

**ADMISSIONS POLICY**

SCOPE: This Policy covers Home, EU, international UG, PGT and PGR, apprenticeship and collaborative recruitment.

Responsibility for delivering the Admissions Policy and managing the application processes lies with the following teams:

* Admissions, Marketing and Communications Department for Home status applicants
* International Office for EU and international applicants
* Doctoral Research College for postgraduate research applications
* Apprenticeships and Partnerships Unit for collaborative partnerships and apprenticeships

The University has a wide range of collaborative academic agreements within the UK and globally. Oversight of admissions rests with the University and course specific admissions criteria and admission processes for collaborative courses are agreed at the point of approval with each partner.  Academic partnership course admission adheres to the principles of the University Admission Policy and also meets local jurisdictional requirements.  The University retains the responsibility for setting standards of entry and for taking all decisions on non-standard qualifications and RPL requests. University and Academic Partner staff roles and responsibilities in admissions processes are prescribed in an Operations Handbook, agreed by the University for each partnership and form an annex to institutional or organisational contractual agreements. Normally a designated University Link Tutor holds operational responsibility for oversight of admission decisions referred by the Partner with Associate Deans retaining responsibility for RPL decisions. Collaborative Partnerships Committee, via the Apprenticeship and Partnership Unit, monitors admissions to University courses within partnerships and student progression and outcomes.

Apprenticeships adhere to University admission policy principles and for entry to associated undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In addition to University admission requirements apprenticeships are also governed by prevailing Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) regulatory requirements for admission. Compliance is the responsibility of the Apprenticeship and Partnership Unit through management of admissions via the University's APTEM system. The University’s dedicated Apprenticeship information is available at: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/business/apprenticeships

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1. **General Principles**
	1. The admissions process is designed to ensure that applicants are appropriately positioned to be successful on their chosen course.
	2. The University provides education and training for all applicants who demonstrate the ability, aptitude and potential to benefit from its provision by meeting the entry requirements published for each course.
	3. It seeks to offer progression from school and further education to higher education undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research degrees, welcoming applicants from a range of diverse backgrounds.
	4. Our approach is to ensure the admissions process is reliable, fair and inclusive. All admission procedures and criteria by which applicants are selected will be clear and explicit. They will support the University’s Access and Participation Plan and widening participation, equality and diversity mission.
	5. The Strategic Recruitment Executive Group has responsibility for reviewing and setting admissions criteria taking account of application, offer, acceptance and progression data to inform recruitment strategies.
	6. The applicant is responsible for ensuring that the University is in receipt of all information required to make a decision on their application and that all information is accurate. Omission of relevant information, or the supply of inaccurate information, may invalidate the application or the offer of a place. An omission of information or submissions of inaccurate information at the admissions stage if discovered later will normally result in disciplinary action under the Student Disciplinary procedure.
	7. Applicants will be selected on the basis of their application, including evidence of qualifications and experience and, where appropriate, through the use of interviewing, auditions, portfolio reviews or other mechanisms.
	8. The majority of full-time Home and EU undergraduate admissions will be processed through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in real time with a small percentage of direct applications managed directly and reported to UCAS within the same cycle. International students can apply directly to the university or through UCAS
	9. Information will be collected and used only in accordance with the University’s Data Protection Policy and the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
	10. The University operated a Home undergraduate applicant conditional unconditional offer scheme between 2013 and 2019 but this has been discontinued in 2020 in favour of a contextualised offer scheme which is outlined in 4.2.3 below. This does not apply to EU or international applicants as they do not meet the criteria.

## Policies and Procedures

2.1 The Policy should be read in conjunction with other University policies, procedures and guidance listed below which are published on the BCU website <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures> such as:

* Academic Regulations
* Student Contract (including the University’s Terms and Conditions)
* Data Protection Policy
* Privacy Notice
* Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25
* Student Protection Plan
* Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
* Safeguarding Policy
* Accommodation Policy - <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/accommodation>
* Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) Issuing Policy

2.2 This Policy and its associated guidance have been mapped against the Expectations, Core Practices and Guiding Principles set out in the QAA’s revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018) and specifically the Advice and Guidance theme: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access.

