

**University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education**

**Admissions Policy for Award-Bearing Courses**

**Introduction**

**Coverage of the Policy:**

- The policy will apply to all award-bearing courses except the Certificate in Higher Education.

**Aims of the policy:**

- to provide clear guidance for students on the criteria and procedures for admission to each of its award-bearing courses;
- to ensure a consistent approach across the Department;
- to provide information for academic and administrative staff on what procedures should be followed;
- to provide information for those setting up new courses;
- to demonstrate clarity and consistency of practice to the University, QAA, the recommendations of the Schwartz Committee 2004 and other bodies.

**Policy**

**1. Management and administration of the admissions process**

- 1.1 The course director shall normally assume the role of admissions tutor, with overall responsibility for all matters relating to admissions to a course. Other members of staff may carry out some aspects of the management or administration of the admissions process in the place of the course director.
- 1.2 The course director should raise any queries on procedures with the Registry. The course director should refer concerns regarding the administration of the admissions process to the relevant Divisional Director.

**2 Statement of Course Admissions Policy:**

- 2.1 The course director should publish the admissions criteria and process in the course programme specification. This should be reviewed annually. Changes to an existing policy should be approved by the appropriate Divisional Director and also the appropriate standing committee in the case of courses offered jointly with another faculty or department.
- 2.2 Within the parameters established by the admissions criteria, applicants should be offered equality of opportunity. Particular care should be taken to ensure

that applicants are not unjustifiably disadvantaged or debarred from application by virtue of disability. The Department will comply with relevant legislation, including the Sex Discrimination Act (1975, 1986), the Race Relations Act (1976), the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), the Data Protection Act (1998), the Human Rights Act (1998), the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000), the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (2001) and the Age Discrimination Regulations 2006. Selection will be without regard to marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, social background, disability or age.

- 2.3 Equality of opportunity should be extended to all ages. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate an approach to their study which includes demonstrable skills of critical analysis, wide contextual knowledge and the ability to manage their own time.
- 2.4 The ability of applicants to finance their study should not be included among the criteria when assessing suitability for admission;
- 2.5 Applicants to undergraduate level courses who do not have English as a first language are required to take an International English Language Teaching System Test (IELTS) or equivalent and to gain a score of at least 7.0<sup>1</sup> More detail is available at:  
[http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate\\_courses/courses/courses\\_and\\_entrance\\_requirements/english\\_language.html](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate_courses/courses/courses_and_entrance_requirements/english_language.html)

Requirements for postgraduate students are an IELTS score of 7.5<sup>2</sup> depending on the level of the course, or equivalent TOEFL scores. More detail is available at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply/english.shtml>

### **3 Selection procedure and decisions regarding admission**

- 3.1 Admission information shall include clear details of the course content, and what is required of applicants, in particular the recommended minimum time commitment from students. An admissions tutor should satisfy him/herself that the applicant has understood the time commitment required. It might be appropriate, for example for a CPD course, to ask if the applicant has the support of any employer. Students should be strongly advised against undertaking more than one award bearing course at a time. (See Policy on Concurrent Registration)
- 3.2 There shall be a published closing date for applications for each course.
- 3.3 Selection of applicants for admission should normally be based upon information drawn from the following sources:
  - Information provided by the applicant on the application form;
  - Further information provided at interview;
  - References.

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<sup>1</sup> With a level of 6.5 allowable for the Advanced Diplomas in British and European Studies and in Globalisation Studies

<sup>2</sup> With a waiver applicable in certain circumstances

This may be supplemented by some or all of the following sources of information

- Written work provided (for example, a sample of the student's work or a proposed project outline);
- A prior test;
- Successful completion of a preparatory course (which should not normally contribute credit towards a final award).

3.4 Applicants should be invited to indicate on the application form or in writing whether they have special needs that may need to be taken account of by the Department. OUDCE should consider offering the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use alternative ways for meeting programme requirements. The course director shall be responsible for judging whether an applicant with special needs might be able to meet programme requirements in alternative ways. Where applicants indicate their disability, the course director should notify the Student Advisor in order to discuss any arrangements that may need to be made in advance of considering the application.

#### **4 Application forms**

4.1 The application form should request all the information that the course director and the Department need to know in order to decide whether to take an application further.

4.2 A request for equal opportunities and disability data for monitoring purposes should be issued to all potential applicants on a separate form.

4.3 The requirements of the Data Protection Act must be adhered to with regard to information collected as part of the admissions process. In particular, course directors must ensure that appropriate information is provided for applicants regarding the Data Protection Act and that information received in the course of admissions is stored and used in accordance with the Act.

#### **5 Selection process**

5.1 All those involved in assessing applications, marking tests or interviewing should keep notes relating to the selection criteria, marks given and the interview performance of each candidate. The Department will make arrangements to keep these notes securely for one year after the completion of the admissions process.

