly for notifications and action requests.

Applicants to research degrees apply via the portal directly but are strongly advised to contact the Department first to discuss their application.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE): Applications must come through the [DfE Apply Portal](#). All decisions will be communicated via this portal.

Entry Requirements

Academic entry requirements for all courses are advertised on the University [course pages](#). Published entry criteria cover a wide range of qualifications, however if an applicant is unsure whether their profile meets the criteria, they should seek further guidance from the Admissions teams via our [‘Ask Us’ form](#).

English Language requirements

All applicants must provide evidence of their ability in spoken and written English, if they are not from a Durham University [recognised English speaking country](#). The University accepts a number of tests and qualifications as evidence of meeting its [English Language requirements](#). Where more than one piece of evidence of English Language proficiency is provided on an application, the University reserves the right to only consider the most recent evidence obtained.

If an applicant misses the English Language requirement, they may become eligible to undertake a Pre-sessional Academic English course, in which case the results from this course would then be used as evidence to satisfy the English Language requirement. The Admissions teams will signpost applicants to our [pre-sessional courses](#) and will assess eligibility for these courses based on the results of an applicant’s latest English Language Test.

Non-academic requirements

Courses that include a placement as part of required learning will require additional checks such as DBS and Fitness to Teach. Failure to complete these checks satisfactorily may result in withdrawal from the course.

Selection principles

Durham University is committed to recruiting the best students for the courses that we offer, irrespective of background.

Applications will therefore be assessed individually, considering the wider context of an applicant as well as some/all of the following information supplied on their application:

- Performance in achieved or partially completed qualifications
- Predicted performance in qualifications yet to be achieved
- Personal statement*
- Reference/s
- LNAT score & essay (applicants to UG Law only)
- [TMUA or STEP score](#) (applicants to UG Maths only)

*Personal statements are given equal consideration alongside other listed criteria. However, for some highly selective courses more weight will be given to personal statements as part of the selection criteria.

In addition, some courses may require applicants to participate in an interview, submit examples of written work, compositions, or sound/video files of performance as part of the selection process. Further information is provided on relevant course pages.

For postgraduate research courses, an application will only be considered where a suitably qualified supervisory team and appropriate academic facilities are available.

Achievement or predicted achievement of the required qualifications for a course, does not guarantee an offer of a place.

[Contextual offers \(UG only\)](#)

The University receives a range of contextual information about an applicant including educational, geodemographic and socio-economic background data, such as data about an applicant's home postcode.

This information allows assessors to consider an applicant's qualifications in light of their socioeconomic circumstances, ensuring that the potential of applicants is not overlooked. Contextual reduced offers can be made to applicants who meet our fair access criteria. To be eligible for a contextual offer applicants must meet,

at least TWO of the following criteria:

- Their home address postcode is classified as POLAR4 Quintile 1 or 2
- Their home address postcode is classified as ACORN 5 or 6
- Their current or most recently attended school is classified as a UK state school
- They are [care experienced](#)
- They are an [estranged student](#)

or **ONE** of the following criteria:

- They are in receipt of free school meals

The personal statement and reference are also important, and applicants will still need to meet any other admissions requirements needed by the course to be considered.

Contextual offers are only available to applicants classified as home for the purposes of tuition fees and eligibility for a contextual offer does not guarantee an offer.

Further information about [contextual admissions at Durham](#) is available on our website.

Widening Access schemes (UG only)

The University offers a number of schemes aimed at preparing and encouraging gifted applicants from underrepresented groups to apply and enrol at Durham. Eligible applicants who successfully complete one of the following schemes will receive a guaranteed standard offer (or in some cases a guaranteed reduced offer) on their chosen course:

- [Supported Progression](#)
- [Sutton Trust Summer School](#)
- [Space to Explore Potential \(STEP\)](#)
- [Levelling up: Aspire Higher](#) (for Chemistry, Maths and Physics courses only)

Mitigating circumstances

If an applicant has experienced mitigating circumstances affecting their ability to study or performance in their exams they can include this information in their application form and it will be considered at the point a decision is made. Reduced offers may be issued at the discretion of the decision-maker.