## Information and guidance

* 1. The University will provide applicants with accurate, clear, relevant and accessible information and clear guidance to enable them to make informed decisions about their options prior to and during the admissions process as outlined in the Privacy Notice at https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/privacy-notices/enquirers-applicants-students. This will be achieved by:
		1. Holding advertised Open Day/Evening Events, Applicant Taster Days, UCAS Fairs, Overseas Fairs, presenting at overseas institutes and schools;
		2. Providing talks at schools and colleges and hosting visits by schools and colleges on site about studying at BCU;
		3. Providing course specific information for every course advertised in the prospectus via the University website or in other durable formats;
		4. Providing support for applicants leading up to their transition into higher education;

 3.1.5 Responding to applicants’ requests for advice made by telephone, email on social media or in person;

* + 1. Ensuring that any changes to published information are communicated to applicants holding an offer so that they are aware of their options to either remain, withdraw or find an alternative course. Changes may include the closure of a course, significant changes to cost, location, content, staff expertise and the status of a course, including withdrawal or granting of validation by a professional or statutory body, or the failure of an advertised course to gain approval or accreditation.

 3.1.7 Promoting UCAS advice and guidance such as the [Admissions Guidance on Offers](https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/ucas-undergraduate-types-offer)

## Recruitment and selection procedures

4.1 The University is committed to ensuring that recruitment and selection policies and processes are transparent and are followed fairly and consistently and that information concerning applicants remains confidential in line with the University’s Data Protection Policy.

## 4.2 Selection principles

 4.2.1 To ensure the process is fair and transparent, clear entry requirements are published in the course level information to show what qualifications are required to demonstrate the potential to succeed on the course. These will be published on the University website, UCAS and in the prospectus.

 4.2.2 Selection criteria will be determined on an annual basis and published in course specifications on the University website and relevant external sites such as UCAS. The University reserves the right to review and alter criteria where appropriate and in line with the University’s policies and procedures and CMA guidance.

              4.2.3    To support inclusivity, a contextualised offer scheme was introduced for 2020 entry related to targets in the University’s Access and Participation Plan.  Details of the full offer strategy and what data is used for the contextualised element can be found on <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/offer-making-strategy>

4.2.4 The University takes account of good practice in relation to a number of under-represented groups such as: https://www.ucas.com/providers/good-practice/equality-diversity

## 4.3 Admissions processes

## 4.3.1 The University operates a paperless admissions process which enables all transactions and communications relating to the application and decision to be held against the student record. For most undergraduate courses, the decisions are made by the Admissions team or International Office within the criteria set for the start of the cycle unless the course has a selection process such as an interview, audition or portfolio reviews which require academic input. At postgraduate taught level, Faculty Admissions Tutors make the decisions. Postgraduate research applications are managed by the Doctoral College in liaison with Faculties.

4.3.2 Direct and UCAS application forms, interviews and other selection activities enable applicants to detail their relevant qualifications, experience and other information in support of the application.

4.3.3 Where courses are full and/or waiting lists are held, or when courses have to be closed for any reason, applicants will be informed immediately with the offer of alternative courses wherever possible.

4.3.4 For applicants to a course where references are required, applicants will be referred to the entry requirements on the course webpages for specific details.

4.3.5 The University will carry out checks on documents supplied by applicants to establish authenticity in order to guard against fraudulent applications. All UCAS applications are subject to the UCAS Hunter fraud verification checks.

## 4.4 Interviewing and assessment

4.4.1 Applicants will receive clear information on requirements for interviews, auditions, portfolios or any form of assessment applied during the application process. Disabled applicants will be entitled to reasonable adjustments for interviewing or assessment for selection purposes.

4.4.2 There will be a clear structure for each interview, or other selection method, and these will be conducted against pre-determined criteria.

4.4.3 Decisions and the reasons for the decisions will be held against the applicant record for ease of feedback.

4.4.4 Where an applicant is unsuccessful for a particular course, the application will be considered for other alternative courses, where appropriate.

