

SECRETARIAT

ACADEMIC POLICY SUMMARY SHEET

NAME OF ACADEMIC POLICY:	Postgraduate Admissions Policy
PURPOSE OF POLICY AND WHOM IT APPLIES TO:	<p>The policy sets out the guiding principles and procedures by which the University considers postgraduate applications to its programmes.</p> <p>The policy applies to all staff involved with postgraduate admissions and prospective students.</p>
RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ COMMITTEE WITH ROUTE OF APPROVAL:	Academic Affairs Committee
LEAD STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS UPDATE:	Director of Student Affairs
PERSONS CONSULTED IN DEVELOPING POLICY:	The latest revised policy was considered by members of Academic Affairs Committee on 10 June 2015.
POLICY FINALLY APPROVED BY:	Academic Board (via Chair's Action in July 2015)
DATE OF ORIGINAL IMPLEMENTATION:	10 December 2008 and revised periodically
DETAIL OF DISSEMINATION:	The revised policy was circulated to relevant staff in July 2015 and is available on the Secretariat's portal site.
PROPOSED DATE OF REVIEW	Annually
SECRETARIAT OFFICER – MAIN CONTACT:	Officer to Academic Affairs Committee
DATE:	July 2015



1.0 Introduction

The University welcomes diversity among its students and seeks to help each one to flourish academically and personally through its programmes. Admission, therefore, is governed by three principles:

- To recruit a diverse student body in terms of background and experience.
- To recruit students who are able to complete their programme as judged by their achievements and potential.
- To provide fair and equal access to those who have the potential to succeed.

2.0 Scope of the Policy

The University of Lincoln aims to provide a fair and transparent admissions system which is implemented consistently and which provides equal opportunities for all, regardless of background.

The Admissions Policy complies with relevant legislation and is guided by the principles and precepts regarding good admissions practice set out by the Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code (Chapter B2) and the Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions 2004 and the Fair Admissions Task and Finish Group 2012.

The Admissions Policy is intended to provide information for applicants and for staff within the University on the procedures and principles involved in making an application to the University for postgraduate study.

3.0 Responsibility

Responsibility for oversight and changes to the University's Admissions Policy in relation to admissions at postgraduate level lies with the University's Academic Board and is reviewed on a regular basis.

Overall responsibility for the postgraduate admissions process rests with the Director of Student Affairs. The University is committed to providing a professional admissions service and admissions activities are carried out by the University's central Student Administration department, academic Schools and by staff in partner institutions.

The Student Administration department's role is to ensure that policies and procedures in relation to student admission are operated fairly and consistently, in line with the University's strategic aims and objectives.

4.0 Information, Advice and Guidance for Applicants

The University is committed to providing high quality, accurate and up to date advice and guidance to its applicants.

The University gives careful consideration as to what information may be needed by applicants and advisors to make informed choices. It provides clear information for applicants on each programme in the University prospectus and on its website on:

- The content and delivery of its programmes.
- The application process.
- The academic entry requirements of each programme.
- The costs associated with study.
- Career opportunities post study.

5.0 General Academic Entry Requirements

The University welcomes applications from appropriately qualified students studying a wide range of qualifications.

Minimum entry requirements are reviewed on an annual basis in view of changing academic requirements. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in the University's prospectus is accurate. Occasionally, amendments may be made after the publication date and these will be publicised on the University's website.

The University therefore recommends that applicants use the information in the programme listings on its website (www.lincoln.ac.uk) as the source of the most up to date information on entry requirements.

Academic entry requirements will clearly state each programme's entry criteria, including academic qualifications, along with appropriate experience and skills required for entry.

In exceptional circumstances, the University reserves the right to exercise academic judgement and discretion when assessing prior achievement. In such cases, the University Registrar, or nominee, on the recommendation of the Head of College, may waive the programme entry requirements for a particular applicant.

