

# ADMISSIONS POLICY COVERING TAUGHT PROGRAMMES AT UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE LEVEL

## 1. General Statement

1.1 *The University Senate is responsible for the admission of students to the University on advice from the University Board for Teaching and Learning and other relevant committees. In consultation with these groups the University sets its admissions targets for the forthcoming academic year, and adopts policies to ensure that the strategic aims of the University are met.*

1.2 *This document represents the University's overarching policy on the admission of students to undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes of the University, regardless of mode of attendance, for internally and externally delivered programmes.<sup>1</sup> The principles contained within this policy are consistent with the precepts of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Code of Practice<sup>ii</sup>, the Schwartz principles of fair Admissions and accepted good practice across the Higher Education sector. This policy additionally complies with all current legislation affecting the recruitment and admission of students in England and Wales, in addition to the requirements of relevant accrediting professional bodies, where appropriate.*

1.3 *This policy and any associated policies will be reviewed annually by a Pro-Vice Chancellor, assisted by the appropriate committees charged with the oversight of admissions and recruitment, and the Director of Admissions. This policy will also be reviewed following national or international developments affecting University Admissions. Responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with the Director of Admissions.*

1.4 *The University is committed to the principles of fair admissions and fair access through the recruitment of students with the greatest academic ability and potential, irrespective of their social, cultural or economic background.*

1.5 *The University is committed to providing a high quality experience to all applicants through transparency and consistency of decision making in the application process, as well as the provision of timely decisions and responses.*

1.6 *In recognising that a diverse student community is of benefit to all the University is committed to widening access to, and participation in, Higher Education, by seeking to raise awareness, expectations, and achievement in the pre-University community so that all those who can benefit from the provision are able to access it.*

1.7 *The University, in accordance with the specific provisions and general intention of its Charter, confirms its commitment to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities in which individuals are selected, developed and otherwise treated on the basis of his or her relevant merits and abilities and are given equal opportunities within the University. The object of this policy is to ensure:*

*That no applicant shall be treated more or less favourably than any other on account of his or her sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, marital status, civil partnership status, family responsibilities, race, colour,*

nationality, ethnic or national origins, citizenship, religion, political belief, membership (or non-membership) of a Trades Union (or other representative association of employees or students), disability, age or socio-economic background.<sup>iii</sup>

1.8 The University has developed a range of bursaries to support undergraduate degree applicants with the greatest financial need. Further information on the bursary schemes currently available can be found in the University's Access Agreement <sup>iv</sup> or on the University's financial support website, which also details information on the bursaries and scholarships available to students on postgraduate taught programmes.<sup>v</sup> The University's Access Agreement additionally outlines the University's use of contextual data in admissions, which the University regularly reviews.

1.9 To allow applicants to find out more about the University, its programmes and requirements for entry the University will attend a number of recruitment events both within and outside the UK. These include 'Market stall' type events organised by UCAS, commercial organisations and individual schools and colleges. The University will also run a number of open days each year, which applicants are encouraged to attend. These open days will be publicised in a variety of places including the undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, the University website and the UCAS website (for undergraduate open days). It is important to note that participation, or otherwise, in any of these events by an applicant does not form any part of our selection criteria.

## 2 Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Admissions decisions will be made on behalf of the University by designated administrative staff within the Admissions Office. These decisions will be based on the recommendation of academic Admissions Tutors or according to entry requirements and criteria agreed in consultation between academic colleagues and the Director of Admissions (or his/her nominee). Upon occasion a Teaching and Learning Dean may be involved in making the final decision on an application.

2.2 The University seeks to ensure that all Admissions Tutors and designated administrative staff concerned with admissions are informed of changes and updates to policies and procedures throughout Higher Education relating to admissions, by way of dissemination of information and training of staff as and when appropriate.

2.3 Admissions Tutors and designated Admissions staff will communicate only with the applicant unless he or she has given consent for the University to discuss his or her application with another person (e.g. a parent or guardian). The University will accept notification of a 'nominated access individual' through the UCAS scheme. In the case of official University-appointed Agents representing international applicants, the University will normally include these Agents in any communication with an applicant.

2.4 The Director of Admissions will monitor processes and practices to ensure consistency of practice and encourage the sharing of good practice.