Deferred entry

Applications for deferred entry, made either at the point of application or requested during the admissions cycle, will be considered at the University's discretion, but are not guaranteed. If granted, deferrals are usually for one year only, unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example medical or for national service.

Year 2 entry and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

Applications for undergraduate Year 2 entry should be submitted via UCAS in the normal way. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, dependent on the modules studied elsewhere, the grades obtained and whether the learning outcomes meet the pre-requisites for the relevant course at Durham. Applicants for Year 2 entry are also expected to have achieved the Year 1 entry requirements for their chosen course.

Course transfers requests from Year 1 current students at Durham should be dealt with and processed internally within the University. If a current Durham student applies via UCAS for transfer into Year 1 or Year 2, their application will be rejected.

Further information regarding Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) can be found in the relevant [Undergraduate](#) and [Postgraduate](#) matriculation regulations.

Disability

The University is committed to considering all applications equally, in accordance with our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy](#). Applicants who consider themselves to have a disability can disclose this to the University on their application or at any time during the admissions process. Early disclosure will enable any reasonable adjustments to be planned in a timely manner, ensuring that applicants receive the necessary support from the outset of their studies.

A decision on your undergraduate or postgraduate application is made solely on academic grounds and completely independently of any discussions you may have with [Disability Support](#).

Some courses, for example Primary Education, PGCE, and Social Work, require fitness to practice as a compulsory professional condition of enrolment. Such cases will be addressed on an individual basis and discussed with the applicant to find solutions and/or alternative programmes.

College membership

Once an offer of admission has been made, offer holders will be contacted by the [Accommodation and Allocations Office](#) regarding College membership. The College membership process is separate from, and does not influence, whether to offer a place to study at Durham University. All enrolled students will be a member of a college.

Fee status and assessment

An applicant's fee status (Home or Overseas) will determine how much tuition fee they are required to pay. Fee status criteria are set out in regulations and guidance published by the Home Office.

The Postgraduate and Undergraduate Admissions teams are responsible for assessing fee status for applicants in accordance with advice and guidance published by the [Charity Supporting International Students in the UK | UKCISA](#). Applicants are required to provide information about their nationality and residential status in their application, which is then used to help determine their fee status.

The University's decisions on fee status are made independently from other institutions (for example Student Finance England, other universities, or research councils). It is therefore possible for an applicant to receive different fee outcomes from other institutions. Decisions surrounding fee status made at other institutions will not influence any decision made at Durham.

A decision on fee status will be made at the point of offer and will be communicated to applicants in their offer letter and via the applicant portal. If an applicant's status is not clear they may be asked to complete a full fee assessment form, before a decision can be made. Applicants who do not complete and return their fee assessment form by the required date, may be classified as overseas, and a decision processed on that basis. If an applicant sends in information after this point and their fee status subsequently changes to home, a place will only be offered if any remain available. Where places are not available a deferred place may be offered for the following year.

Applicants have the right to appeal if they believe their fee status to be incorrect, but this must be requested no later than 31 July in the year of application. For any offers made after 31 July, an appeal must be submitted by 31st August. (Deadlines do not apply to PGR applicants) By accepting our offer of admission and enrolling on the course, applicants are accepting the University's decision in relation to fee status, unless an appeal is already underway.

Appeals should be made in writing to the Assistant Admissions Manager (Fee Status and Compliance) at feestatus.admissions@durham.ac.uk. All appeals will be considered by a panel of at least three experienced staff members, who were not previously involved in the original decision.

The Panel will only accept a submission from the applicant themselves and will only reply to the applicant directly, unless written consent is given from the applicant to communicate with a third

party, for example, a parent or legal representative. The Panel's decision will be made within the legal framework of the Education (Fees and Awards) (England) 2007 Regulations, as amended, and the Higher Education (Fee Limit Condition) (England) Regulations 2017, as amended.

The panel will make one of two decisions: Home or Overseas. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the applicant by email within fifteen working days wherever possible.

The fee status decision will apply for the entire duration of study. A current student's fee status can only be reviewed if there has been a change in circumstances AFTER the start of their course, which they believe may make them eligible for Home fees under UKCISA guidelines. It is extremely rare that this will lead to a change in fee status.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions

As part of Durham's duty of care to our students and staff, we ask applicants who have received and accepted an offer with us to disclose any relevant unspent criminal convictions.

