



# Code of practice for Postgraduate Admissions

Academic entry year 2023/24

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## Context

1. The University of Surrey is committed to excellence in admissions and adhering to the principles of fairness and transparency as referred to by the [Office for Students guidance](#).
2. The University is enhanced by the presence of a diverse student body which includes students both from within the UK and from overseas, and applications from as wide a range of students as possible are actively encouraged.

## Purpose

3. The purpose of this *Code of practice* is to ensure that the University is treating all applications fairly and according to the principles set out in the University [Quality Framework](#), including [Regulations for Foundation Year](#), [Regulations for taught programmes](#), etc.
4. The University's admissions practices are designed to consider all applications on the basis of applicants' achievements and potential to successfully complete their chosen programme of study.

## Scope

5. This document is the overarching *Code of practice for postgraduate taught admissions* for the University of Surrey. It is relevant to applicants applying to study a postgraduate taught degree at the University of Surrey, from the UK, EU and overseas.
6. This *Code of practice* does not cover applications to study an International Foundation Year offered by Study Group ([isc.surrey.ac.uk](http://isc.surrey.ac.uk)).
7. This *Code of practice* is intended to provide information for applicants, their parents or advisers, and for staff within the University of Surrey on the key principles relevant to applications for postgraduate study. It outlines the University's approach to a number of matters relating to the processing of applications and explains the institutional, national and legal context within which the admissions' function operates.

## Principles

8. The University of Surrey offers a high-quality learning environment, which supports students to achieve their full potential in the academic discipline and prepares them for professional life. The key principle of the University's approach is that all applicants are considered primarily on merit and their academic potential.
9. The University's *Code of practice for postgraduate taught admissions* is committed to:
  - providing transparent, consistent and efficient information
  - selecting applicants who are able to complete the programme as judged by their achievements and potential
  - using reliable assessment methods, including consideration of evidence provided, and, where appropriate, auditions and interviews
10. Initially, applicants will be considered for entry based on the following criteria:
  - Review of prior academic achievement of the applicant
  - Review of predicted examination results where results are not yet known

- Review of the personal statement in support of the application
- Review of the referee's assessment of an applicant's ability
- Review of relevant work experience

See paragraphs 15-19 below for full details of admissions and selection criteria.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

11. The University Education Committee (UEC) is responsible for this *Code of practice* that covers admissions processes at undergraduate level. UEC is reporting to each meeting of Senate.
12. The Chief Operating Officer and Vice-Chancellor, together with the University Executive Board, are responsible for setting the entry criteria for the admission of students. The minimum entry requirements for academic programmes are revised and confirmed on an annual basis.
13. The role of the University of Surrey Admissions department is to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented in a fair and consistent way in line with relevant legislation and University strategy. The Admissions department make decisions on individual applications for most programmes, applying established criteria.
14. Admissions Tutors make decisions on individual applications in cases where these decisions cannot be made by the Admissions department.

### **Admissions criteria and selection principles**

15. Entry requirements are updated on an annual basis in light of changing academic requirements, in a timely fashion. Rarely, some exceptional late changes to the entry requirements may be applied after the University prospectus has been printed. This means that sometimes these requirements do not reflect the information published in the hard copy of the undergraduate prospectus. The University strongly recommends that applicants look at the information in the course listings on the University of Surrey online programme pages as the source of the most up-to-date information.
16. The University aims to select those applicants who are likely to succeed academically and benefit from its academic programmes. Aptitude for an individual programme is the primary criterion for selection and an academic decision will always be reached on an application before other factors such as criminal convictions are taken into account.
17. The selection criteria and process ensure that:
  - decisions are fair and consistent in relation to the published entry criteria
  - evidence of a candidate's potential to succeed on the programme is taken into account
  - where appropriate, Admissions staff may consider contextual factors in relation to an application
  - the selection process is transparent. Selection may be on the basis of an application form (with or without additional required written work or a portfolio) or on application form plus audition/interview. Where interviews or auditions form part of the selection process, candidates will be informed of the process in advance
  - the outcomes are communicated to the applicant in a timely way. The University will communicate via email and Surrey Self-Service and, where applicable, via UCAS

- compliancy requirements in regard to external legislation (such as the UKVI requirements) are taken into account when reviewing an application.
18. All applicants are required to submit official documentation to fulfil the entry criteria; this will include official translations into English.
19. Before applying applicants should consider the following points:
- The details of programme-specific entry criteria on the programme pages of the University website
  - Prior to entry, minimum levels must be obtained in GCSE (or equivalent), qualifications in English Language, Mathematics and, in some cases, Science. The details of these requirements are published on the programme pages of the University website
  - Applicants must provide evidence that they possess at least the minimum level of English Language proficiency as set by the University Education Committee and the Senior Leadership Team for Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions. Details of the English Language requirements are published on the programme pages of the University website.
  - Applicants who have non-standard qualifications or have work experience they wish to have assessed may be considered on an individual basis in line with the general aims and principles of the Admissions and [RPL/RPC policies](#) (Recognition of prior learning or credit). For further details please refer to the [Code of practice for the recognition of prior learning and prior credit: taught programmes](#)
  - Entry onto some programmes of study requires applicants to meet additional non-academic conditions. These conditions usually apply to programmes that have professional requirements and may include Disclosure & Barring and Fitness to Study clearance. Where such clearance is required, information will be provided in programme literature and advice given to applicants.

