



Academic Handbook

Section 2J

The admission and recruitment of students to courses (undergraduate and postgraduate taught) leading to academic awards

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ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT PRINCIPLES

1. Southampton Solent University is committed to ensuring recruitment processes and procedures are fair and transparent. We welcome applications from students who demonstrate a commitment to study and consider each applicant based on their own individual potential and ability. Decisions about the offer of places on courses are based on whether an applicant can benefit from and successfully complete their chosen course.
2. Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, Government departments or others may place specific criteria for admission on certain courses which they fund or accredit. The University therefore accepts such funding or accreditation only where it is willing to adopt these additional criteria.
3. Where criteria in addition to academic qualifications are adopted for related vocational, professional, or statutory reasons, these shall be clearly stated and assessed appropriately.
4. The admissions process complies with relevant legislation and is guided by the good practice developed in the sector and specifically the findings of the Schwartz Report¹. The University keeps entry requirements and policies under review to ensure that they remain current. The University works in partnership with the Office for Fair Access and through our Access Agreement to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to participate.
5. The qualifications normally required for entry to courses are set out in the University's *Course Entry Requirements Statement*. Specific criteria set each year, may exceed the normal criteria for entry for those courses where entry is competitive. The specific criteria for each admissions cycle are agreed annually by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations).
6. The authority to admit applicants to a course is delegated by Academic Board to External Relations, and specifically the *Admissions and Enrolment team*. Authority to make admissions decisions in accordance with the specified selection criteria is delegated to those staff. Directors of School shall appoint Admissions Tutors within their Schools to act as a point of liaison and to advise admissions staff in particular cases.

¹ <http://www.spa.ac.uk/information/fairadmissions/schwartzreport>

7. The Admission and Enrolment team will assess an applicant's fee status at the point of application based on information provided by the applicant and in accordance with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA). It may be necessary for applicants to provide additional documentation to the University to support their fee assessment.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT

8. The University uses its Equal Opportunities Statement as a primary reference point when creating admissions policy and procedure, and is committed to the elimination of all forms of both direct and indirect discrimination, and to promote fair treatment and equality for all applicants regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, political or religious beliefs, disability, marital status or social class. The following extracts from the University's Equal Opportunities Statement are of particular relevance to the University's admissions process (the full statement can be found in the University's Policies, Procedures and Guidelines):
 - i. The University aims to foster a community with a culture of mutual trust, fairness, harmony and respect devoid of hatred and intolerance. It is committed to the elimination of all forms of both direct and indirect discrimination, and will take appropriate decisive action wherever possible to enforce this commitment;
 - ii. The University will implement and review policies to promote fair treatment and equality of opportunity for all prospective and current students taking into account the diversity of the student body.

MANAGEMENT OF UNIVERSITY PORTFOLIO AND ADMISSION STATUS

9. Academic Planning and Recruitment Committee (APRC), on behalf of Academic Board, is responsible for managing the University's portfolio of courses. That is, approving partners and course titles and/or suspension/withdrawal of courses.
10. Decisions on closing courses for recruitment rests with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (External Engagement) in consultation with Directors of Schools and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations).
11. Specific course entry requirements are approved as part of the course approval process and reviewed annually. Revisions to the course entry requirements are recommended by the School to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) for approval as required.
12. Directors of Schools shall ensure that the same rigour be applied, as part of a documented University process, in relation to non-credit bearing courses

before they are opened to recruitment.

13. The University endeavours to comply with the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) requirements and will seek to review and improve its performance here annually.

APPLICATION OF ADMISSION AND RECRUITMENT PRINCIPLES

14. The Admissions and Enrolment team and as required, the Admission Tutors, shall make admissions decisions first and foremost on the basis of academic criteria, taking account of the Equal Opportunities Statement obligations and the necessity for transparency and fairness of process, subject only to the necessity to close admission to any course that becomes oversubscribed in relation to the available resources.
15. Qualifications required for entry to courses at the University are set out in the *Course Entry Requirement Statement* which is reviewed and approved on an annual basis by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations).
16. The University will accept a variety of qualifications of UK and overseas qualifications, which it considered equivalent. The University will endeavour to ensure that the entry requirements approved for all courses provide the widest range of entry routes.
17. For undergraduate courses, offers are based primarily on UCAS tariff scores or their overseas equivalent, but we do accept qualifications that are not listed in the UCAS tariff. Non-traditional and vocational qualifications will also be considered alongside an applicant's personal statement and references.
18. For postgraduate courses, offers will be based on the relevant course entry requirement for that course. Non-traditional qualifications may also be considered alongside an applicant's personal statement and references.
19. The University recruitment sub-strategy incorporates relevant sections of the University Access Agreement to actively encourage applications from under-represented groups. The University is strongly committed to social justice and intends to remain highly ranked among English Universities for its proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
20. Where applicants have already completed qualifications, unconditional offers will be made and applicants will be expected to provide proof of qualifications prior to enrolment. Where applicants are currently studying for qualifications, conditional offers will be made based on meeting the University's course entry requirement as per the issued offer. Conditions can also include English Language and additional admissions assessments.