## 4.5 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/how-to-apply/advanced-entry>

4.5.1 Under the RPL process, applicants can enter a course with a previous qualification or other certified learning, where this learning is mapped to the BCU course and it has been established that the learning outcomes, content, currency, academic credit and level of award are appropriate and relevant. The evidence of prior learning must be provided at the admissions stage so that the mapping is completed prior to enrolment. This requirement will be built in as a condition of offer.

4.5.2 The admissions process also allows for standard progression arrangements such as HNC/D students topping up to degree level.

4.5.3 The University will also consider recognising prior experiential learning e.g. learning achieved outside a formal learning environment, such as through professional work experience.

## 4.6 Making offers

## 4.6.1 Offers are made in accordance with the University’s published offer strategy outlined in 4.2.3 above.

4.6.2 Decisions are made in accordance with timescales set by relevant external admissions application services. Direct applicants will be addressed in a timely manner. Clear information will be provided in the offer to the successful applicant on:

* + - * any academic and non-academic conditions attached to the offer
			* the next steps to be taken by the offer holder and BCU

4.6.3 Requests to defer study until the following year will be considered but are not guaranteed. An offer can be deferred for a maximum of one entry cycle only unless there are exceptional circumstances. BCU does not normally defer offers made in Clearing if they are below the main cycle published entry requirements.

4.6.4 Where offers have been made on the basis of information which is found to be fraudulent, the University reserves the right to withdraw the offer or withdraw the student if enrolled.

## English Language Requirements and international qualifications

4.7.1 As all teaching, learning and assessment delivered at the University is through the medium of English, all applicants will be required to demonstrate that they meet the required level of English language competency for their desired course of study.

4.7.2 International and EU applicants will be required to have a recognised English language qualification, such as IELTS (International English Testing System) or equivalent at the appropriate level for the course of study for which they wish to be considered. The University’s standard English Language entry requirement is IELTS 6.0 (with no banding below 5.5). Some courses may set higher requirements where necessary together with any individual element requirements as approved by SREG. The English language qualifications accepted are outlined on the University website at: https://www.bcu.ac.uk/international/your-application/english-language-and-english-tests/accepted-qualifications.

4.7.3 Each course entry profile will state an overall IELTS score (or equivalent) together with any individual element requirements, as and where appropriate.

4.7.4 Where an applicant’s English language competency is below that necessary for their intended course of study, they will be required to successfully undertake a pre-sessional English language course prior to being enrolled on their course. Further information is available on:

<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/international/your-application/english-language-and-english-tests/pre-sessional-english-courses>

4.7.5 The University uses UK NARIC to compare international qualifications with the equivalent levels of UK qualifications and to authenticate qualifications.

## 4.8 Visa requirements including UKVI Tier 4

4.8.1 Applicants who are not UK, EU or EEA citizens wishing to gain admission to the University must meet and possess the appropriate leave to remain/leave to enter in the UK and satisfy immigration requirements in force at the time of entry onto the course. The University will not normally accept students whose decision by the Home Office is pending.

4.8.2 Students seeking sponsorship through UK Visas and Immigration Tier 4 sponsorship will be required to meet the requirements as set out by the Home Office in addition to University requirements.

4.8.3 Students who are not UK or EU nationals and who are not sponsored under Tier 4 will be required to demonstrate that they have appropriate leave to remain/leave to enter in the UK.

4.8.4 Further advice for applicants or existing BCU students who require a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to enable them to make an application for a Tier 4 General visa is available here: <https://bcuassets.blob.core.windows.net/docs/cas-issuing-policy-may-2017-version-1-0-131823641419872019.pdf>

4.8.5 The University has links with agents and representatives in many countries to allow applicants to explore all of the study options available to them and give them the opportunity to be guided through the application process. More information is available at: <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/international/bcu-in-your-country>

1. **Fee Status**

UK Government Legislation allows publicly funded institutions to charge fees to "overseas" students at a higher rate than to "home" students unless they fulfil certain residence and immigration status criteria. If it is not possible to determine fee status from the information presented on an application form, applicants will be asked to complete a Fee Assessment Questionnaire. Assessment of this questionnaire is carried out under guidelines set by the UK Council for International Student Affairs.

