



# **POSTGRADUATE ADMISSIONS POLICY**

This policy applies to all applications to postgraduate and PGCE courses at the University of Chester, from Home and EU applicants.

## 1. Principles

The University of Chester is committed to providing all students with a high quality, caring and supportive learning experience, including work-related learning that equips them with the necessary personal and academic skills to engage confidently with the wider world.

The University aims to ensure that all students are enabled to achieve their full potential and that no prospective or existing student is disadvantaged or discriminated against on the grounds of age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, faith, disability or specific need, HIV status, sexual orientation, gender, marital or parental status, political belief, or social or economic class.

The University actively seeks to increase levels of recruitment from groups currently underrepresented in higher education and aims to offer educational opportunities to those members of the community who are capable of benefiting from them.

The University's policies and procedures aim to be fair, clear, explicit and transparent and covers undergraduate students from both home and overseas. This policy embraces the expectations and indicators of sound practice of the 'Schwartz Report', 'Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice' (2004) and the UK Quality Code for HE (2018).

## 2. Admissions and Selection

### *Selection Principles*

The University of Chester is committed to a fair and consistent admissions process and considers all applications on an individual basis, taking into account all of the information presented in the application form and applying tried and tested entry criteria in a consistent manner. Admissions decisions are based on applicants' academic achievement to date, predicted academic achievement, ability and potential, and are made by staff within the academic departments e.g. programme leaders. Decisions are communicated to applicants through the relevant Admissions team.

In order to comply with the requirements of relevant professional bodies, applicants to certain professional courses may be required to provide a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, or to demonstrate fitness to practise prior to being admitted onto the course. Applicants will be advised of these requirements when they are made an offer of a place.

### *Entry Requirements*

Each programme has its own entry requirements, which are published annually in the University's postgraduate prospectus, and on the University website. The programme entry requirements are set in consultation with academic departments and postgraduate admissions and are reviewed and updated annually.

Postgraduate taught programmes: For MA / MSc taught programmes, candidates should normally possess at least a lower second class (2ii) honours degree (or equivalent alternative), however some programmes require a higher academic entry requirement so candidates should always refer to the respective individual programme requirements.

Postgraduate research programmes: For DProf, MPhil or PhD research programmes, candidates will be expected to have a first degree, normally an upper second class (2i) honours degree (or

equivalent alternative) in a relevant subject, or a relevant postgraduate Master's qualification (or equivalent). For admission to a Masters by research, candidates should normally possess at least a lower second class (2ii) honours degree (or equivalent alternative). Some programmes require a higher academic entry requirement so candidates should always refer to the respective individual programme requirements.

Exceptions to these academic requirements may be made when applicants can demonstrate significant work experience or by demonstrating relevant knowledge and skills in a specific field. The admission of such applicants is subject to approval by the Head of Department/Programme Leader. Applicants who are unsure of the entry requirements for a particular postgraduate taught programme are advised to contact Postgraduate Admissions prior to making an application to the University.

PGCE programmes: candidates will be expected to have a first degree, normally an upper second class (2i) honours degree (or equivalent alternative). For Primary and Early Years programmes, candidates must be able to offer an academic profile that offers a suitable base for the development of teaching across the full range of subjects within the primary National Curriculum; for Secondary programmes, the degree content must be broadly appropriate to the secondary school curriculum. Candidates must also offer GCSE grade C or above (or equivalent) in English Language and Mathematics, and a Science for Primary and Early Years programmes.

Candidates offering international qualifications will be expected to have achieved the equivalent of the minimum entry requirements for the postgraduate programme. The University is guided by the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) in terms of the equivalence awarded to international qualifications. Applicants are advised to contact UKNARIC in the first instance to ascertain equivalency.

Each applicant will be required to provide an academic transcript of their previous study as part of their application (other than students currently registered on programmes at the University).

Information for overseas applicants can be found on the University website (<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/international/how-apply/entry-requirements>) along with a detailed list of acceptable international qualifications, by country.

