



ADMISSIONS POLICY: RESEARCH DEGREES

This policy applies to candidates applying for a research degree at the University of Plymouth (PhD, Professional Doctorates [DClinPsy, EdD, EngD, DBA, DPA]¹, MD¹, MPhil or ResM).

¹ For Professional Doctorates and MD degrees, please also refer to the specific requirements for these programmes.

Section one: aims and principles

The Doctoral College aims to engage, guide and enable applicants through the admissions process by:

- Empowering and developing its staff to provide excellent service and collaborate professionally and respectfully with all users;
- Provide professional, expert advice and guidance to all enquirers, applicants and stakeholders;
- Ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all suitably qualified applicants to gain admission to a University of Plymouth research degree programme

The University of Plymouth will achieve these aims by:

- Being committed to recognizing the academic and other relevant achievements and experiences of each applicant
- Welcoming applications from motivated candidates from all backgrounds
- Being committed to promoting equal opportunities for all applicants and students from within and without the UK
- Treating all applicants fairly, consistently and expeditiously
- Clearly identifying and communicating the entry requirements for each programme.

- Selecting applicants for entry on the basis of a range of criteria including academic, professional, experiential and personal experience
- Complying with appropriate legislation and all University of Plymouth policies.

The University may receive more applications than it has places for and hence reserves the right to make informed admissions decisions based on a wide field of information including academic profile and other relevant achievements.

Section two: application considerations

1. Similarity detection and suspected fraud

Application documents submitted are examined, and qualifications are verified with awarding bodies wherever necessary. If fraud is suspected (or confirmed), the University reserves the right to withdraw/withhold offers.

Offers of a place are conditional upon the information supplied to the University. False statements or omissions of relevant information may lead to the withdrawal of an offer or a place. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the information provided is accurate and complete.

2. Relevant criminal convictions

In accordance with our principles, the University of Plymouth provides a fair and transparent decision-making process for all applications, including applicants declaring a criminal conviction. Applications are subjected to the standard admissions procedures, and if it is decided to make an offer, additional steps are taken to liaise with the applicant and establish the nature of the offence, and any other action required, which may include review of supplied information by a cross institutional review panel.

For some programmes, disclosure is required by law, particularly for programmes in health and related areas, social work, teaching or working with children.

The University of Plymouth will follow the procedures outlined by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in respect of the application. The DBS can be applied for on line via GBG. The decision to make an offer rests with the relevant School/Faculty.

If it is discovered during the application process that an applicant has a relevant criminal conviction that is not spent, and the box has not been ticked on the application form, the University may deduce that the applicant has knowingly withheld information, which may lead to the withdrawal of an offer or a place.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the information provided is accurate, and to quickly respond to our requests for additional information in support of his/her application.

If we do not receive a response to our requests, we will assume that the applicant does not wish to progress any further, and the University will terminate the application.

If you receive a criminal conviction *during* your application process you must declare this to the Doctoral College, who will liaise with the relevant admission staff to identify if the conviction has an impact on the admissions process.

You will be contacted to discuss the progress of your application. The University will investigate the declaration because it is concerned with:

- Duty of care: to staff, students and visitors
- The protection of children and vulnerable groups
- The requirements of professional bodies, regulating organisations and placement providers.

A conviction obtained during the application process will not always result in the withdrawal of a place, but early advice is essential.

Your personal information will be kept securely, in accordance with our data protection policy.

3. Disability

The University welcomes applications from applicants with disabilities. Applicants will be subject to standard academic selection procedures in the same way as all other applicants. Some applicants may receive an offer based on academic suitability only. Other eligibility, including assessment linked to reasonable adjustment and support may require further investigation.

Some students may be invited to attend an information meeting, in collaboration with Disability Services, to ensure that the University of Plymouth can provide the required support. For a small number of applicants the University may reluctantly conclude that the adjustments needed to provide the necessary support for the applicant cannot reasonably be fulfilled. In cases where adequate support cannot be provided the University reserves the right to withdraw the offer and the applicant will be notified immediately.

If during the process of the application, the applicant's personal circumstances alter, or the applicant is affected by an injury or disability, they should contact the Doctoral College.

The University of Plymouth's [Disability Services](#) is nationally recognised for its good practice in supporting learners with disabilities. Applicants can contact Disability Services via the Student Hub on [+44\(0\)1752 587676](tel:+44(0)1752587676) or email: studentservices@plymouth.ac.uk.

4. Minors (Under 18s)

The University of Plymouth welcomes applications from minors admitted as students. If we offer a place to an applicant who is under the age of 18 it is because the University believes that this individual has the ability, potential and intellect to successfully complete the programme offered.

The University does not expect to act 'in loco parentis' and the applicant will need to provide details of their legal guardian. Minors are subject to any legal age restrictions. Overseas minors are legally required, under the rules of the UKVI, to provide a letter of consent from the parent/legal guardian, consenting to the arrangements with regard to travel, arrival and accommodation.

5. Non-traditional learners and returners to study

The University of Plymouth has a long tradition of admitting students who are returning to study, and we do not set an upper age limit. We welcome the admission of non-traditional learners to the University community and the diverse range of skills and experiences that they bring with them.