1. **Applicants under 18**

The University does not discriminate on age and applicants under 18 years who meet the minimum entry requirements will receive an offer. However, there are certain professional body courses where admission under 18 is not permitted and others where a risk assessment will be required. This information will be provided within the course profile. The University Safeguarding Policy is available at: <https://bcuassets.blob.core.windows.net/docs/safeguarding-policy-and-reporting-process-131558448220451763.pdf>

## Support for students with Disabilities and additional needs

## Students are encouraged to disclose any disabilities or additional needs at the application stage so that their needs can be discussed and reasonable adjustments made prior to joining or to support an interview or other selection process. The Pre-Entry Disability Advisor in the Disability Support team will make contact at the application, offer and acceptance stages in the process. Pre-entry Advisors are also available to provide information and guidance for Admissions Tutors. Further information is available on: <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-affairs/enablement-and-wellbeing/disability-support>

## Criminal Convictions and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

8.1 Certain courses, particularly in teaching, health, social work and others involving work with children and vulnerable adults, require offer acceptors to undergo an enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check via an external DBS service provider and a satisfactory check is a condition of entry. Further guidance is available on the website in the DBS information pages: <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/hels/Health/Student-Governance/DBS/Index>

8.2 Offer holders for courses which do not require a DBS check will be asked to disclose whether they have any relevant and unspent criminal convictions as this may have implications for the University’s duty of care to students, staff and visitors. All disclosures will be subject to a risk assessment on a case by case basis by a University panel chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).  The policy is available at: <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/crim-con-policy>

1. **Occupational Health Checks**

All students who are offered a place on a Health and Social Care Professional programme in the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences will be subject to an occupational health check via an online questionnaire to ensure they are able to meet the health requirements before they go out to their allocated placement learning opportunity. For students who will be eligible to apply for Registration with a Regulatory Body they need to ensure they meet the necessary criteria. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) offer guidance for prospective students on ‘good health’. They advise; ‘if you have a disability or a health problem that you should seek advice about whether you canbe adequately supported to be capable of providing safe and effective practice without supervision’.

1. **Feedback**

Due to the volume of applications received, the University cannot provide individual feedback for every unsuccessful application. Where the applicant has attended a selection process such as an interview or audition, feedback can be requested in writing to Admissions@bcu.ac.uk and the response is agreed with the academic team.

## Complaints and Appeals about the admissions process

The student complaints procedure is available at: <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies-and-procedures/complaints-procedures>

 A separate policy for applicants is under development and will be published by January 2021.

1. **Disrupted Studies** <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/offer-making-strategy/disrupted-studies>

We encourage applicants or their referees/advisors to contact Admissions if they have experienced issues of a personal, social or domestic nature that have affected their studies or ability to meet our published entry requirements or offer. The guidance and claim form is published within the offer strategy on the website. To ensure a fair and consistent approach, claims are submitted to the Head of Admissions and a recommendation is made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for approval.

1. **Transfers in and out**

13.1 In accordance with the requirements of Condition F2 of the Office for Students regulatory framework, the University is committed to supporting students to transfer between higher education providers where this proves necessary or desirable to complete their degree. We understand circumstances can change such as having to move away from a current place of study for family reasons. We have a number of processes in place to support student transfers both in and out of BCU, and further information, advice and guidance is available at: <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-transfer-arrangements>

13.2 The University is a member of the Midlands Enterprise Universities’ Scheme which facilitates transfers via the Credit Compass process details of which are available at:

<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/studentiinfo/midlands-credit-compass>

## Staff Development

The University is committed to ensuring that all those involved in recruitment and admissions are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Mandatory training and staff development opportunities are provided and staff participate in external events such as the UCAS Annual Admissions Conference, UCAS Regional Forum and Academic Registrars’ Council Admissions Practitioner Group to share best practice. Staff who are involved in international admissions undertake training with NARIC, UKCISA, UKVI and other relevant external bodies. Annual training is provided on the University’s paperless admissions process.

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