

# POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT ADMISSIONS POLICY

## **1. SCOPE**

1.1 The Postgraduate Taught Admissions Policy applies to the admission of students to postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes at Durham University. It takes effect from October 2018 and replaces Durham University's previous Postgraduate Admissions Policy.

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

2.1 Durham University is committed to recruiting the most able and talented postgraduate 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 all relevant legal and regulatory requirements along with recognised good practice in fair admissions to Higher Education.

## **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 taught admissions are determined through the University's annual planning round.

4.3 Operationally, the postgraduate taught 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 taught 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 accommodation<sup>1</sup> 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.

5.3 The offer of a place at Durham University is separate to any offer of funding. Applicants are responsible for sourcing the funding required to complete their programme, regardless of whether this is provided by the University or any third party.

5.4 Applications to most programmes are made direct to the University via an online application form<sup>2</sup>, with the exception of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Applications for PGCE programmes are made via UCAS with the exception of the PGCE International Geneva, which uses the University's standard PG application.

5.5 Some programmes charge an application fee. Where this exists, information on the fee will be provided on the University's website. Applications for these programmes will only be considered once the required fee has been received.

5.6 Applicants can contact the University to check their eligibility for specific programmes and/or the availability of funding.

5.7 In certain circumstances the University may contact applicants as part of the admissions process to request further information to help in their consideration of the application.

5.8 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 selectors in Recruitment and Admissions. The formal decision (offer or unsuccessful) is made by staff in Recruitment and Admissions .

5.9 Once an offer is received, applicants will be eligible to apply for college membership, with or without accommodation. All taught postgraduate students 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 on their behalf. The College allocation process is separate from, and does not influence, whether to offer a place to study at Durham University.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.dur.ac.uk/study/accommodation/guarantee/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/study/accommodation/guarantee/)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.dur.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/#2](http://www.dur.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/#2)

## **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 admissions 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.

## **7. INFORMATION**

7.1 The main sources of information on postgraduate taught 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;
- UCAS, for PGCE programmes. This information includes typical offers, subject-specific entry criteria, course information and information about how applications are considered;
- Members of staff at the University;
- 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 Most departments in the University welcome 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. A small number of departments do not normally accept requests to defer entry but in those cases, the applicant will be advised to submit a new application during the following admissions cycle. Applicants should note that deferring entry might impact on their 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. Course-specific interpretations of merit and potential are published in the University postgraduate prospectus, on the University web-site or can be discussed with Recruitment and Admissions. 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 concession<sup>3</sup>.

9.3 Some applicants will be interviewed prior to a decision on their application, such as is typical for the MBA, MSW or PGCE programmes. Some programmes require applicants to submit examples of written work or, in the case of programmes within our Music department, compositions or sound/video files of performance. Information is provided on our website.

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 Committee, which reports to Senate, with support provided by Recruitment & Admissions. Any change in selection method requires approval from EC and Senate. 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.

10.3 In exceptional circumstances, the University 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 and in discussion with the individual applicant to find solutions and/or alternative programmes.

10.4 The Durham University Disability Service provides advice and practical support to all applicants to the University who have stated a disability.<sup>4</sup>

## **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.

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<sup>3</sup> Further information can be found at [www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/2/4/2/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/2/4/2/)

<sup>4</sup> Further information can be found at [www.dur.ac.uk/dussd/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/dussd/)

## **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 \(ATAS\)](#). This scheme is compulsory for overseas applicants to specific programmes. If this applies to a programme of study, applicants will be directly notified that ATAS is required. Approval by the FCO under the terms of the scheme will be a requirement for entry for these programmes.

## **13. DEPOSITS**

13.1 The University reserves the right to charge a tuition fee deposit. All self-financing overseas students applying for postgraduate taught programmes at Durham University are required to pay a tuition fee deposit if they accept an offer. The tuition fee deposit is paid before the University issues a Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS) number, which overseas students need in order to apply for a visa.

13.2 Deposits are also payable by Home/EU applicants to some programmes, e.g. Masters programmes in Business and Finance.

13.3 Applicants will be notified that a deposit is required as part of their offer.

## **14. UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS**

14.1 An offer of a place on a postgraduate 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 PGCE and Masters degrees. Further information can be found on the University's website<sup>5</sup>.

## **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. Without this permission, it will not be possible to provide feedback to any third party.

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. Therefore at certain times of the year there may be a delay in receiving a response to any request. Further details, including typical response times, can be found on our website.

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<sup>5</sup> See: [www.dur.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/fees/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/fees/)

15.5 Feedback will be provided once per course and per application. The University will not respond to further requests for feedback on unsuccessful applications where feedback has already been provided. Unfortunately, Recruitment and Admissions are not able to enter into further discussions about any feedback provided.

## **16. COMPLAINTS**

16.1 The University publishes a complaints policy for applicants<sup>6</sup>. 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 matriculation<sup>7</sup> 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 has the power to withdraw an offer or acceptance prior to matriculation and registration and to require a matriculated and/or registered student to withdraw, immediately, upon written notice, where the University becomes:

- a) of the reasonable opinion that the applicant, or someone making the application in their name, or the matriculated or registered student failed to supply relevant information, or supplied false or misleading information, relating to their application, matriculation or registration;
- b) aware of previously unknown information relating to the application, matriculation or registration (including, but not restricted to, criminal convictions, subject to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, and other conduct) which, in the University's reasonable opinion, makes it inappropriate for the applicant, matriculated or registered student to study on the programme.

## **18. OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES**

18.1 The Postgraduate 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:

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<sup>6</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/policy/complaints/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/policy/complaints/)

<sup>7</sup> For further information about matriculation please see:

[www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/matricregspg.pdf](http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/matricregspg.pdf)

- Regulations for Matriculation<sup>8</sup>
- Durham University Diversity and Equalities Policy<sup>9</sup>
- Data Protection Policy and Student Privacy Notice<sup>10</sup>
- Applicants who have a stated disability
- Advice on qualifications and their equivalency<sup>11</sup>
- English Language Proficiency<sup>12</sup>
- Credit transfer arrangements<sup>13</sup>
- Student Protection Plan

*Date of Senate agreement of Policy: 19 June 2018*

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<sup>8</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/matricregspg.pdf](http://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/university.calendar/volumeii/2011.2012/matricregspg.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/diversity.equality/policy/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/diversity.equality/policy/)

<sup>10</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/ig/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/ig/)

<sup>11</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/international/prospectivestudents/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/international/prospectivestudents/)

<sup>12</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/3/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/3/)

<sup>13</sup> [www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/6/](http://www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/6/)