### **English Language**

20. All applicants must meet the University's minimum English language level through the most recent evidence of one of the following prior to admission:
- An approved Level 2 equivalent qualification including country equivalent
  - An approved English Language test taken within 2 years prior to the start of the course
  - Successful completion of the appropriate Pre-sessional English Language programme offered by the University of Surrey, provided it is completed immediately preceding the main degree programme or with exceptional agreement
  - Successful completion of an English Language assessment at the required level according to a University partnership agreement
21. Applicants can also be exempt from completing one of the above requirements (see paragraph 20) if they are a national of a Majority English Speaking Country or have studied for a minimum of one full academic year, and successfully completed within the past five years a qualification at least equivalent to a UK Bachelors taught in English. For further details please visit the [language webpage](#).
22. In some cases, a student will present a variety of pieces of evidence, sometimes conflicting, regarding English language ability.

23. The principle here is to judge the student on the **most recent** piece of evidence, except that an IELTS taken no more than 6 months before the end of a degree course takes precedence over degree study. Where a student registers for an IELTS test but subsequently withdraws without taking the test, they are judged on the other criteria and evidence of the cancelled test will be required.

### **Extenuating circumstances**

24. Extenuating circumstances are non-academic factors which may include illness, family circumstances, personal responsibility or instability affecting the school or the college where these may have had an adverse effect on a student's educational attainment.
25. Applicants should first submit their extenuating circumstances to their exam boards for consideration and await a decision from the boards before contacting the University. The University will usually only consider extenuating circumstances where an exam board has not already made special dispensation post-examination to a student's grades. In these cases, applicants should contact [headofadmissions@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:headofadmissions@surrey.ac.uk) confirming which exam board the qualifications were taken.
26. All extenuating circumstances will be dealt with on an individual basis and with the strictest confidence, but it is important to note that submitting extenuating circumstances does not guarantee that the University will be able to accept applicants who do not meet the conditions of their offer.

### **Applicants with disabilities**

27. The University of Surrey is committed to equality of opportunity for all of its students and encourages applications from students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties. The University's policy of equal opportunity ensures that all applicants are considered on the same academic grounds. It is important, however, that applicants with a disability make this known to the University so that appropriate arrangements for reasonable adjustments to support their education and learning can be made. A procedure for exploring all possible reasonable adjustments with the participation of the applicant will be followed. In exceptional cases, the University may require further advice from health professionals. Occasionally, other criteria may need to be considered, such as the requirements of professional bodies. For example, applicants to nursing programmes must undergo an occupational health check.

### **Applicant's conduct**

28. Applicants and their representatives should note that the University will not tolerate inappropriate behaviour or language towards its employees or other applicants during the admissions process. Hostile or otherwise inappropriate behaviour or language, whether expressed verbally or in writing, will be viewed seriously and may adversely affect the consideration of an application, appeal or complaint. Such action may include the withdrawal of an offer or the rejection of an application.

### **Criminal convictions**

29. The University aims to select those applicants who are likely to succeed academically and benefit from its programmes. Having a Criminal Conviction (as defined in the [Criminal Convictions Guidelines](#)) will not usually prevent an applicant from gaining admission to the University.
30. A failure to disclose any Relevant Criminal Conviction(s) (as defined in the Criminal Convictions Policy) is taken seriously and could result in: the withdrawal of any existing or subsequent offer of a place; or to the termination of any subsequent

registration in accordance with the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#) or [Regulations for Fitness to Practise](#).

31. Please see the [Criminal Convictions Guidelines](#) for further details.

### **Fraudulent and misleading applications**

32. The University follows the UCAS rules and policies concerning fraudulent applications and liaises closely with the UCAS Verification Unit to prevent fraud. We will refer to UCAS any application that we suspect to be fraudulent or to contain fraudulent information.
33. The University reserves the right to cancel an application or withdraw any offer made on the basis of an application which we have found to be fraudulent. Any student found to have been admitted on the basis of fraudulent information may have their studies terminated. International students who have been admitted on the basis of fraudulent information may have their studies terminated and also be reported to the relevant government agency. We may carry out credibility checks and failure to pass these checks may result in an offer being withdrawn.