5.1 English Language Requirements

Applicants whose first language is not English are required to produce evidence that they are competent in English language and the majority of programmes require at least GCSE English at grade C or:

- A satisfactory level in a University approved secure English language test. For example, the University's minimum requirement is an IELTS overall score of 6.0 and no less than 5.5 in each of the elements (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Some programmes will require higher scores and applicants are advised to check individual programme requirements on the University's website.
- Successful completion of the University's internal English language test.
- A higher education level award delivered and assessed in English, by an institution recognised by the University of Lincoln.

In exceptional cases where there is alternative evidence of an acceptable level of English, the Head of College may waive the standard English Language competency requirement for a particular applicant. A written case shall be submitted to the relevant Head of College for approval and the performance of students admitted on this basis shall be reported to the relevant Academic Board Committee on an annual basis.

Applicants are advised to use the information on the International pages of the University's website for further clarification – www.lincoln.ac.uk/international.

5.2 Programme Specific Subjects

Whilst the University will normally consider a wide range of subjects as appropriate for entry, some programmes may specify particular subjects. This information will be clearly stated within the entry requirements for each programme on the University's website.

6.0 Additional Entry Requirements

6.1 Interviews, Portfolios and Research Proposals

In addition to academic entry requirements, programmes may also draw on a variety of additional methods to assess the suitability of an applicant. These may include an interview, a portfolio of work or a research proposal (for postgraduate research applications).

All interviews and portfolio viewings are scored and the outcomes are fully documented.

Further details regarding the selection process are available on the programme specific pages of the University's website.

6.2 Non-standard Applicants

The University welcomes applications from all students and will give careful individual consideration to those who do not meet the standard entry requirements. The University will take into account any alternative qualifications or work experience applicants may have.

6.3 International Applicants

The consideration of individual applications is undertaken centrally by the University's International Admissions Team, where specialist admissions staff review applications for the majority of postgraduate programmes. The International Admissions Team will set entry requirement equivalencies for international qualifications which will be implemented consistently for all programmes.

The equivalence of overseas qualifications will be assessed using UK NARIC, the national agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on international qualifications and skills.

6.4 UK Visas and Immigration Compliance

The University of Lincoln holds a Tier 4 Sponsor licence which enables the University to sponsor overseas students applying for a Tier 4 visa to study in the UK. The International Admissions Team works closely with the Tier 4 Compliance Team to ensure compliance with UK Visas and Immigration regulations.

The International Admissions Team is responsible for the issuing of Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) documentation to allow international applicants to apply for their visa to study in the UK. The University is not able to guarantee that an applicant who is issued a CAS will secure a visa. The applicant has responsibility for ensuring that all appropriate documentation is submitted in support of a visa application.

There may be times that the University will need to check the immigration history of an applicant before the CAS is issued.

As part of its sponsor duties, the University is required to keep copies of all international students' current passport, current and previous visas, original qualification documents, contact details and ATAS Certificate (if applicable).

The University of Lincoln reserves the right to cancel the CAS issued to an overseas applicant if the unconditional offer is retracted or if the offer is declined.

7.0 The Application Process

7.1 Making an Application

Applications should usually be made using the University's on-line application form available on the website:

<http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/studyatlincoln/postgraduateprogrammes/howtoapply>

Applicants applying on-line will be able to track the progress of their application by logging into the My Lincoln section of the system using the username and password used when first submitting an application.

Applicants may also submit a paper copy of the application form which is available as a Word document on the University's website.

There is currently no charge for making an application for postgraduate study.

The University will send an acknowledgement email to all applicants on receipt of their application.

7.2 Documentation Required in an Application

As part of an application, applicants are required to provide the following documentation for consideration:

7.2.1 Proof of academic qualifications

Applicants are required to provide evidence of their most recent academic qualifications. This will usually be a copy of a degree certificate and transcript.

Former students of the University do not need to provide copies of certificates and transcripts, as the University already holds this information.

Applicants whose first language is not English will need to include a copy of an English Language qualification, for example an IELTS certificate.

