

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. SCOPE

1.1 The Postgraduate Admissions Policy applies to the admission of students to postgraduate research programmes at Durham University.

2. PRINCIPLES

2.1 Durham University is committed to recruiting the most able and talented postgraduate research students from across the world. It seeks to achieve this by identifying merit and potential and ensuring that its admissions process is open, fair and transparent to all with the potential to meet our entry requirements, regardless of background.

2.2 Durham University's Admissions Policy is aligned with the University's Strategic Plan (2017-27) and complies with the quality framework provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and all relevant equalities legislation.

3. GOVERNANCE

3.1 **Senate** is "the supreme governing body of the University in all academic matters" and has the specific responsibility to regulate "the admission of persons to courses of study".

3.2 Policy in respect of admissions is monitored and developed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) through the University Executive Committee (UEC) and Senate.

3.3 Education Committee is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). Education Committee, through its Access and Admissions Committee, is responsible for monitoring admissions and recruitment policies and outcomes at University, Faculty and departmental levels.

3.4 Boards of Studies of individual Departments are responsible for the setting of entry standards and selection criteria, in the context of policy set by UEC and Senate.

4. MANAGEMENT OF ADMISSIONS

4.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education takes executive responsibility for admissions at a strategic level, and is supported by senior staff at the level of Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor and heads of professional support services.

4.2 Target numbers for postgraduate research admissions are determined through the University's annual planning round.

4.3 Operationally, the postgraduate research admissions process is managed institutionally by Recruitment and Admissions, and the following units have responsibility for specific parts of the process:

- Academic Departments
- The Faculties
- The Colleges
- The International Office
- The Student Immigration and Financial Support Office

5. APPLICATION PROCESS

5.1 If spaces are available applications are welcomed up until the start of a postgraduate research programme. Some programmes are very popular and may therefore operate a closing date or dates. Where this is set in advance it will be published on the department's web pages. In deciding when to submit an application, applicants are recommended to take into account factors such as securing accommodation¹ and, if appropriate, deadlines for applying for funding or for a visa for study.

5.2 Students applying to Durham University apply to an academic programme of study and are offered a place on a programme of study. Subsequently they are allocated to a college. The offer of a place at the University is also separate to an offer of funding.

5.3 Applications to most programmes are made direct to the University via an online application form². For applications to research degrees, part of the application process involves the discussion of a research proposal. Applicants can contact the Department to check that it has a suitably qualified supervisory team and appropriate academic facilities before applying. In certain circumstances the University may contact applicants to request further information in order to consider their application. Some programmes may charge an application fee.

5.4 Subject to such limitations on entry standards as might be determined by Senate, academic departments set the selection criteria for a programme. Selection decisions are then made by academic selectors or by delegated and trained selectors within the department or professional services. The formal offer or rejection is made by staff in Recruitment and Admissions or by other staff delegated to do so.

5.5 The Colleges Office will contact applicants when they have accepted an offer from the University with an online application for college membership only or college membership and college accommodation. All postgraduates are members of a college throughout their time at Durham University, whether they live in college accommodation or elsewhere. Applicants who accept an offer from the University can express a preference for a particular college but this is neither guaranteed nor compulsory. If an applicant prefers not to select a college, or cannot be placed in their preferred college, then the Colleges Office will select a college. The College allocation process is separate from, and does not influence, whether to offer a place to study at Durham University.

6. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

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

6.2 All staff involved in making admissions decisions are required to complete a compulsory introductory training programme and yearly refresher training.

¹ See www.dur.ac.uk/study/accommodation/guarantee/

² See www.dur.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/#2

7. INFORMATION

7.1 The main sources of information on postgraduate research admissions, including scholarships and bursaries, are:

- The University web-site, which displays regularly updated information on admissions details by programme;
- The University Postgraduate Prospectus, issued on a yearly basis approximately 12 months ahead of the relevant academic year of entry . The Prospectus is comprised of two parts: a document containing general information about postgraduate study at the University and department-specific information;
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- Members of staff at the University, for instance in discussing research proposals;
- The University also provides opportunities to visit the University and discover further information through open days and events, which are held throughout the year at many convenient locations across the UK and internationally.

8. POLICY ON DEFERRED ENTRY

8.1 The University generally welcomes applications from students who intend to defer their entry, although students can only defer one year at a time up to a maximum of two times. Deferring entry might impact on a student's ability to obtain funding.