### **Deposit**

34. In order to firmly accept a postgraduate offer of admission at the University of Surrey, applicants are required to pay a deposit of £2000 towards the tuition fees (for September 2024 entry the deposit required is £3000). If the total fee for the year is less than £4000, applicants are required to pay a deposit of 50% towards the tuition fees.
35. The deadline to firmly accept your offer and pay your deposit will be highlighted in your offer letter which you can view on Surrey Self-Service. If you pay the deposit after this deadline you will still be considered for entry, subject to places being available on the programme.
36. For programmes starting at any other times of the year, the deposit must be paid no less than 10 days prior to the start of the programme. Applicants who require a visa to study in the UK are encouraged to pay their deposit as early as possible to allow time for the visa process.

### **Refunds**

37. Once a deposit has been paid, it can only be refunded for the following reasons:
- *Refusal of a student visa for an overseas applicant*  
An applicant will be asked to provide proof that a visa has been refused and the University must be able to verify through the UKVI that the individual has been refused entry to the UK. An administration fee of £100 will be deducted from the refund. Any applicant suspected of submitting a visa application merely to obtain a refusal for a refund will not be eligible to have the deposit refunded.
  - *Inability to meet academic or English language requirements specified in offer*  
An applicant will be asked to provide proof that they have been unable to meet the conditions of their offer. For English Language conditions it is expected that an applicant would continue to retake a test to fulfil conditions up to 6 weeks prior to the start of the course. An administration fee of £100 will be deducted from the refund.

- *Programme closure*  
In the event that the University can no longer offer a place on a programme, due to closure or substantial changes to the programme, a full refund will be given
38. If applicants wish to request a refund they must complete and submit a refund form within two weeks of the original start date of the course.
39. Should any applicant be found to use fraudulent documents at the time of application or at the time of applying for entry clearance, no refund will be due.

### **Student visas**

40. The UK government operates a points-based immigration system for all overseas students. Further details at [gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration)
41. The University is licensed with the Home Office as a Student Route Visa Sponsor. To apply for a Student Route Visa, applicants must have a Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS). This is a unique number which will enable students to apply for their visa. The University is under no legal obligation to sponsor any individual and exercises caution with respect to issuing a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to not risk its status as a Student Route Visa sponsor.
42. Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS) is issued in accordance with the Student Route Visa Sponsorship and CAS Issuing Policy, available at: [surrey.ac.uk/apply/policies](https://surrey.ac.uk/apply/policies)

### **Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)**

43. It is mandatory for some applicants who need entry clearance to study in the United Kingdom and who are applying to certain programmes to have an ATAS certificate. We will not be able to issue a Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS) or register applicants on to the programme until their clearance has been received. For further details, please visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website. [gov.uk/academic-technology-approval-scheme](https://www.gov.uk/academic-technology-approval-scheme)

### **Disclosure of information**

44. Failure to disclose relevant information or providing false information may result in the place being withdrawn.

### **Feedback**

45. The University may provide feedback if requested. Applicants must be aware that feedback will only be given directly to them unless the University has received written permission that the applicant is willing for the matter to be discussed with another individual. The applicant should also be aware that there may be cases where highly specific or tailored feedback may not be possible.

### **Complaints**

46. The University of Surrey is committed to delivering a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service in line with its selection criteria and guidelines. In the event that an applicant wishes to make a formal complaint, the University will follow a procedure



which ensures that all complaints are dealt with fairly, promptly, consistently and with due regard to the Equalities Act (See Appendix A). If a complaint is upheld, the University will take appropriate action. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated clearly to the applicant.

47. An applicant does not have the right to appeal against an academic decision not to offer them a place at the University, as long as the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the University's published entry requirements and selection criteria.
48. The University will only correspond with the applicant, unless the applicant has provided written permission for the University to discuss the application with another person. Full details of the complaints process can be found on Appendix A of this Code of practice.

### **Disclaimer**

49. The University undertakes a continuous review of its programmes, services and facilities to ensure quality enhancement. The University is also largely funded through public and charitable means and is required to manage these funds in an efficient and cost-effective way for the benefit of the whole of the University community.
50. The University, therefore, reserves the right if it considers it to be necessary:
  - to make reasonable variations to the content and syllabus of programmes of study (including in relation to placements)
  - to suspend or discontinue programmes of study or to combine or merge them with others
  - to make changes to its statutes, ordinances, regulations, policies and procedures which the University reasonably considers necessary. Such changes if significant will normally come into force at the beginning of the following academic year and depending on the nature of the change will normally be applied to all students regardless of the date of their enrolment
  - to make reasonable alterations to the timetable, location, number of classes, content or method of delivery of programmes of study and/or examination processes.
51. To the extent permitted by law, the University hereby expressly excludes:
  - All conditions, warranties and other terms which might otherwise be implied by statute, common law or the law of equity
  - Any liability for any direct, indirect or consequential loss or damage incurred by any user in connection with our site or in connection with the use, inability to use, or results of the use of our site, any websites linked to it and any materials posted on it
  - Any liability for direct or indirect financial or other losses arising from any discontinuations, changes to or mergers of any programme of study, service or facility

### **Monitoring and review**

52. This Code of practice is reviewed annually by the University's Senior Management Team for Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions and the University Education Committee. The next review date is September 2023.