Information relating to criminal convictions will not affect the academic assessment of an application and is not shared with assessors. Further information about what information we collect and what we do with it can be found on our dedicated [Criminal Convictions](#) webpage.

ATAS

In order to avoid the proliferation of potentially dangerous technologies, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) runs an [Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#). This scheme is compulsory for overseas applicants from outside the EU and approval by the FCO under the terms of the scheme is a requirement for entry to a number of courses. If ATAS clearance is required for a course, applicants will not be able to enrol until this requirement is satisfied.

Deposits

The University reserves the right to charge a tuition fee deposit.

All PGT courses require overseas applicants to pay a deposit, and for some courses a deposit is also required from Home applicants to secure their place.

When applicants pay their tuition fee deposit, there is a 7 day "cooling off" period in which to cancel their contract with the University and receive a full refund. After this period, the University is only able to refund a deposit in the following circumstances:

- the applicant has received a conditional offer and failed to meet one of the conditions. They must have attempted to meet the condition after receiving their offer.
- the applicant is unable to secure a visa
- the applicant has a serious medical condition that prevents them from attending (medical evidence must be submitted).

Deposits cannot be refunded if an applicant changes their mind, however exceptional circumstances will be considered.

In the event that the University revokes an application based on fraud, any deposit paid up to that point will not be eligible for a refund.

If you think you are eligible for a refund, please upload your evidence to your [Applicant Portal](#).

Course amendments and withdrawals

Our [Student Protection Plan](#) provides transparent and accessible information on the action the University will take in the event of substantial course change or the withdrawal of a course following the receipt of applications.

Fraud, omission and plagiarism

All applicants and registered students are required to disclose to the University all academic and personal information material to an application made by the applicant or in their name and to their matriculation and registration. Applicants and matriculated and/or registered students, and those acting in their name, also have a continuous obligation to notify the University of changes in their circumstances.

For applications received through UCAS (Foundation and Undergraduate courses), these will be subject to UCAS rules and procedures concerning fraudulent applications. Applicants suspected of providing or omitting, or found to have provided or omitted, false information will be referred to UCAS. Applications identified by UCAS's Similarity Detection software to contain plagiarised material will be considered on an individual basis by Admissions staff, taking into account the nature, relevance and importance of the plagiarism.

The University reserves the right to cancel an application or withdraw any offer if it is found that an application contains false, plagiarised or misleading information, as stated in the [Admissions regulations](#). If the fraud is not identified until after an applicant has enrolled on their course, this may result in the applicant being withdrawn from their course and the UKVI being informed (where a student visa has been issued).

Feedback

Admissions staff are required to record the reasons for unsuccessful admissions decisions.

For Foundation and UG applications, reasons for rejection will be provided for all unsuccessful applications via the UCAS Hub.

For postgraduate taught and postgraduate research courses, feedback will be provided via the Applicant Portal.

Feedback for PGCE applications will be sent via DfE Apply alongside an unsuccessful decision.

Complaints and Appeals

Complaints should be submitted in writing. A complaint is defined as a specific concern related to a procedural error, irregularity or mal-administration in the admissions procedures or policies.

Complaints on any other grounds or dealing with processes or decisions not linked to an application or admission to the University will not be accepted under this policy.

Requests by an unsuccessful applicant for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision, with an aim of overturning or changing that decision, will not be considered.

Applicants will not be discriminated against in any further application should they request feedback or make a complaint under the University's policies and procedures.

Please visit our website for more information about the University's [complaints policy and procedures](#).

Related policy documents

- [Notification of Academic and Personal details for Admission, Matriculation and Registration purposes](#)
- [Regulations for Undergraduate Matriculation \(including Accreditation of Prior Learning – APL\)](#)
- [Regulations for Postgraduate Matriculation \(including Accreditation of Prior Learning – APL\)](#)
- [Policy for applicants under 18](#)
- [Student Protection Plan](#)
- [Statutes and Regulations](#)
- [Data Protection and Student Privacy Notice](#) (UG)
- [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct](#)