### *English Language Requirements*

With the exception of foreign language modules, all courses at the University of Chester are taught and assessed in English. International students must have an appropriate level of English proficiency certification before applying. For the majority of postgraduate courses, the University recognises the following English language proficiency qualifications:

- IELTS 6.5 (with no less than 5.5 in each of the sub-skills)
- Trinity College London ISEII with Pass in all four components

For DProf Counselling, DBA, MSc Applied Psychology, Physician Associate Studies, Nutrition and Dietetics, and professional Nursing programmes, the University requires:

- IELTS 7.0 (with no less than 6.0 in each of the sub-skills)

For (EU) applicants whose first language is not English, the University will also consider the following qualifications:

- Cambridge Proficiency/Advanced Test (from Jan 2015) with 176 overall (no element below 169); 185 overall for courses that require IELTS 7.0 equivalence
- Cambridge Advanced Test (CAE) (prior to Jan 2015) with grade C
- Cambridge Proficiency Test (CPE) (prior to Jan 2015) with grade C
- GCSE/IGCSE English Language at grade C or above
- PTE Academic with overall score of 58 and no less than 51 in any component
- TOEFL (IBT) with a score of 88 (minimum of 19 in writing and listening; 20 in reading; 22 in speaking)

Applicants who do not have the required English language level may be able to attend a pre-session English language course. Further details on the University's pre-session English Language courses can be found at <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/international/how-apply/entry-requirements>

### *References*

Applicants to Postgraduate Taught programmes are required to obtain one reference as part of their online application. For Postgraduate Research programmes, two references are normally required. Ideally the reference(s) should be from an academic staff member able to judge the quality of their academic performance to date. Where this is not possible, the Programme Leader may, at his/her discretion accept other appropriate references. Applicants to PGCE programmes are required to submit one academic reference as part of their UCAS Teacher Training application.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain a reference. Applications will not be considered without a suitable reference.

### *Interviews*

As part of the selection process for Postgraduate Taught programmes, applicants may be required to attend an interview before the offer of a place can be made. These will be organised by administrative staff in the relevant Faculties and Departments, or by Programme Leaders.

Applications for Postgraduate Research programmes will only be considered where an appropriate supervisor(s) and resources are expected to be available for the duration of the normal period of study. A decision to admit a student will be based on an interview and the panel will include the Head of Department (or nominee), the prospective Principal Supervisor and other members of the prospective supervisory team, including an independent academic.

For all PGCE programmes, applicants will be required to attend an interview before the offer of a place can be made. These interviews will be held on dedicated interview days and will involve headteachers/mentors from the University's School Partnership.

### *Accreditation of Prior Learning (APCL/APEL)*

The University may give credit for a programme, or part of a programme, that would exempt an applicant from having to study that area again. Each applicant is responsible for making the claim of knowledge and skills achieved through experience, and for providing supporting evidence.

To be admitted to a postgraduate taught programme, evidence of prior credited/certified or prior experiential learning should be equal to higher education Level 6, the final year of an undergraduate degree course, or other equivalent, e.g. related professional qualifications. This may not have been undertaken in an educational environment, but its value may be the same, or more. Further information about this process can be obtained from academic departments.

There may be subject areas for which course attendance is compulsory and credit exemption does not apply, but, equally, there may be areas of study for which credit may be gained purely on the basis of prior academic achievements or experience.

With the exception of PGCE courses, it is possible to claim credit for up to 66.67% of any award.

### *Verification of Qualifications*

The University requires all applicants to provide evidence of the qualifications upon which their offer of a place is based. All applicants, including those that have been made unconditional offers, should expect to provide original certificates of their qualifications prior to enrolling with the University. In the event that an applicant is unable to evidence their achievement to the satisfaction of the University, we reserve the right to withdraw the application at any point even if an offer of admission has been made.

Applicants for Teacher Training, Social Work, Nursing, and Early Years Practice with EYPS will also be expected to provide verification of their GCSE (or equivalent) qualifications and proof of identity.

## **3. Admissions Processes**

### *Applications and Deadlines*

Applications to all full-time and part-time postgraduate programmes should be made through the University of Chester's online application system - AIMS. Applicants should seek clarification on the programme's mode of study (i.e. whether it is offered on a full time or part-time basis) before submitting an application.

Applicants are required to check whether the taught programme requires additional documents to be included with the application, e.g. Nutrition and Dietetics. Further information can be found at <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/postgraduate/how-apply/applying-nutrition-and-dietetics>

There is no official application deadline for postgraduate programmes, though applicants are advised to apply as early as possible to avoid disappointment. Some programmes (i.e. Nutrition and Dietetics and Social Work) have specified closing dates and applicants are advised to check these prior to submitting an application.

Applications for all PGCE courses must be made through UCAS Teacher Training (changing to the DfE Portal for 2021 entry). The University will observe the procedures and deadlines for the handling of applications to PGCE courses, as set out by UCAS/DfE.