In the case of Professional Doctorates or programmes that include credit-rated taught modules, the University will consider entry based on any previous experience under our APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) or APEL (Accreditation of Experiential Learning) policy.

6. Fitness to practice, fitness to teach and occupational health assessment

For a number of health programmes, applicants are required to complete a medical questionnaire. An offer of a place is conditional upon a satisfactory state of health. There is a requirement, for candidates applying to these programmes to pass a fitness to practice assessment. Details of the procedure can be found here: [Fitness to Practice/Teach](#).

7. International applicants and English Language Requirements

Applicants should normally be able to demonstrate a level of literacy and numeracy appropriate to the course which they are undertaking. The admissions process will identify whether an applicant meets this requirement.

It is the University's requirement that an applicant whose first language is not English completes a University approved test in English language. The University is seeking proficiency in accordance with the qualifications listed below in the guidance table: [Language Entry requirements](#).

For applicants whose previous studies were not undertaken in the English Language, in particular for international applicants, the following qualification may be used as a guide to an appropriate level of competence in English language: British Council International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) overall band 6.5 or 7.0 depending on the research programme, with a minimum 5.5 score in each of the elements.

International students who do not meet the full academic admission criteria of the University of Plymouth may be eligible to commence their university studies via a pathway programme at University of Plymouth International College (UPIC).

Please note our requirements take into account UKVI (<https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/knowledge-of-english>) minimum requirements for B2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) where appropriate.

The UKVI list of approved English Language tests and B2 levels can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt>.

Other applicants whose first language is English will also be required to demonstrate English language proficiency.

8. Extenuating, mitigating or medical circumstances

We take into account extenuating, mitigating and medical circumstances that are brought to the University's attention during the application process up until enrolment. We require a supporting statement from the academic referee, and we welcome direct communication from a senior staff member or official from a school/college/university or local community in support of an applicant's circumstances.

9. Complaints

Each application is processed in a fair and transparent way. If an applicant believes that, in the processing of its application, the actions of the University have fallen below the standard expected, then an applicant may make a complaint. A complaint relates to the operation of the University's application process and/or its outcome, or the actions or behaviour of a member of staff involved in the admissions process.

Should an applicant wish to make a complaint/grievance, they are advised to put their complaint in writing to the Doctoral College Manager who will acknowledge the complaint, investigate and respond on behalf of the University. Under normal circumstances, applicants should expect to have a response within 15 working days of receipt of the letter.

If, having received a response, the applicant is still dissatisfied then they should follow the University's Formal Complaint Process:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/complaints-appeals/make-complaint>.

10. Appeals

Each application is considered in accordance with our principles and offers are made based on the information provided on the application form, the availability of a suitable supervisory team and resources, and the entry requirements. If an applicant believes that, in its consideration of their application, the actions of the University have fallen below the standard expected then an applicant may make an appeal. **An**

appeal must relate to the process of decision making rather than the decision itself which is a question of academic judgment. There is no automatic right of appeal against a decision on whether or not to offer a place.

Should an applicant wish to appeal, they are advised to put their concerns in writing to the Doctoral College Manager who will acknowledge the appeal, investigate and respond on behalf of the University. Under normal circumstances, applicants should expect to have a response within 15 working days of receipt of the letter.

The University of Plymouth reserves the right to exclude an applicant who is considered on justifiable grounds to be unsuitable for a place on a particular programme according to individual circumstances.

11. Interviews

The University of Plymouth requires all applicants for postgraduate research degrees to be interviewed prior to being offered a place on a programme of study. Interviews provide an opportunity for an applicant to demonstrate their skills and abilities, and interest in studying with Plymouth, and are not tests. Interviews may be conducted in person or via video conference. Unless otherwise noted in an invitation to interview, applicants are responsible for meeting the costs of attending an interview.

The interview and decision-making process will be consistent with the University's policy on equal opportunities. However, if not already done so, applicants are encouraged to disclose any disability to the University to help ensure that any necessary adjustments to support their studies can be assessed by the interview panel.

12. Supplementary Materials

For some subject disciplines, applicants will need to submit documents and materials in addition to an application form and evidence of English language qualifications. These may include an extended project proposal; CV; a sample of critical writing; and, if engaging in creative or artistic research methods, evidence of the applicant's ability to undertake the proposed practice-led research (e.g. via DVD, portfolio, links to websites, reviews, catalogues, samples of creative writing, etc.). If applicants are required to submit any of these materials as part of the selection and admissions process, this will be indicated in disciplinary-specific guidelines for application.

13. Applicant feedback

The University is committed to providing appropriate feedback to an applicant upon written request only. The request for feedback must be received by the Doctoral College (doctoralcollege@plymouth.ac.uk) within 28 days of the University's decision. Feedback will be provided via email direct to the applicant within 10 days.

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint or request a review of an admissions decision after they have received feedback, this must be directed to the Doctoral College Manager in the first instance (see also Complaints and Appeals sections above).

14. Contract of Admission

The acceptance of a research degree offer enters the candidate into a contract of admission and the University's regulations are incorporated into the contract made. All students are required, as a condition of enrolment, to accept those rules and regulations, which are set out in the University's Academic Regulations:

<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/regulations>.