9. SELECTION

9.1 Durham University is interested in recruiting students able to develop both academically and personally within an environment that is attractive to and supportive of an increasingly diverse and international student population. Achievement or predicted achievement of the required qualifications does not guarantee an offer of a place. All applicants are judged on the basis of merit and potential, including their motivation to benefit from the range of academic opportunities available within the University. All of the information included in the application will be considered, including reference(s) and the personal statement. A suitably qualified supervisory team and appropriate academic facilities will be an essential consideration in assessing applications to postgraduate research degrees. Course-specific interpretations of merit and potential are published in the University postgraduate prospectus, on the University web-site or can be discussed with individual departments. The University interprets "merit" as the positive attributes of an applicant seeking to study at Durham, which is based on the evidence of prior achievement and experience. Mindful of the context of prior achievement, the University judges "potential" as the scope for a student to benefit from what Durham has to offer, and the promise for future achievement. This might be exemplified by professional experience. The University values the wider contribution that a student can make to University life.

9.2 Entry criteria are published for each programme. Applicants who do not meet these entry requirements but are nonetheless assessed as being suitably able and qualified to undertake the programme of study might be granted a concession³.

9.3 Some applicants will be interviewed prior to a decision on their application.

9.4 We seek to ensure that all of our selection methods are reliable and valid. Our admission selection methods are developed and approved by University Education

³ Further information can be found at www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/2/4/2/

Committee, which reports to Senate, with support provided by Recruitment & Admissions. Any change in selection method requires approval from EC and Senate. Department and College Admissions Staff will make decisions in accordance with University admissions policy.

10. APPLICANTS WITH A DISABILITY

10.1 We strongly encourage applicants with a disability to disclose this to the University, to enable any necessary reasonable adjustments to be planned in support of their education.

10.2 Applications from students who declare a disability will be considered on the same criteria and principles as for other candidates. A decision may need to take into account any overriding health and safety concerns, barriers relating to professional requirements such as fitness to practice, or the University's ability or inability to make any necessary adjustments. Such cases will be addressed on an individual basis.

10.3 The Durham University Disability Service provides advice and practical support to all applicants to the University who have stated a disability.⁴

11. APPLICANTS WITH A CRIMINAL CONVICTION

11.1 Admissions staff will disregard any criminal convictions that are spent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, unless the programme of study is likely to bring the student into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Where this is the case, a disclosure will be sought through the Criminal Records Bureau. Where an applicant has an unspent conviction or has a conviction that affects fitness to practice, a decision on whether to offer a place will be made according to the procedure for considering applicants with criminal convictions.

12. ATAS

12.1 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 programmes.

13. DEPOSITS

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

14. UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

14.1 An offer of a place on a postgraduate research programme is independent from a decision about funding. Durham University offers a wide range of full and partial funding opportunities to outstanding applicants wishing to study towards Doctoral degrees. Further information can be found on the University's website⁵.

⁴ Further information can be found at www.dur.ac.uk/dusd/

⁵ See: www.dur.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/fees/

15. FEEDBACK

15.1 Admissions staff are required to document the reasons for admissions decisions.

15.2 Feedback will be provided only on request. A request must be made in writing (by email or letter), including details of the applicant's full name, date of birth, home address and programme applied for.

15.3 Under the Data Protection Act a request for feedback should come from the applicant or from someone to whom the applicant gives express and voluntary consent, in writing, to act on their behalf. Feedback will only be provided to a third party if the applicant has given prior, express and voluntary consent, in writing.

15.4 The University undertakes to reply to all requests for feedback, but applicants should note that the University prioritises making decisions on applications over providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants and therefore at certain times of the year there may be a delay in providing feedback.

16. COMPLAINTS

16.1 The University publishes a complaints policy for applicants⁶. 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.

16.2 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.

16.3 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.

17. FRAUDULENT STATEMENTS/OMISSIONS AND PLAGIARISM

17.1 Every applicant and registered student is 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 matriculation⁷ 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.

17.2 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 information⁸.

⁶ www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/policy/complaints/

⁷ For further information about matriculation please see:

www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/matricregspg.pdf

⁸ www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/admissionpersdetails.pdf

18. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

18.1 The Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy is supported by a number of policies, processes and sources of information, advice and guidance designed to minimise barriers to potential applicants that include:

- Regulations for Matriculation⁹
- Durham University Diversity and Equalities Policy¹⁰
- Data Protection Policy and Student Privacy Notice¹¹
- Applicants who have a stated disability
- Advice on qualifications and their equivalency¹²
- English Language Proficiency¹³
- Credit transfer arrangements¹⁴

Date of Senate agreement of Policy: 19 June 2018

⁹ www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/matricregspg.pdf

¹⁰ www.dur.ac.uk/diversity.equality/policy/

¹¹ www.dur.ac.uk/ig/

¹² www.dur.ac.uk/international/prospectivestudents/

¹³ www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/3/

¹⁴ www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/6/