## 3 Selection

3.1 In deciding whether to offer a place to an applicant, the University will treat each application on its individual merits. It will take a range of information supplied in the submitted application into account when identifying an applicant's suitability for, and likely ability to meet the demands of, the programme for which he or she has applied. The University, at its discretion, may also take into account existing knowledge of an applicant or information provided in addition to that found on the application form. The University will consider whether an applicant meets both the general academic entry requirements (section six below), as well as any applicable subject-specific requirements. Past and expected performance in academic qualifications will be used as one of the main indicators for this judgement. The applicant's personal statement (or statement of purpose in the case of postgraduate taught applicants) will also be considered, especially when determining whether an applicant is suitably motivated and committed to following the programme applied for. The

*supplied reference(s) will also be taken into account, particularly when looking at a candidate's achievements, abilities and skills.*

*3.2 Where applicants submit their completed application before any relevant published deadline, including the UCAS deadline for the receipt of "on-time" applications, the University will ensure that equal consideration is given to all applications received prior to that deadline for the relevant academic year of study.*

*3.3 In order to embed an ethos of equality of opportunity in the Admissions process, staff directly involved in assessing applications for admission to the University will be required to undertake training in the avoidance of unconscious bias.*

*3.4 Admissions Tutors or designated Admissions Staff may arrange interviews for applicants, or request the submission of a portfolio of work in order to assist in evaluating their suitability to meet the demands of their intended programme. Where applicants are required to attend an interview, performance at interview will be used in conjunction with the submitted application, when making a decision. The University will try to give at least two weeks' notice of the date of any interview to applicants. Where travel to the university is impractical, for instance where an applicant lives overseas, wherever possible, alternate arrangements, such as an online (video) or phone interview will be offered. All interviews are conducted in line with the principles of equality of opportunity as contained within this policy.*

*3.5 The University will normally invite undergraduate offer holders to visit the University on a Visit Day. Visit Days allow offer holders the chance to see the University environment, meet staff and students from the department he or she has applied to, learn more about the programme and raise any questions he or she has regarding his or her offer of admission. Applicants holding an offer for taught postgraduate programmes are encouraged to visit the University on an open day and to take advantage of departmental events where these are available.*

*3.6 The University does not normally employ Admissions Tests as part of its selection methods. However, should a test be required this will be made known to potential applicants.*

*3.7 An applicant who meets the general or standard entry requirements as indicated in Section seven below, in our printed materials and on the website is not guaranteed an offer of a place.*

*3.8 As part of the selection process, an applicant's fee status will be determined by the University's Admissions Office in accordance with the regulations set out by the Government<sup>vi</sup>. Owing to any restrictions placed on the University regarding the recruitment of some groups of 'home/EU' fee-paying students, the fee status of an individual may, upon occasion, affect whether the University is able to make an offer of a place.*

## **4 Communication of a decision**

*4.1 An applicant will receive notification of the University's decision on his or her application electronically or by emailed letter from the University, and where applicable, electronically via UCAS. If he or she is to be made an offer of a place, the offer will specify any conditions of entry that he or she is expected to meet and the date by which these conditions must be met in order to take up that place. The University aims to make clear, easy to understand offers and the conditions of entry may include, but are not limited to, academic; non-academic e.g. completion of a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check; financial and English language proficiency. The offer will detail the tuition fee and will provide the University's terms and conditions that apply to the degree programme being offered..*

*4.2 The University aims to consider applications and make decisions as quickly as possible. However, given the volume, range and quality of applications the University receives, it is not always possible to make an admissions decision within a short timeframe. Where the University is not able to make a decision for a significant amount of time, the Admissions Office will contact applicants to explain the situation and let them know when they should expect to receive a decision.*

4.3 An applicant will be expected to respond to an offer using the appropriate method e.g. online through UCAS for full-time undergraduate programmes or directly to the University for most other programmes. Any deadline for reply and the method for responding will be indicated by the University or, where applicable, by UCAS.

## 5 Deferred entry

5.1 The University recognises the advantages that some undergraduate students can gain from a "gap year", and therefore welcomes applications for admission for the following year. The University also understands that an applicant's personal circumstances may necessitate a change to his or her intended year of entry.

5.2 Admissions staff will consider deferred applications using the same selection process as for applicants for the current year. A successful applicant will receive correspondence from the University, using his or her supplied contact details, in the interim.

5.3 The University will normally only defer an offer of a place for one year. Applicants wishing to defer a place for a second year will be required to submit a new application.

5.4 Deferred entry may result in some changes to the advertised programme specification. The University will notify applicants in a timely fashion where changes are made and, where appropriate, will provide guidance on contractual remedies available to applicants due to the change.

## 6 Provision of Information & guidance (including publication of entry requirements)

6.1 The University aims to provide clear, accurate, transparent and up-to-date information and guidance to applicants and advisors about all aspects of recruitment, selection and admission to its programmes including entry requirements, that are appropriate to the needs of prospective applicants, in both internal and external publications regardless of the medium (i.e. printed, audiovisual, world wide web, etc) enabling them to make choices in an informed manner. Where appropriate, the University uses the UCAS entry tariff in publicising programme level entry requirements for undergraduate programmes of study.

