Code of practice for postgraduate taught admissions

Academic entry year 2027/28 onwards

Last revised August 2026

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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 pathway programmes offered by Study Group (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 is committed to securing and promoting the freedom of speech of their students and staff (See *Freedom of Speech Code of Practice*). These commitments also apply to admissions of postgraduate students such that no prospective student will be denied admission to the University for their lawful speech or expression, however controversial or unpopular their ideas or opinions may be, including when their speech may have caused offence.

10. 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.

11. Initially, applicants will be considered for entry based on a review of:

    - Prior academic achievement of the applicant
    - Predicted examination results where results are not yet known
    - The personal statement in support of the application
    - The referee's assessment of an applicant's ability
    - Relevant work experience.

    See paragraphs 16-20 below for full details of admissions and selection criteria.

Roles and responsibilities

12. The University Education Committee (UEC) is responsible for this *Code of practice* that covers admissions processes at postgraduate level.

13. The Vice-President, Global 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.

14. 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.

15. Admissions Tutors make decisions on individual applications in cases where these decisions cannot be made by the Admissions department.

Admissions criteria and selection principles

16. 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 postgraduate 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.

17. 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 lawful factors, such as criminal convictions, are taken into account.

18. 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 legally relevant 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 an 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 your applicant portal 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.

19. All applicants are required to submit official documentation to fulfil the entry criteria; this will include official translations into English.

20. 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 UK 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

21. 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. These must have been completed within the last 5 years unless otherwise detailed.
- A qualification equivalent to a UK bachelor's degree or higher, taught and assessed fully in English is also acceptable to meet the English language requirements of the programme where the university considers this sufficient evidence for accepting. This can be demonstrated by providing a letter from the university confirming that the medium of instruction was English

- 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.

22. Applicants can also be exempted from completing the above requirement (see paragraph 21) 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 a qualification at least equivalent to a UK Bachelor's degree or higher, taught entirely, or in part, in English at an overseas campus. For further details please visit the language webpage.

23. In some cases, a student will present a variety of pieces of evidence, sometimes conflicting, regarding English language ability. The principle here is to judge the student on the **most recent** piece of evidence, whilst taking all evidence into account, 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 or awarding bodies 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, and this is evidenced. In these cases, applicants should contact headofadmissions@surrey.ac.uk confirming which exam board or awarding body the qualifications were taken from.

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 threatening behaviour or abusive language towards its employees or other applicants during the admissions process. Hostile or abusive 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 and expulsions

29. The University aims to select those applicants who are likely to succeed academically and benefit from its programmes. Being expelled from an educational institution or having a criminal conviction (as defined in the *Procedure for Expulsions and Criminal Convictions*[1]) will not usually prevent an applicant from gaining admission to the University.

30. A failure to disclose any expulsion or relevant criminal conviction(s) (as defined in the *Procedure for Expulsions and Criminal Convictions*) 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 *Procedure for Expulsions and Criminal Convictions* for further details.

Fraudulent and misleading applications

32. 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; failure to pass these checks may result in an offer being withdrawn.

Deposit

33. In order to firmly accept a postgraduate offer of admission at the University of Surrey, international applicants are required to pay a deposit of £3000 towards the tuition fees. If the total fee for the year is less than £6000, applicants are required to pay a deposit of 50% towards the tuition fees. Students joining courses charged on a per-module basis rather than an annual basis are required to pay the cost of their first module as a deposit. There may be a higher deposit if students are applying from a country or region which is considered higher risk in terms of visa refusal rates or low conversion from deposit to enrolment. These deposit requirements do not apply to online programmes, for which payment terms will be communicated to applicants.

34. The deadline to firmly accept your offer and pay your deposit will be highlighted in your offer letter which you can view on your applicant portal. If you pay the deposit

[1] https://www.surrey.ac.uk/quality-framework/academic-and-student-regulations-and-procedures

after this deadline, you will still be considered for entry, subject to places being available on the programme.

35. 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.

36. A deposit is not required where a student provides evidence of external sponsorship or where a Surrey international graduate is moving directly from a UG course to a PGT course.

37. For particularly high demand PGT courses a deposit is always required for home and international students, and the exceptions detailed above do not apply.

Refunds

If a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) letter has been issued, a refund will be issued only in the following specific circumstances:

- *Refusal of a student visa*
  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 £150 will be deducted from the refund. Any visa refused on the grounds of credibility or falsified documentation, or as a result of the applicant's own negligence, will not be eligible for a deposit refund.

- *Extenuating circumstances*
  Extenuating circumstances may include illness, family circumstances, or other issues outside the applicant's direct control. An applicant will be asked to provide proof that these circumstances have resulted in them not being able to take up the place at the University. An administration fee of £150 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. 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.

39. If an applicant is unable to meet the conditions of their offer or otherwise wishes to withdraw their application prior to the issuance of a CAS letter, a refund can be requested. No further evidence will be required in such cases, and no administration fee will be charged.

40. If applicants wish to request a refund they must complete and submit a refund request through our online form. The refund must be requested either:
    a. Within four weeks of the original start date of the course, or

b. Within one week of receiving a visa refusal, or a negative outcome from a visa administrative review, provided that the visa application or the administrative review was requested before the start date of your course.

Student visas

41. The UK government operates a points-based immigration system for all overseas students. Further details can be found at gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration.

42. 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.

43. 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.

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

44. 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.

Disclosure of information

45. Failure to disclose relevant information or providing false information may result in the offer of a place being withdrawn.

Feedback

46. 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.
47. University of Surrey and Education Agents
48. University of Surrey is a supporter of Agent Quality Framework (AQF), and signed the AQF pledge on 12 March 2024 as a symbol of our commitment to the best practices of recruiting international students. That pledge can be found at - https://www.surrey.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/AQF-pledge.pdf. As part of AQF, the University of Surrey works closely with its network of partners to ensure international students receive professional and competent guidance, ethical advice and knowledge regarding their options of studying in the UK.
49. University of Surrey has a commercial relationship with its network of education agents. A placement fee is paid to overseas representatives, who successfully enrol international students.
50. International students, who received unsatisfactory services from their representative, whilst applying to the University of Surrey, can share their feedback and report their experiences by completing the report an agent form.

Complaints

51. 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.

52. 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.

53. 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 in Appendix A of this *Code of practice*.

Disclaimer

54. 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.

55. 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.

56. 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

57. This *Code of practice* is reviewed annually by the Admissions Steering Committee and the University Education Committee.

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

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. This Complaints Procedure covers both the informal and formal stages in handling a complaint.

Informal complaint

11. Most complaints can be resolved satisfactorily at this stage.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. In relation to complaints about all other matters relating to the admissions process, the Admissions Officer will provide written reasons for their decision.

16. 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

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. The Head of Admissions' decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.

21. During the main results period or where the Director of UK Recruitment and Admissions is not available through absence, a member of the Senior Management Team for UK Recruitment & Admissions will handle the complaint. Their decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.

22. If the Head of Admissions has had previous involvement in the applicant's admissions process or complaints procedure for an individual, they will refer the complaint to the Director of UK Recruitment and Admissions. The Director of UK Recruitment and Admissions' decision will then be considered as final.

Appendix B – Related documents

Freedom of Speech Code of Practice

Code or practice for the recognition of prior learning and prior credit; taught programmes

Student Route and CAS Issuing Policy

Expulsions and Criminal Convictions guidance

(https://www.surrey.ac.uk/office-student-complaints-appeals-and-regulation/declaration-expulsions-and-criminal-convictions)

Terms and Conditions of Offer

Data Policy