### *Deferred Entry*

Applicants who wish to defer their application prior to enrolment will be considered on an individual basis. These requests must be made in writing, by letter or email, to the relevant Admissions section. Applicants must normally have satisfied all conditions of entry in order to defer their place.

The normal maximum length of deferral that will be considered is one year; after this period applicants would be required to re-apply.

### *Disabled Students*

The University is committed to ensuring equality of educational opportunity for all applicants and welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities. All applications are considered on the same academic grounds as non-disabled applicants and there is no judgement or assessment of disability prior to an offer being made. The University has developed extensive support for disabled students. Plans are personalised, and information is available from the University's Disability Support.

With the exception of those disclosing code G on their UCAS Teacher Training/Direct online application form, on receipt of an offer from the University, applicants will be required to complete a questionnaire by Disability Support in order for the University to determine what adjustments may be necessary, should they be accepted and placed on their chosen course. Those who disclose disability code G are advised to contact Disability Support or visit the University website for information about available reasonable adjustments.

Where information provided indicates that the applicant will require significant support or will require modifications to the academic course, the applicant will be invited to meet members of staff from Disability Support and relevant members of staff from the Academic Department(s) to discuss the applicant's individual needs.

In a very small number of cases where adjustments may not be feasible to implement, or where there are fitness to practise concerns, advice will be obtained by Disability Support from the Department, the University's nominated Occupational Health Provider and appropriate disability organisations to ensure every reasonable effort is made to support the student in taking up their offer of a place. Following these discussions, staff from Disability Support and the Department will offer to meet with the applicant to discuss the support available to enable them to make an informed judgement on the suitability of the course. In the exceptional and unlikely event where fitness to practise issues remain a concern, or adjustments cannot be implemented, the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer. Applicants who wish to appeal a decision not to implement adjustments requested that prevents the applicant from taking up their offer of a place on a course may write to the Dean of Students/Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions to request a review of the decision.

Disabled applicants are encouraged to visit the University to meet with academic staff and support services, view department and campus facilities, as well as discuss their additional support needs in more detail with Disability Support.

Further information about disability support at the University can be found at:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/our-services/disability-and-inclusion>

### *Criminal Convictions*

As part of the University's duty of care to its staff and students, the University will require applicants to declare a relevant unspent criminal conviction as part of the process of accepting an offer. Applicants who choose the University as their Firm choice will be asked to declare any relevant unspent criminal convictions or cautions in order to enable us to assess and make any relevant

adjustments or specific provision in order to facilitate your learning, and in some cases to consider the need to reduce the risk of potential harm to others. The University does not require this information at the application stage.

Relevant convictions are defined as “only those convictions for offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, and convictions for offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking”. Convictions that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) are not considered to be relevant and applicants are not required to reveal them.

Information relating to the conviction will be assessed by the Postgraduate Admissions Manager, the Senior Assistant Registrar for Health and Social Care Admissions, or the Deputy Director of Admissions, in consultation with the relevant Dean of Faculty. In the majority of cases, a prior criminal conviction will not necessarily preclude an applicant from being offered a place. If the conviction is spent it will be disregarded, unless the programme applied for is likely to bring the applicant into contact with children or vulnerable adults. Please note that custodial sentences of more than two and a half years can never become ‘spent’.

For programmes in teaching, health, social work, veterinary medicine, veterinary science or courses involving work with children or vulnerable adults, any criminal convictions, cautions (including verbal cautions), reprimands, final warnings and bind-over orders are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; therefore applicants to the following postgraduate taught degrees and PGCE programmes at the University of Chester are required to obtain a satisfactory enhanced disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS):

Nutrition and Dietetics; Social Work; Nursing; Early Years Practice with EYPS; Clinical Counselling; Cognitive Behavioural Therapies; Physician Associate Studies; Psychological Trauma; PGCE Early Years; PGCE Primary; and PGCE Secondary (Core, School Direct and CaBan).

Further information on the DBS process will be sent to unconditional firm (UF) applicants by the University’s Institutional Compliance Officer.

It should be noted that if an applicant is required to disclose a criminal conviction and fails to do so this will be considered a serious matter by the University and is likely to lead to the offer of a place being withdrawn or, if enrolled at the University, to the individual’s registration being revoked.