Copies of qualification certificates and transcripts can be uploaded as scanned documents (PDF, JPEG etc) as part of the on-line application in the 'Supporting Documents' section. Alternatively, a hard copy can be sent to the Student Administration department at the University by post.

7.2.2 Copy of a passport

Applicants requiring a visa to enter the UK will need to provide a copy of their passport as part of their application. Copies can be uploaded as scanned documents (PDF, JPEG etc) as part of the on-line application in the 'Supporting Documents' section. Alternatively, a hard copy can be sent to the Student Administration department at the University by post.

7.2.3 References

The University usually requires at least one reference in support of an application. Referees should usually be able to comment on the academic potential of the applicant and their suitability for study at postgraduate level.

Applicants who have not been in employment or education for a number of years, may use someone who knows them in an official capacity, for example in the case of voluntary work.

Details of referees must be provided as part of the on-line application. The University will send referees an automated email asking them to complete a reference. If an email address is not available, applicants will need to ensure that they contact referees and ask them to forward the reference to the University.

7.3 Application Deadlines

7.3.1 Home/EU students

The majority of postgraduate taught courses begin in September. Although there is no official closing date, it is recommended that applications are submitted by the end of July prior to the start date.

For courses starting in February, it is recommended that applications are submitted by the end of December.

Research applications can usually be submitted throughout the year. However it is advised that applicants check with individual Schools prior to submitting an application.

7.3.2 International Students

To allow time for visa applications, applicants who require a visa to study in the UK are recommended to apply by 30 June for programmes starting in September. For programmes starting in January and February, it is recommended that applications are received by 30th November prior to the start date.

7.4 Non-standard Application Routes

Some programmes, such as the DClinPsy Psychology, require an alternative application process. Please see the University's website for further details.

7.5 Decisions

7.5.1 Responsibility for Decisions

The University is committed to providing a professional admissions service to its applicants. The consideration of individual applications is usually undertaken centrally by the Student Administration department, where specialist admissions staff review applications for the majority of programmes.

Academic Schools remain involved in the process and are responsible for agreeing entry requirements for each programme. In addition, Academic Schools will determine whether or not an interview/audition/portfolio is required as part of the selection process.

7.5.2 Assessing Suitability

The University will admit students from a wide range of backgrounds who can demonstrate their potential to successfully complete the programme.

When assessing an applicant's suitability for a particular programme, the University will normally consider:

- Academic qualifications (both achieved and yet to be completed)

- A personal statement
- A reference that can comment on the academic potential of the applicant and their suitability for study at postgraduate level
- Relevant work experience where appropriate
- Prior academic achievement or experiential learning where appropriate
- Performance at interview where appropriate

7.5.3 Making Decisions

In reaching a decision the University will:

- Ensure that all decisions are fair and consistent in relation to the published entry criteria.
- Ensure that staff who make the decisions are appropriately qualified and trained.
- Communicate all decisions clearly and in a timely manner.

7.6 Offers

Successful applicants will receive an offer which will either be conditional on the basis of qualifications or other requirements yet to be completed, or unconditional.

Applicants who applied on-line will be able to view their offer on the 'My Application' page of the on-line application system which will give an explanation of any conditions attached to the offer.

Applicants who submitted using a paper application will be notified by email or in writing.

7.7 The Offer Email

Successful applicants will be formally notified of their offer by email. This will include:

- Details of any conditions attached to the offer
- The academic year of entry to which the offer applies and when the programme starts
- The fees charged, when they are due and methods of payment
- How to accept the offer
- Links to further information regarding scholarships, bursaries and accommodation

7.8 Unsuccessful Applicants

Applicants who are unsuccessful in gaining an offer of a place on the programme are entitled to feedback. Requests for feedback should be made within 14 days of receiving the University's decision. These requests should be in writing, either by email or letter and be addressed to: The Head of Student Administration, Student Administration, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln LN6 7TS.

7.9 Assessment of Tuition Fee Status

The University uses information given in the application to determine the level of tuition fee payable by applicants. Fees are classed as either Home (UK students), European Union (EU students), Channel Islands or Overseas (International students).