6.2 The main sources of information on programme specific entry requirements are:

- The University Undergraduate, Part-time and Postgraduate Prospectuses (both in printed and on-line format)
- School and departmental literature
- The University website
- The UCAS website and entry profiles<sup>vii</sup> (for undergraduate programmes)
- The University Open Days and Visit Days

6.3 The University regularly reviews entry requirements to its taught programmes of study with any changes made to entry requirements or standard offers since the publication of printed materials being communicated as soon as possible via the University website (and the UCAS website where applicable). These sources should therefore be considered the most up-to-date and applicable.

6.4 Contact details for requests for further information about the University's programmes of study, as well as all enquiries regarding student recruitment and admissions are available on the University's website.

## 7 General entrance requirements

7.1 The University welcomes applications from students holding a broad range of qualifications. The University will use independently published guidelines and rankings recognised within the United Kingdom higher education sector, such as UK NARIC<sup>viii</sup> and UCAS, when considering the equivalence of qualifications.

7.2 Where transcripts or other documents submitted in support of an application are in a language other than English, the University requests that applicants submit a copy of both the original document, as well as a certified translation.

7.3 As a minimum, applicants for undergraduate programmes will be expected to have been educated to General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) or equivalent in other qualifications<sup>x</sup>. In addition the University will normally expect an applicant to the University demonstrate a good general education, which includes acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, normally equivalent to at least Grade C (or grade 4 in the numeric grading scheme) at GCSE in English and Mathematics.

7.4 The University welcomes applications for postgraduate taught programmes from appropriately qualified applicants, having normally achieved at least an upper second class honours degree in their undergraduate studies, or an equivalent qualification. Some programmes may accept applications from graduates holding a lower second class honours degree or equivalent. Applicants with relevant equivalent professional experience will also be considered for taught postgraduate degree programmes.

7.5 For admission to the University of Reading International Foundation (and Language) Programme, the minimum entry requirements are normally:

- the equivalent of a pass at Grade C (or 4 in the numeric grading scheme) or above in five subjects at GCSE or
- a good result in the school leaving qualification of the applicant's home country (where that qualification is equivalent to at least GCSE level).

Evidence of having attained the appropriate level of English language competency as detailed in section 8 beneath.

7.6 Whilst the University encourages applicants to consider carefully which programme(s) are suitable to apply for in light of their experience, qualifications and future ambitions, applications to more than one programme at the University are welcomed.

7.7 The University welcomes applications from applicants who are resitting entry qualifications, as this demonstrates dedication to study and achievement.

7.8 Applicants who are unsuccessful may apply again for a subsequent entry point. Applications will be considered against the standard entry criteria for the programme applied to for that year of entry. The University may draw upon all information from previous applications or any previous registrations at the University as a student when assessing suitability for the course.

7.9 The University has adopted a range of collaborative and progression agreements which enable students from our partner institutions to study for and receive a University of Reading degree. Further information on our collaborative and progression agreements can be found on our website.<sup>x</sup>

## 8 English Language Qualifications

8.1 Applicants must be competent in the English Language. This can be satisfied through GCSE English Language at Grade C (or 4 in the numeric grading scheme) or better, or an equivalent qualification. Alternatively, applicants will normally be required to achieve one of a number of English Language qualifications intended for academic purposes approved by the University. The level required will be dependent on the programme of study to be undertaken, and will be published in the University Prospectus or on the University website.

8.2 English Language certificates must be verifiable through an online service (as for IELTS, Pearson and TOEFL) or else must be provided as an original certificate. English Language certificates will not be accepted if they are more than two years old<sup>xi</sup>.

## **9 Applicants with Disabilities and additional support needs**

9.1 The University welcomes applications from students with disabilities. Applications from students with disabilities are assessed following the standard procedures contained in this document and consideration of support requirements will remain entirely separate. If an offer is made, an assessment of needs is carried out to ensure that the University can provide the required support.

## **10 Mature Students**

10.1 The University welcomes applications from mature students and may waive the general entrance requirements where evidence of his or her potential to complete the chosen programme of study successfully is provided. Applicants who have been out of formal education for a number of years, normally three years or more prior to the date of admission, will normally be expected to show evidence of recent academic study in order to be considered for admission. In such cases the University would accept, for example, a GCE A level or an Access to Higher Education Diploma.