#### **4. Admissions Decisions**

##### *Conditional Offers*

A conditional offer means that the University of Chester will offer an applicant a place providing certain conditions are met. Offers will be based upon current qualifications and satisfactory references. Offers may also include other non-academic conditions such as the receipt of a satisfactory DBS check or health check.

##### *Unconditional Offers*

An unconditional offer means that an applicant has met all of the entry requirements set by the University of Chester and has been accepted onto their chosen programme of study. Applicants will need to provide proof of qualifications (please refer to Verification of Qualifications).

### *Confirmation*

Confirmation is the process by which universities receive examination results/references etc. for those applicants who have accepted conditional offers. Applicants who meet the conditions of their offer will automatically have their place confirmed with the University.

Applicants who do not fully meet the conditions of their offer may nevertheless have their place confirmed, subject to appropriate places being available. Personal or educational circumstances which may have affected an applicant's performance in their examinations will be taken into account.

### *Unsuccessful application*

Applicants will receive an unsuccessful response (rejection) if the University decides not to offer them a place on the programme they have applied for. The reason(s) for the decision will be recorded by Admissions staff.

In some cases, where an applicant has applied for one programme and is unsuccessful, an alternative study programme may be offered by the University. Applicants will be contacted by Admissions staff to confirm and discuss alternative options.

### *Replying to Offers*

Applicants for postgraduate taught programmes are required to reply to their offer via the University's online applications system – AIMS. There is no official deadline for replying to offers; however reminder emails will be sent to all applicants with outstanding replies. Nutrition and Dietetics applicants are required to reply to their offer within 14 days of receipt, due to high demand for the programme.

PGCE applicants will confirm their acceptance through UCAS Teacher Training.

### *Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants*

Applicants who have not been offered a place to study at the University may wish to request feedback regarding the reason(s) for their unsuccessful application. All requests for feedback should be made in writing, by letter or email, to the relevant Academic department/Faculty. Requests for feedback should be made within 6 weeks of the unsuccessful decision being received by the applicant.

The University is unable to enter into discussions relating to individual applications with anyone other than the applicant themselves unless the applicant provides written permission for the University to discuss it with another person.

The University will aim to respond to requests for feedback within 10 working days of receipt. Please note: this may not always be possible during busy admission periods.

Applicants should be aware that requesting feedback will not adversely affect any further application they may subsequently make to the University.

### *Fraudulent Applications*

The University reserves the right to withdraw or cancel an offer of a place made on the basis of an application that has been found to contain information which is materially inaccurate.

The University abides by the rules and procedures set by UCAS Teacher Training. Any full-time PGCE application suspected by the University to contain fraudulent information will be referred to UCAS Teacher Training.

### *Course Changes*

Applicants will be notified of substantive changes to programmes of study, or programme cancellations, as early as possible in the admissions cycle. In the case of programme cancellations, the University of Chester will undertake to offer applicants an alternative programme of study. The relevant Admissions section is responsible for co-ordinating the process of communicating with applicants affected by programme changes or cancellations.

### *Visas and Immigration*

Students applying for a visa to enter the UK will be assessed under the Points Based System, and must apply for a 'General' student visa under the Tier 4 category. The University of Chester will comply with the requirements of the UK Border Agency (UKBA) in providing international applicants with documentation to support their visa application. The University will generate Certificates of Acceptance for Study (CAS) when applicants are firmly holding an unconditional offer of a place and the University has received documentary evidence of the qualifications they hold.

More information about the visa application process and the Points Based System can be obtained from the University's International Office or from the UK Border Agency's website at [www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk)

## **5. Fees**

For the University's postgraduate taught programmes, fees are set per module, per programme, and are subject to an annual review and may rise in line with inflationary increases in the University's costs. Please check the University website for up-to-date information on fees and funding.

Applicants should decide before applying how they intend to finance their studies. Applicants must produce evidence that they can pay their programme fees and support themselves whilst at University, for example, evidence of a grant/scholarship from an awarding body, such as a Research Council, or a letter from an employer confirming their sponsorship. Self-financing students will be required to sign a statement that they accept their obligation to pay fees, and that they will do so when they are due. Students will not be permitted to continue with their studies if they fail to pay the fees. Programme fees do not take into account the cost of accommodation, living expenses, equipment or books.

Fees for PGCE programmes are set by the Government.

### *Assessment of Tuition Fee Status*

The offer letter will confirm the fees to be charged based on the programme of study and the applicant's fee status.