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21. The University may operate an unconditional offer scheme whereby unconditional offers may also be made based on predetermined requirements - this includes for those applicants who are yet to complete the entry qualification.
22. The University may provide package offers when appropriate. A package offer is an offer that includes two or more courses that are contingent on each other.
23. Courses with heavy demand and/or requiring additional admission assessments, the University may make use of additional assessment tools such as interviews, auditions and/or portfolio viewings, to enable appropriate and effective judgements to be made by the Admission and Enrolment team or Admissions Tutors.
24. To achieve these aspirations the University will ensure that:
 - i. entry requirements for all courses provide the widest practicable range of entry routes, enable each applicant's potential to be fully assessed, and take full account of each individual's prior learning, experience and skills;
 - ii. entry requirements, to its courses of study are clearly expressed and made widely available (these are published in the University's current prospectus, and on its website, which are all updated annually);
 - iii. admission procedures do not unfairly discriminate against any individual or group, and make appropriate allowances for individual differences;
 - iv. the recruitment sub-strategy reflects the policy of actively widening participation to encourage under-represented groups and ensure advertising materials are free from stereotyping, whilst presenting the University requirements generally through the full range of promotional channels;
 - v. staff are trained to deal with and are aware of issues concerning admissions, entry requirements, equal opportunities and under-represented groups in higher education;
 - vi. detailed information shall be provided for applicants through the External Relations teams reflecting validated course details and information in the relevant prospectus and websites, as well as specific course requirements; and
 - vii. Using the University's CRM, the University will maintain regular contact with prospective students, from enquiry, application, offer, acceptance, enrolment and induction to the University.
25. The Admission and Enrolment team shall maintain records of all applications,

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and their progress, from receipt of application to enrolment. They shall also ensure that the University's obligations to the external bodies, such as UCAS and the QAA, are complied with.

26. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that complete and accurate information is provided to the University and where necessary, provide the University with additional information as requested. Applicants must ensure that they adhere to deadlines set by the University and UCAS for submitting applications and replying to offers.
27. The University reserves the right to refuse admission to any applicant whose application contains false or misleading information or whose personal statement contains a significant amount of non-original material. Applicants may also have their place withdrawn if they do not meet internal deadlines set by the University.

GENERAL ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES AND USE OF UCAS TARIFF

28. The University recognises and makes use of the UCAS tariff points system for interpreting comparability between common UK further education qualifications. The UCAS tariff is used for setting entry requirements for courses at Foundation, HND, Honours Degree and Integrated Master's Degree level.
29. Specific course requirements are stated in the course documentation, specified within individual course entry profiles available on the UCAS website and in the University's admissions information on the University website. The University website details the University's most current admissions criteria.
30. Within the tariff point requirement, we may specify certain combinations of qualifications or grades that must be present, for example where a course requires an applicant to complete a qualification in a relevant subject.
31. For entry to an Honours Degree or Integrated Master's courses, the University would expect an applicant to have completed or be studying towards a minimum of 2 A Levels or equivalent Level 3 qualification. Some of the courses within our portfolio also require applicants to have passed specific subjects with a Grade C at GCSE level.
32. Applicants must satisfy the minimum entry criteria but must also meet the course specific requirements of their chosen course which will normally be higher than the minimum indicated.
33. Entry requirements for all other courses at the University, including postgraduate, sub-degree, professional and short courses that do not adhere to the UCAS tariff points system will have entry requirements set by

processes similarly rigorous to those for undergraduate courses, or will be aligned with external body requirements as appropriate, and recorded in course approval documentation and in the *Course Entry Requirement Statement*.