## **11 Admission of Under 18s**

11.1 The policy on admission of under 18s onto undergraduate programmes is available separately<sup>xii</sup>.

## **12 Applicants with Criminal Convictions**

12.1 As part of its duty of care to staff and students, the University asks applicants for information about any relevant criminal convictions with this information being normally assessed before any offer of entry is made. The assessment is undertaken by a panel of experienced staff and the process is managed by the appropriate Senior Manager within Admissions. Applicants are advised to consult the University's policy on admission of those with a criminal conviction, which is available separately<sup>xiii</sup>.

## **13 Admission to undergraduate programmes with Recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning (RPL/RPEL)<sup>xiv</sup>**

13.1 Applicants are advised to consult the University's policy on Admissions to undergraduate programmes with recognition of Prior (Experiential) Learning, which is available separately. Acceptance of prior learning for credit purposes is at the discretion of the University and its Schools. Certificated credit obtained from another institution can be recognised in one of two ways:

- Exemption from individual modules within or from the whole of part 1 of an undergraduate programme
- Transfer of credit and marks in substitution for modules within an undergraduate or postgraduate programme that count towards the classification of that programme.

13.2 Where a module contributes to the classification of a qualification (i.e. those in a postgraduate programme or part 2 or 3 of an undergraduate programme), exemption from those modules will not normally be granted to an applicant.

13.3. The evidence for acceptance of prior experiential learning must demonstrate that the experiential learning meets the coverage of the relevant modules in terms of the outline content and assessable learning outcomes of the module, and is appropriate to the level of the module. RPEL will normally be limited to a maximum of one third of a programme of study.

## 14 Applicants requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom

14.1 The University is licensed by the Home Office as a Tier 4 Sponsor and aims to provide a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) in good time for an applicant to make a visa application but in doing so relies upon the applicant taking responsibility for;

- a) Making a timely application for admission including complete details of all previous study and periods of study in the UK
- b) Responding fully and in good time to accept the offer
- c) Responding fully to requests for any further information, such as passport details

14.2 In order to comply with UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) regulations, the University reserves the right to refuse admission 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.

14.3 The University is required to notify UKVI, where relevant, of any non-arrival, or late arrival, of an applicant and of any subsequent changes to a student's enrolment status.

14.4 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 UKVI and/or withdraw the offer of a place and/or withdraw its sponsorship of the individual's visa.

14.5 The University may need to review this policy in the light of changes to Home Office Tier 4 policy in order to remain compliant with its duties as a sponsor. This may result in changes to matters such as the evidence required for English language proficiency at short notice. Where changes are necessary the University will endeavour to contact all relevant applicants promptly.

## 15 Feedback

15.1 The University strives to treat all applicants fairly and without prejudice. As the University is not able to offer a place to all applicants, Admissions staff will normally record the reason(s) for rejection on an applicant's file. The reason for rejection will normally be communicated to the applicant, electronically via UCAS and/or electronically or by letter from the University. Should an applicant ask for more in-depth feedback the University will, wherever possible, answer the request. Requests for should be made by the applicant and directed, in the first instance, to the Admissions Office who will aim to deliver more in-depth feedback within 10 working days of receipt of the request.

## 16 Confirmation and enrolment

16.1 The University will confirm an applicant's place on a programme when he or she meets all the conditions set out in his or her offer within the timescale stated in the offer.

16.2 Applicants who have not met the conditions of their offer are encouraged to submit results of those qualifications contained in the offer by 31 August of the application cycle in which they have applied, as in certain circumstances the university may be able to confirm their place on their intended, or an alternative programme of study.

16.3 The University will send all successful applicants confirmation of his or her place on the programme, as well as enrolment information providing details concerning induction, enrolment and activities to help them settle in during the first few weeks of term. This information may be sent in hard copy or by electronic means. The information will also be made available via the University website.

## 17 Responsibility of the applicant

17.1 The University expects that an applicant will, in line with the UCAS regulations where applicable, provide full and accurate information in order to be considered for admission. Full-time undergraduate applicants suspected of submitting, or found to have submitted, false information will be referred to UCAS. In the case of international applicants, details may also be passed to the United Kingdom Border Agency. The University reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a place if fraud is discovered following an applicant receiving an offer.

17.2 Undergraduate applicants who have been identified by the UCAS Similarity Detection Service will be dealt with under the University's Admissions Plagiarism Procedures.<sup>xv</sup>

## 18 Changes to Programmes

18.1 If there is a significant change to a programme of study between the publication of the Prospectus and the start of the programme to which an applicant has applied the University will notify applicants as soon as possible in writing indicating the options available to them, in addition to providing support to secure a place on an alternate programme if available. Significant changes may include:

- Substantial changes to the content of the programme applied for
- Changes regarding the status of the programme (e.g. validation by a professional or statutory body)
- Discontinuation of a programme of study.