Applicants are assessed as eligible to pay either home tuition fees or overseas tuition fees. In most cases, the information provided on the application form is sufficient for the University to determine the appropriate fee status. If the University requires further information regarding an individual fee status, a 'fee status questionnaire' will be sent to the applicant to complete and return. Following

an initial assessment by the relevant Admissions team, the fee status is confirmed by the University's Finance Office and the decision is communicated, in writing, to the applicant.

Further information on the University's tuition fees for international students is available from the University's International Centre. International students can also check their expected fee status on the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website at [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk).

## **6. Information to Applicants**

All postgraduate applicants who receive an offer of a place at the University will be sent a formal offer letter from the University confirming details of the programme of study, start date, fees to be paid and verification of qualifications. All conditions attached to the offer will also be specified.

International applicants who meet all of the conditions of their offer will be issued with a further letter to assist them in applying for an entry visa.

All PGCE applicants will receive an offer letter from UCAS Teacher Training in the first instance, followed by an offer letter from the University.

If an applicant chooses the University as his/her Firm choice then the University will send an information pack in July/August, which includes information on the University, support services, accommodation, enrolment and registration, finance, term dates, graduation and exit awards.

## **7. Data Protection**

The University of Chester is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data. In order to fulfil its purpose and to meet its legal obligations to funding bodies and the government, the University of Chester must keep certain amounts of personal information relating to both staff and students. In doing so, the University is subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation from 25 May 2018.

Any personal data provided in relation to an application (including data provided by UCAS) will be treated in confidence by the relevant Admissions Section and processed only in accordance with the Act and the terms of any consent given by the applicant. Data will not be disclosed to any third party unless the University of Chester is required to do so under the terms of the Act itself.

The University's Data Protection Policy explains how the University complies with its obligations under the relevant legislation, including the process for subject access requests and complaints in respect of personal data:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/legal/data-protection/data-protection-policy>

## **8. Complaints Procedures**

The University of Chester is committed to providing the highest possible standard of service for all applicants.

Applicants who have a query or complaint regarding the admissions process or wish to appeal a selection decision, should, in the first instance, refer it to the relevant Admissions section for discussion. If the informal discussion does not resolve the issue, then the complainant should write to the Head of Admissions at the University (if you are a Home/EU student) or to the Director of the International Centre (if you are an international student). Thereafter, if the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the matter will be referred to the relevant Executive Dean(s) of Faculty and/or appropriate Pro-Vice Chancellor and, if necessary, to the Vice-Chancellor. More detailed information can be found at <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/other-useful-information>

Applicants should be aware that making a complaint or appealing a decision will not adversely affect any further application they may subsequently make to the University.

## **9. Staff Development and Training**

The University is committed to ensuring that all those involved in admissions are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. All Admissions staff undertake training and development to ensure they are aware of UCAS Teacher Training procedures, University policy and practice, and of national and international developments in relation to admissions to higher education.

Close liaison between admissions staff and those in the faculties/departments ensures consistency, transparency and high standards of the University's student admissions processes.

## **10. Monitoring and Review**

The Deputy Director (Admissions and Outreach) monitors all procedures within the University's admissions function. Procedures are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that they continue to support the mission and strategic objectives of the University; that they remain current and valid in the light of changing circumstances, and that they are of a continuing high standard.

This policy is consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice, and complies with current legislation affecting the admission of students.

This Postgraduate Admissions Policy is periodically reviewed and approved by the University's Senate. The policy observes the University policies on data protection, equality and diversity, students with disabilities, safeguarding, and widening participation.

This policy is underpinned by the following relevant legislation:

Data Protection Act 2018

General Data Protection Regulation

Consumer Rights Act 2015

Equality Act 2010

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

**Further Information**

General information about the University can be found at:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk>

**Specific course information can be found at:**

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/study/postgraduate>

For further information regarding this policy or postgraduate taught admissions at the University of Chester please contact:

University of Chester

Postgraduate Admissions

Riverside Campus

Castle Drive

Chester

CH1 1SL

Tel: 01244 511000

Email: [postgrad@chester.ac.uk](mailto:postgrad@chester.ac.uk)

For Postgraduate Research admissions please email [pgradmissions@chester.ac.uk](mailto:pgradmissions@chester.ac.uk)

For Postgraduate Health and Social Care admissions please email [hscadmissions@chester.ac.uk](mailto:hscadmissions@chester.ac.uk)

For PGCE admissions please email [admissions@chester.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@chester.ac.uk)