In addition, the University will ensure eligibility is consistent with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) guidance when determining overseas fees.

The University will contact applicants if further information is needed to determine the level of tuition fee.

7.10 Deferred Entry

For the majority of programmes applicants may request deferred entry to the following academic year. Should an applicant wish to defer their year of entry once an offer of study has been made, they should contact the University who will, wherever possible, amend the offer start date.

7.11 Accreditation of Prior Learning

Applicants may be admitted to programmes at a higher stage than the normal entry point if they can demonstrate either sufficient accredited learning (for example from previous qualifications or part-qualifications) or sufficient and appropriate experience or training. The point at which they enter the programme will depend upon the level and range of their previous achievement.

Under the National Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme, students may transfer appropriate credits gained from other programmes, universities or colleges. Students transferring such credits will not have to re-take elements for which they have already gained credit, providing that the credit is accepted as appropriate for the programme to which they are transferring. Students with credits which are less directly appropriate may be required to take additional credits to meet the learning outcomes of their new programme.

Applicants may also enter a programme at a higher than normal entry level on the basis of either previous learning through experience or of non-credit bearing qualifications, provided that they can provide sufficient and robust evidence that such previous learning can take the place of entry-level learning for the programme in question. These students will also not have to re-take elements in which they can clearly demonstrate knowledge and competence, and will be exempted from them.

Recognition of prior learning is a matter of academic judgement, with the main consideration being whether the prior learning is broadly equivalent to the learning that would otherwise have been assessed during the course module.

In all cases, any entitlement to advanced standing admission must be established before enrolment. Further information is available in the Accreditation of Prior Learning Guidelines for Applicants.

7.12 Admission on the Basis of Previous Learning through Experience

The University will admit students on the basis of previous learning through experience provided it can be substantiated on application, is relevant to the award applied for and provides sufficient evidence of the applicant's ability to benefit from the award.

Each applicant is responsible for making the claim of knowledge and skills achieved through experience and for providing adequate supporting evidence. If an applicant without formal qualifications is applying for the entry level of an award the application must be supported by sufficient evidence of relevant experience, commitment to the subject and ability to undertake an academic qualification. The University will advise applicants individually of what is necessary.

Learning through experience can also be the basis for admission with advanced standing. This entails matching the applicant's experience against the learning outcomes of specific sections of the chosen programme, and is a more complex procedure. Again, the University

will advise applicants of the process and, without prejudice to the final decision, whether they have a likely case for making such an application.

7.13 Applicants Declaring Criminal Convictions

As part of the applications process, applicants are asked whether they have any 'relevant criminal convictions'. Relevant criminal convictions are only those concerned with violence, sexual offences, drugs, firearms, arson and terrorism. Convictions that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) are not considered to be relevant (except for applicants who come into contact with children or vulnerable adults) and need not be disclosed.

If the programme of study is likely to bring the applicant into contact with children or vulnerable adults, then 'spent' criminal convictions must be declared on application. In such cases information will be sought regarding all cautions and convictions.

All applicants first pass through the standard selection process which ignores the conviction and makes an assessment of suitability on academic grounds alone.

Once an application has been accepted on academic grounds, applicants will be required to provide further information in relation to the conviction, which will be considered by the University's Special Admissions Panel. The Panel will consist of at least three members convened by the University Registrar (or nominee).

In making any decision, the Panel must consider the University's duty of care to its students and staff and the need to safeguard its property. The Panel's decision is final and is based on the relevance or otherwise of the conviction to either the programme or the University in the light of its assessment of the risks involved.

Applicants who are convicted of a criminal offence between applying for a place and enrolling on their programme must inform the University immediately. The conviction will be considered through the process described above.

Programmes that involve direct contact with children or vulnerable adults will require applicants to undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check prior to the start of the programme. Students may be asked to withdraw from the programme if they are found to have a criminal record which was not previously declared at the point of application.