18.2 These changes will be communicated to you in writing as far in advance of any change as reasonably possible and the University will take all reasonable steps to mitigate any negative impact on you as a result of these changes. Reasons for making changes include, but are not limited to:

1. to make updates to reflect best practice and academic developments for the benefit of students;
2. to improve the Programme and your experience of it;
3. to meet the requirements of external or accrediting bodies;
4. as a result of staff changes within the University; or
5. changes to the law.

## 19 Appeals and Complaints

18.1 Should an applicant wish to lodge a complaint concerning the application process or an appeal against an admissions decision, he or she should write in the first instance to the Director of Admissions. Should the University not have adhered to its own policies and procedures or any national policies or have broken the law, or there is evidence of bias or prejudice, the Admissions Appeals and Complaints policy and procedures will be implemented<sup>xvi</sup>. The University will not normally alter an unsuccessful decision should an applicant's actual performance be greater than was predicted at the time of his or her application.

## 20 Interaction with an applicant

19.1 The University is committed to ensuring that any interaction with an applicant is conducted in a professional, courteous and respectful manner and it expects that any communication from an applicant or his or her representative is conducted in the same way.

19.2 Applicants, and their representatives, should note that the University will not tolerate inappropriate behaviour towards its employees. Hostile, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate behaviour will be viewed seriously and may prejudice the consideration of an application, appeal or complaint.

19.3 The University will usually warn an applicant or representative that his or her behaviour is felt to be inappropriate, and that action may be taken but where the behaviour is particularly inappropriate no warning may be given.

## 21 Data Protection

20.1 The University collects and retains certain types of data, in various formats, about its applicants, current and past students in order that it can fulfil its functions as an education provider.

The University is required by legislation to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. All applicant information will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to family, friends or any third party without the applicant's explicit consent, unless disclosure is permitted under the provisions of the Act. Details of the University's Data Protection policy are published on our website.<sup>xvii</sup>

## Version control

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	Director of Admissions	Annually	University Board for Teaching & Learning	7 December 2015
1.1	Director of Admissions	Annually	University Board for Teaching & Learning	16 May 2017

---

<sup>i</sup> This includes all Integrated Masters programmes such as MChem, MEnvSci, MEng, and MPharm Programmes.

<sup>ii</sup> Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2012), UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education.

<sup>iii</sup> The full policy can be found at [www.reading.ac.uk/equality/humres-policies.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/equality/humres-policies.aspx)

<sup>iv</sup> Visit [www.offa.org.uk/access-agreements/searchresult/?inst=University%20of%20Reading](http://www.offa.org.uk/access-agreements/searchresult/?inst=University%20of%20Reading)

<sup>v</sup> Visit [www.reading.ac.uk/studentfinance](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studentfinance)

<sup>vi</sup> The Education (Fees and Awards) (England) Regulations

<sup>vii</sup> Entry profiles can be accessed through [www.ucas.com/students/coursesearch](http://www.ucas.com/students/coursesearch)

<sup>viii</sup> Information on UK NARIC can be found at [www.ecctis.co.uk/naric](http://www.ecctis.co.uk/naric)

<sup>ix</sup> Guidance on equivalent qualifications can be found in the prospectus or by contacting the

Admissions Office

<sup>x</sup> The University's collaborative partnership register can be found at

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/QualityAssurance/CollaborationWithOtherInstitutions/cqsd-register.aspx>

Details of progression agreements can be found at

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/cqsd/QualityAssurance/CollaborationWithOtherInstitutions/cqsd-othercollab.aspx>

<sup>xi</sup> The two years' duration is counted from the date of the test on the certificate to the date on which the proposed course of study is due to commence.

<sup>xii</sup> The policy on admission of under 18s onto undergraduate programmes is available at

[www.reading.ac.uk/admissions-policies.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/admissions-policies.aspx)

<sup>xiii</sup> The policy on admission of those with a criminal conviction is available at

[www.reading.ac.uk/admissions-policies.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/admissions-policies.aspx)

<sup>xiv</sup> The full University policy can be found at

[www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/apelpolicy.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/apelpolicy.pdf)

<sup>xv</sup> Details of the University's statement on Academic Misconduct can be found at

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-misconduct.aspx>

<sup>xvi</sup> Full details of the Admissions Appeals and Complaints policy and procedures can be found at

[www.reading.ac.uk/admissions-policies.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/admissions-policies.aspx)

<sup>xvii</sup> Full details of the University's Data Protection policy can be found at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/imps/Data-Protection-Policy-CURRENT.pdf>