5.2 Unless there are specific reasons not to, all applications for an undergraduate level course should be considered together and interviews should be held in groups and over as short a period as possible, in order to assist in the process of comparing applicants. Applications for Masters courses must be treated according to the University procedure. The same principles apply to applicants for postgraduate certificate or diploma courses, in particular, that those who

apply before the same application deadline or who apply in the final “open field” should be considered together.

- 5.3 All applications received after the closing date should be dealt with in a consistent manner.

## **6 Interviews**

- 6.1 The style of interviews will vary considerably in order to reflect in an appropriate manner such factors as the aims and level of the course. In general, it is assumed that the interview will be used as an important method for exploring with the applicant the match between the information already provided in the application and the admissions criteria; and in particular that the student is aware of the time commitment required for the course.
- 6.2 A face-to-face interview, or equivalent activity, should normally form part of the selection procedure for all courses. Equivalent activities, particularly in the case of the Department’s Internet-based courses, might include telephone interviews or interaction via the Internet as well as standard written application materials. Where telephone interviews are used, a report should be made and form part of the application material. Where admissions for a course do not include an interview, the Course Admissions Policy should indicate the means by which those making decisions can judge candidates, perhaps from a variety of backgrounds and locations, against the selection criteria, and also how applicants may gain information and advice.
- 6.3 Interviews should normally be carried out by a selection panel of at least two academic staff one of whom must be the course director.
- 6.4 In the interests of fairness and transparency, the same method of interview should normally be used when considering all the applicants for a cohort of a course. For example, all applicants should be interviewed face-to-face for entry to a particular cohort rather than some being interviewed face-to-face and others by telephone or not at all.
- 6.5 Applications may be rejected without interview. However, applicants whose application appears to offer a *prima facie* case for admission by satisfying all of the admissions criteria should not normally be rejected without interview. Where the decision is made to reject applicants without interview, a pro forma sheet should be used to record the suitability of the applicant against the course’s admissions criteria, together with the reasons for that judgement. The decision to reject without interview should be made by at least two members of academic staff.

## **7 References**

- 7.1 For all courses, at least one reference, academic where possible, should be sought for each applicant. For postgraduate level courses, the number of references should also be consistent with University requirements. The same number of references should be sought for all applicants for a particular cohort of a course.

- 7.2 Applicants should forward pre-addressed envelopes and letters requesting a reference to their chosen referees, who should return the references directly back to the Department.
- 7.3 Every effort should be made to secure references before applicants are interviewed. In order to protect the confidentiality of referees and safeguard the value of the reference system applicants should not be informed, formally or informally, that admission has been granted on a conditional basis subject to the receipt of appropriate references.

## **8 Decisions regarding admission /implementation of decisions**

- 8.1 The Course Director's decision whether to admit an applicant is final
- 8.2 Applicants should be contacted as soon as possible once a decision has been reached regarding admission. Targets for processing applications published in prospectus information should, under normal circumstances, be adhered to.
- 8.3 The Department should abide by a stated timing for communicating with candidates at various stages of the admissions cycle e.g. acknowledgement of receipt of applications; notification of decisions. The contents of letters of offers or rejections should comply with Department and University guidelines.

## **9 Enquiries and complaints regarding admissions decisions**

- 9.1 Any enquiries about admissions decisions should be referred to the Course Director.
- 9.2 Where applicants wish to make a complaint regarding the admissions process, this should be directed to the relevant Divisional Director. Complaints will only be considered where they relate to the procedural matters.

## **10 Annual review of the admissions process**

- 10.1 The course director shall be responsible for an annual review of the admissions process as part of the annual course review presented to the Board of Studies, and to the relevant standing committee in the case of courses operated jointly with another faculty or department. The admissions criteria and procedure will be reviewed by the course director during this annual review. Admissions statistics including numbers of enquiries, applications, interviews, offers and places taken up, will be monitored annually and reviewed by the Department on a course by course basis.

## **11 Staff development and internal provision of information regarding admissions**

- 11.1 The University recognises that academic staff must be appropriately skilled, trained, and conversant with relevant national issues in order to carry out their responsibilities with regard to admissions. Training in the conduct of admissions interviews is included as part of the package of staff development available to current and new academic staff.
- 11.2 As a guide to all staff involved in the admissions process, the approved Departmental policy on admissions is available on the Registry shared drive (Q drive/registry/view registry/general policies) and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

## **12 Retention of records regarding admissions**

- 12.1. Course directors are responsible for ensuring that consistent and accurate records regarding admissions, including all application forms and supporting documentation, are maintained. Admissions records relating to applicants admitted to courses should be kept with the other records regarding the student and retained for five years after completion of the course. Admissions records relating to unsuccessful applicants should be retained for at least one year after the date of application.

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