The University reserves the right to withdraw any offer of admission to an applicant, or to terminate the enrolment of a student who has not declared a criminal conviction at the point of application.

7.14 Applicants with Disabilities, Medical Conditions or Specific Learning Differences

The University recognises that students with disabilities, medical conditions or specific learning differences, are an integral part of the academic community and makes every effort to meet the needs of these applicants. It cannot, however, guarantee to meet those needs in every case.

All applications are first considered on their academic merits through the standard selection process. The University sends information on its services to all applicants offered a place on the course and who have disclosed a disability, medical condition or learning difference. A member of the Student Wellbeing team may contact an applicant to discuss their individual needs.

8.0 Responsibilities of Applicants

Applicants are responsible for providing full and accurate information in an application and for notifying the University of any changes or corrections to their original application.

When accepting an offer of admission, applicants agree to abide by the University's regulations.

If additional information is made available after selection, the University reserves the right to amend, or, in exceptional circumstances, withdraw the offer. The University also reserves the right to amend errors made in the communication of decisions and offers.

9.0 Confirmation of Offers

Confirmation is the process by which universities receive applicants' examination results. If an applicant achieves the requirements of their conditional offer, their place will be confirmed. Applicants who have not met the entry requirements will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Examination results, the interview (if appropriate) and any other relevant factors will be taken into account. In some cases, the University may decide to make an offer on an alternative programme. The approval of the applicant will be sought, prior to any change.

Applicants will be able to view confirmation decisions on 'My Application' page of the on-line application system.

Once an offer has been accepted, the University will contact applicants with further information regarding enrolment and induction. In addition, applicants may also be contacted by individual Schools and Colleges with programme specific information.

10.0 Induction Information

Successful applicants are sent a new starter pack, which includes information on how to access enrolment information on the University's website. This website contains advice and guidance on finance, how to enrol and general information about the University.

Applicants based outside of the UK are sent a link to the University's Pre-departure Guide which contains specific information about the enrolment process for international students.

11.0 Payment of Tuition Fees

Tuition fees can be paid through the University's Online Payments system, using a debit or credit card (MasterCard, MasterCard Debit, Visa Credit, Visa Debit and Visa Electron cards are accepted).

UK and EU students are able to pay tuition fees in full or by instalments between two and nine payments. International students are required to pay a deposit on receipt of a conditional offer and will be expected to pay 50% of the tuition fee balance on or before enrolment. The remaining balance can be paid by a maximum of nine monthly instalments.

12.0 Fraudulent Applications

The University reserves the right to withdraw an application which has been found to contain fraudulent information. It also reserves the right to or to terminate the enrolment of a student found to be admitted on the basis of fraudulent information.

In cases of expected fraud, the University may request additional information and documentation from the applicant and third parties to check authenticity.

13.0 Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure

The University always seeks to process applications carefully, and to assess each application fairly and equally. It does however, recognise that some applicants might be dissatisfied either about the way in which their application was processed, or about a decision not to be offered a place.

Applicants who believe their application has not been handled appropriately through the admissions process should, in the first instance, write to: The Head of Student Administration, Student Administration, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln, LN6 7TS.

Thereafter, if applicants remain dissatisfied with the way in which their application has been considered, they should write to: The University Secretary, Secretariat, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln, LN6 7TS, who will arrange for a senior member of staff from outside Registry to review the issues raised by the applicant.

This procedure shall not apply in cases where the University has declined to offer a place to an applicant on the grounds that he/she has failed to meet the stipulated minimum entry requirements for the programme, or because the programme is already fully subscribed.

14.0 Privacy Statement

The University of Lincoln will obtain and process personal data in order to perform and manage its operations, provide services and fulfil specific legal requirements.

Personal data will be used within the University to provide applicants with related services, such as accommodation, the Library and study advice.

The University may also share personal data with third parties where there is a legitimate need or obligation to do so. For further information, please read the University's Privacy Statement:

<http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/media/universityoflincoln/globalmedia/Privacy,Notice.pdf>