34. The relevant entry requirements will be applied regardless of mode of study (full-time or part-time).
35. Individual employers may set the selection criteria for their Apprenticeships in conjunction with the University. Most candidates will have A-levels or equivalent, or existing relevant Level 3 qualifications, as well as English and Maths at Level 2. Other relevant or prior experience may also be considered as an alternative.
36. Applications for part-time courses shall be processed in the same way as the equivalent full time modes of these courses.
37. The University may take contextual data into consideration when assessing applications.
38. Applicants applying from institutional partners which have a signed Admissions Agreement may be made an offer based on the conditions approved within the respective agreement. Applicants must still attend additional admissions assessments, if stated as part of the entry requirements for a course and before an offer is made.

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS

(see also Points Based Immigration: Tier 4 (General) Section 4J)

39. The University welcomes applications from those living outside of the UK. Our *Course Entry Requirement Statement* specify the qualifications recognised as being equivalent to UK qualifications and therefore acceptable for admission.
40. International applicants can apply to study at the University directly, through an agreed agent or institutional partner. Applications via UCAS will also be accepted.
41. Applicants who do not hold English as their first language will be required to demonstrate an approved level of proficiency in English to be considered for entry. The most commonly accepted English language test is the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) certificate, however there are many other tests which the University recognises that are listed in the *Course Entry Requirement Statement*.
42. International applicants must have an adequate proficiency in English in

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order to be admitted to a course. For Non-EU applicants the University requires the UKVI SELT requirements to be met as a minimum (<https://www.gov.uk/tier-4-general-visa/knowledge-of-english>), but some courses may require higher standards of English Language, as listed in the *Course Entry Requirement Statement*.

43. The University offers two pre-sessional courses to improve English language standards prior to the commencement of a full time course. These courses may be included within an offer to study.
44. Applicants who currently reside outside of the European Union, require a visa to enter the UK to study. The University will support an applicant's visa application with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) once an applicant has an unconditional offer which they have accepted and have paid their deposit (as per the University Fees Regulations for that year).

ADMISSION OFFERS AT STUDENT RECRUITMENT EVENTS

45. Appropriately trained staff of the Student Recruitment team, may be empowered by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) to make offers of places on designated courses whilst at student recruitment events. These offers shall be subject to agreed safeguards and later confirmation by the Admissions and Enrolment team. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) will review this practice annually.

ADMISSION WITH ADVANCED STANDING/INTERNAL TRANSFERS

(see also Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Section 2H)

Admission with advanced standing

46. Where an applicant can demonstrate that they have achieved all the learning outcomes of an earlier stage/level of a course, either through certificated learning or experiential learning the Admissions Tutor may grant them advanced standing to enter the next stage/level of the course, without the award of University credit.
47. For intermediate awards students can only be admitted to the final level and may be eligible for RPL for up to one third of the credits.
48. For undergraduate (including Integrated Masters) degrees students can be admitted at any level and any stage at level four and five. Students can only be admitted by advanced standing to level six (not any stage in level six) and may be eligible for RPL for up to one third of the credits.
49. For awards with only one level e.g. masters or top-up degrees, advanced

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standing will be permitted only where the award has defined stages as outlined in the course documentation and with the requirement that a student must be able to complete two-thirds of the credit value of the award at the University.

Internal transfers

50. Existing University students can transfer courses (please refer to RPL Section 2H)

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES FOR APPLICANTS WITHOUT STANDARD PRE-ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

51. Applicants without GCE A-levels, other recognised equivalent qualifications or appropriate Access to Higher Education qualifications will be considered for admission on the basis of other qualifications and experience following interview and testing as appropriate.

52. The Admission and Enrolment team shall be free to offer places on courses subject to there being a clear set of criteria designed to assess an applicant's potential to successfully complete the course. The following criteria shall always be considered:

- i. The extent to which the applicant's work history and experience supports their application;
- ii. The extent to which evidence is available to suggest that the applicant understands the demands of the content and level of the course;
- iii. The desirability of getting supporting references from third parties of good standing (e.g. former employers); and
- iv. Other relevant qualifications.

53. It is of particular importance in such cases that a full employment and study history is recorded for these applicants in lieu of recent formal educational participation, to help establish their bona fides, and to corroborate as far as possible that their stated experience and aspirations relate to their chosen course.

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

(see also Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students Section 2Q)

54. The Admission and Enrolment team will collate all eligible and completed applications (including all relevant documents), and forward the application to

the Research and Innovation Office, who will arrange for the application to be considered following the PGR admission process.

ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES FOR APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL HEALTH OR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

55. The University welcomes application for admission to its courses from all prospective students with the interest and commitment to study at higher education level in the subject areas it offers. Experience suggests that a wide range of special needs can be supported successfully through collaboration between the student, University staff, appropriate external agencies and families or carers.
56. Applicants are encouraged to declare disabilities, special health or educational needs at the earliest opportunity on their application form, through an additional selection event or via discussion with any member of University staff. Any conditional offer provided via UCAS and every offer letter will provide information on disclosing information about any disabilities, special health or educational needs.
57. Applications from those who declare a special need or disability will be assessed by the Admission and Enrolment team based on the standard entry requirements of a course to initially determine whether the applicant has the academic potential to benefit from and successfully complete the course.
58. Once an offer is made, an applicant will receive further information from the University regarding the support that is available to them from Access Solent. It is the applicant's responsibility to refer themselves to Access Solent for an assessment of their support needs. Consideration shall be given at this point to the effect of those needs on the applicant's ability to meet the participation and assessment requirements of the course.
59. If appropriate, staff in Access Solent will arrange a meeting with the applicant and the course team to establish the support needs and whether reasonable adjustments can be made to support the applicant for the duration of the course. If the University is unable to make reasonable adjustments, an alternative course may be offered. Where the University is unable to meet the needs of the applicant's learning requirements, the offer will be withdrawn.

APPLICANTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL HEALTH OR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS - DECISION- MAKING IN CASES REQUIRING HIGH LEVELS OF SPECIAL SUPPORT

60. Such applications are by their nature individual cases and will be assessed as such, informed by the principles of fairness and transparency set out earlier. It is not therefore possible to publish generic guidelines for acceptance or

rejection of an application. However, the nature and severity of the applicant's needs or disabilities will inevitably play a significant part in the decision making process, both for the University and the applicant. Part of the decision making process shall therefore include, when the case necessitates it, discussion between the applicant and the University of the resource necessary to provide appropriate sustained support for the duration of the chosen course. In cases of significant additional support needs this cannot be separated, for either party, from the final decision on whether to proceed. In such cases a decision may be made in principle to offer a provisional place, subject to special needs support being clarified and agreed by the University, the applicant and any relevant third parties.

61. Depending on the nature of the support required, additional costs may be incurred over and above those which can be reasonably met out of the University's normal fee income and public funding. In such cases the relevant School and/or professional services department will agree with the applicant if and how these costs can be met, and would expect to work closely with the relevant external funding and care agencies.
62. In the case of overseas applicants with special needs requiring significant extra support, especially those with substantial physical or mental health conditions, decisions by both the University and the applicant could be complicated by remoteness from the applicant's usual home, family or medical support. Additional external funding is not generally available for such applicants, and the University will identify clearly at the application stage the extent of the support it can reasonably provide from its general resources. If this is not adequate to sustain the necessary support for the duration of the course, and the applicant cannot provide the balance of finance, it may lead to the withdrawal of the offer of the place.
63. All applicants with special needs shall be asked to consider carefully the general intellectual, emotional, physical and financial demands of a higher education (HE) course of study. Whilst the University makes every effort to enable students to study successfully, certain special needs, physical and cognitive, and the limitations they impose, may make a course in a general HE institution an unrealistic option. The University reserves the right to recommend appropriate action if it believes this to be the case.
64. In all special needs cases the University reserves the right to judge what support it is reasonable for it to provide and is sustainable both for itself and the applicant.

ADMISSION OF APPLICANTS WHO WILL STILL BE UNDER 18 YEARS OLD AT THE START OF THEIR COURSE

65. In line with legislative requirements the University has put in place special support and safety arrangements for those under the legal UK age of

majority on entry to University courses. The parents or guardians of such applicants remain legally responsible for them until they become 18 years old. For this reason the University has allocated special residential accommodation arrangements for under 18s based near the East Park Terrace Campus for students choosing to live within University managed residences.

66. The Admission and Enrolment team shall identify such applications upon receipt and forward to them, the University's guidance to '*Applicants still aged under 18 at the time of starting a course*'. This confirms that the University will not be acting 'in loco parentis' and ensures clarity on responsibilities and accommodation arrangements at an early stage.
67. Provision at Warsash Maritime Academy recognises that Merchant Navy Cadets may be admitted from age 16 years under the sponsorship of commercial shipping companies and that under 18s may be accepted on short courses as part of their Merchant Navy training. The University's policy regarding minors is outlined in its 'Safeguarding Policy' (see Policies, Procedures and Guidelines).