## **Appendix A - Admissions Complaints guidance**

### **Summary**

1. The University of Surrey is committed to delivering a high quality, efficient and fair admissions service in line with its selection criteria and policy. In the event that an applicant wishes to make a formal complaint, the University will follow this procedure to ensure that all complaints are dealt with fairly, promptly, consistently and with due regard to the Equalities Act.

### **Scope**

2. These procedures set out how an applicant may raise a complaint about the admission process.
3. The Complaints Procedure may be invoked by any individual who has submitted an application either via UCAS or through the University's online application system for an integrated foundation year, or an undergraduate, postgraduate taught, or postgraduate research degree.

### **General principles**

1. An applicant does not have the right to appeal against an academic decision not to offer them a place at the University, as long as the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the University's published entry requirement and selection criteria.
2. In the vast majority of cases an applicant's complaint can be handled fairly, amicably and to the satisfaction of all concerned without the necessity of a formal complaint.
3. The University will ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly and with fairness and with consistency. There will be no discrimination against any applicant who makes a complaint.
4. If a complaint is upheld, the University will take the appropriate action and will do so promptly. If the complaint is not upheld, the reason for the decision will be communicated in a timely manner to the applicant.
5. An applicant making a complaint, and those whom the complaint is made about, can expect the complaint to be dealt with confidentially. It may be necessary however, to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure.
6. A complaint should be made by the applicant. Complaints made on behalf of the applicant by parents, representatives, school or another third party will only be considered in exceptional cases where there are clear reasons for doing so. Complaints that are made anonymously cannot be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure.
7. This Complaints Procedure covers both the informal and formal stages in handling a complaint.

### **Informal complaint**

8. Most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily at this stage.
9. The applicant should first raise their complaint in writing with an Admissions Officer. In most cases this should be the member of staff who processed the application, unless the complaint is about that individual. In those cases, the complaint should be addressed to the Admissions Pre-enrolment Manager.

10. A complaint must be made within 14 days of the admissions decision or any other action of which the applicant wishes to complain. Complaints made outside of this timeframe will not be considered, unless there are valid reasons why the complaint could not be made within the time scale. The Admissions Officer will respond to the complaint within 10 working days of the complaint being made and shall retain a record of the correspondence and any action taken. If it is not possible to fully respond within the 10 days, the complainant will be advised of the timescale for a full response.
11. Where the complaint concerns non-selection and the Admissions Officer is satisfied that the application was considered fairly and that the decision complies with the selection procedure, they will respond explaining the context of the decision and any selection processes that were applied. The Admissions Officer will also at this stage draw to the attention of the complainant the Complaints Procedures, should they wish to pursue the matter further.
12. In relation to complaints about all other matters relating to the admissions process, the Admissions Officer will provide written reasons for their decision.
13. If the Admissions Officer concludes that the decision was unfair and/or not in accordance with the Admissions Procedure; they will refer the complaint to the Head of Admissions.

#### **Formal complaint**

14. If the applicant is dissatisfied with the response received from the Admissions Officer or Admissions Pre-enrolment Manager, they should submit, within 10 working days of receiving the response from the Admissions Officer or Admissions Pre-enrolment Manager, a written complaint to the Head of Admissions. Any complaints received out of the timeframe will not be considered.
15. The complaint should be set out to include the informal steps that have already been taken and details of any response received, a statement as to why the applicant remains dissatisfied and the outcome the applicant is seeking.
16. The Head of Admissions will acknowledge in writing a receipt of the complaint within 5 working days. The Head of Admissions will then investigate the complaint and submit a written response to the complainant within 14 working days from acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint.
17. The Head of Admissions' decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.
18. During the main results period or where the Head of Admissions is not available through absence a member of the Senior Management Team for Marketing, Recruitment & Admissions will handle the complaint. Their decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.
19. If the Head of Admissions has had previous involvement in the applicant's admissions process or complaints procedure for an individual, he/she will refer the complaint to the Director of Marketing, Recruitment & Admissions. The Director of Marketing, Recruitment & Admissions' decision will then be considered as final.

## **Appendix B – Related documents**

[Code of practice for the recognition of prior learning and prior credit; taught programmes](#)

[Student Route and CAS Issuing Policy](#)

[Criminal Conviction guidance](#)

[Terms and Conditions of Offer](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)