ADMISSION OF APPLICANTS WITH PREVIOUS CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

68. The University expects all applicants to declare any criminal convictions on their application form.
69. Applicants who declare a criminal conviction will be required to divulge information on their conviction to the Deputy Head of Student Services. A panel will be convened to determine if an offer can be made to the applicant. This panel involves consideration of the University's duty of care to staff and students and its commitment to individual human rights, the right to an education and the right not to be discriminated against as protected under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
70. Procedures for the processing of applications that include a declaration of a criminal conviction or pending court case are detailed in the University's '*Declaration of Criminal Convictions Student Policy and Procedure*'. The overriding principle is that where an applicant makes a declaration of a previous criminal conviction, the University will ensure that the conviction is not taken into account when making an academic decision regarding entry to their chosen course. All cases will be considered on an individual basis and in a fair and equitable manner.
71. Where it is decided that an offer cannot be made on the basis of a criminal conviction declaration, the applicant will be notified in writing and will be made aware of the complaints procedure.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECKS

72. The University requires all applicants to undertake an Enhanced record check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if:
- i. The course qualification requires professional registration and there is a professional body requirement for DBS clearance prior to practice;
 - ii. Students are required to work with children and vulnerable adults for significant periods of time.
73. Where DBS is required for a course, and clearance is not provided by the service, the applicant will be required to apply for an alternative course.

ADMISSION OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE STUDIED AND FAILED TO COMPLETE THEIR PROGRAMME AT SOUTHAMPTON SOLENT UNIVERSITY

74. Students who have failed or withdrew from a course at the University may apply to study a new course from the beginning, following assessment from the Admissions and Enrolment Team Manager in collaboration with other departments across the University.
75. When considering that the student should be admitted onto the new course it should be noted that the student starts again in terms of registration period and normal assessment regulations will apply.
76. In arriving at their decision, the following considerations will be taken into account:
- i. the extent and nature of previous failure and the likelihood of the student succeeding on an alternate course, particularly if there are common units;
 - ii. references provided by the previous course tutor regarding the reason for failure;
 - iii. any professional body requirements / constraints;
 - iv. standard entry requirements for the new course; and
 - v. whether the course change is in the student's best academic interests.
77. If a student is permitted to return to a new course of study, it would be appropriate for the new course Admissions Tutor to meet with the applicant to counsel as necessary on the demands of the course.
78. Students who have failed a course, or have formally withdrawn or been withdrawn from a course will not normally be readmitted to the same

course.

79. It is the students' responsibility to contact their Student Funding body to ensure that additional study can be funded.

FEEDBACK TO UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

80. All decisions made by the Admission and Enrolment team and Admissions Tutors will be recorded, together with any supporting evidence.
81. Feedback will be provided on request to unsuccessful applicants, and only when that request is made in writing, either by letter or e-mail. The Admission and Enrolment team shall ensure that feedback is provided within 20 working days of the request being received by the University.
82. Applicants may provide written consent to the Admission and Enrolment team for an appropriate third party, such as a parent or college advisor, to seek feedback. All copies of written consent will be retained and the Admission and Enrolment team will liaise with agreed agents.

RIGHTS OF COMPLAINT OR APPEAL

83. Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the application process, they may make a complaint in writing to the Admissions and Enrolment Team Manager who will investigate the issue(s) and report back to the applicant within 20 working days.
84. Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the application decision, they may make an appeal in writing to the Admissions and Enrolment Team Manager who will investigate the decision and report back to the applicant within 20 working days.
85. Where applicants can show a material error in the handling of their appeal or complaint, or where there is a student with criminal convictions, they may make a further appeal to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations).

DATA PROTECTION

86. The University holds and processes information on students for administrative and academic purposes; this includes personal, academic, financial and disability data. Sensitive personal data on the applicant form may be processed anonymously, but where these data become personal data and are necessary for a student's acceptance on to a particular course (e.g. a criminal record check) they will be advised in advance of processing.

87. The University will not disclose confidential information about students without their written permission. This includes references. Permission to certain disclosures (e.g. reports to sponsors or agents) is secured at enrolment.
88. Under certain circumstances, defined by the Data Protection Act, the University may have to make data available without consent. For example, the University is required to pass information to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and to confirm student attendance to the Student Loans Company. Other exemptions include national security, crime and taxation or a life-threatening situation.