Any offer of a place made by the University is made on the basis of the applicant's:

- acceptance of the University's rules and regulations as published and amended from time to time, acceptance of the University Research Ethics Policy and Code of Good Research Practice:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/governance/research-ethics-policy>
- undertaking to pay the fees required for the programme and any other fees for services offered by the University and accepted, such as accommodation, etc.
- statements made on the application form, where the discovery of false statements or omissions may lead to the offer being withdrawn (or in the case of candidates who have already enrolled, to their being required to withdraw).

Section three: entry requirements and qualifications

1. Standard Entry Requirements

The standard entry requirements for a research degree are:

- a masters degree from a UK university or a degree of a non-UK institution deemed to be of equal standing to a UK degree, or
- a first class or second upper class first bachelor degree award by a UK university or a degree of a non-UK institution deemed to be of equal standing to a UK degree, or
- a professional qualification recognised as equivalent to a degree, or
- other qualifications and experience that have demonstrated that the applicant can meet the challenges and demands of the programme, and
- two verifiable satisfactory reports from academic referees. Verbal or e-mail references (other than where sent from the academic e-mail address of the referee) may not be accepted.

References should be submitted, independently from the applicant, directly from the referees to the Doctoral College (doctoral.college@plymouth.ac.uk). No offer (conditional or unconditional) will be issued without the satisfactory references having been submitted.

Prospective supervisors can act as one of the referees; however, a second reference independent from the prospective supervisory team must be obtained.

The University's minimum entry requirements are intended to:

- Ensure that applicants are appropriately prepared for postgraduate research study in higher education
- Draw attention to the diversity of qualifications that can prepare applicants for higher education
- Support staff in recruiting suitably prepared students who have satisfied the University of the applicant's fitness to pursue such research study and of the school/faculty's ability to provide all necessary facilities and support.

2. Verification of Qualifications

The University of Plymouth requires that all applicants provide evidence of the qualifications upon which their offer of a place has been made. An offer remains conditional until all academic and non-academic conditions are met.

Applicants should expect to provide original certification or certified copies of original certificates, prior to enrolment. Such examples would include degree transcripts (with translations if not in English), access and international qualifications plus non-academic conditions including DBS checks and Occupational Health questionnaires. Applicants are advised to provide this documentation as soon as is practicable, in order to prevent delays in the admissions process.

3. Confirmation

Applicants who narrowly fail to satisfy the specific academic conditions of their offer may still be offered a further conditional offer for the following academic year to give the applicant the opportunity to fulfil the conditions during the next 12 months. Such deferred offers are at the discretion of the admissions panel.

Section four: non-academic policy

1. Assessment of tuition fees

Applicants will be assessed as eligible to pay Home, Channel Islands or Overseas tuition fees. Applicants will be required to self-assess their residential category as part of the application process. The applicant may be asked to provide further information if their fee status is unclear. Inaccurate information may make an applicant's offer void. The University will reserve the right to identify an applicant as eligible to pay overseas tuition fee at any point in the admissions process, up to and including the point of enrolment.

Applicants are required to indicate their highest level of qualification on entry to date, in order that their application can be processed accurately, and the correct fee information assigned.

To clarify an applicant's personal situation, especially if an applicant is seeking to check their International/Overseas status, please refer to UKCISA which is a service that offers advice for international students.

2. UK Visa and Immigration

International Students who require a Tier 4/Student visa or other visa to study in the UK:

If an applicant is made an offer of a place to study at the University of Plymouth University, once the academic requirements of the offer has been met there will be other steps involved in the admission process before we can confirm the place, if a Tier 4/Student visa or other visa is required to study in the UK.

The University as a Tier 4/Student visa sponsor is required to check that the applicant meets the University and UKVI (UK Visas & Immigration) English Language requirements, have enough time left to study as per the Tier 4/Student visa time limit, that the course represents academic progression, and any other requirements as set out by UKVI at the time of application.

We will also ask that the applicant either pays a tuition fee deposit, or shows acceptable evidence that the applicant is officially sponsored by a body recognised by UKVI, and can satisfy the financial and immigration health surcharge requirements.

Before issuing a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Study), the University of Plymouth will also ask that the applicant discloses to us their full study and immigration history in the UK, including any adverse situations that may mean the University cannot or should not sponsor the applicant under Tier 4/Student visa.

If the applicant has met the academic conditions of their offer, we will do our utmost to ensure that the applicant can take up their place, but please be aware that due to immigration law and our duties as a Tier 4/Student visa sponsor, there may be rare occasions where the conclusion of our admission process is that we cannot offer an unconditional place, or issue a CAS. In these circumstances we would endeavour to explain this decision to the applicant as early as possible in the admissions process, once all relevant information has been received and duly considered.

3. Enrolled Students subject to Immigration Control in the UK:

Any student enrolled on a programme of study at the University of Plymouth who is subject to UK immigration control, may have their enrolment revoked if they are found to be in breach of UK immigration requirements or immigration law.

If information connected to immigration status in the UK has been falsified or withheld during the student's admission or enrolment process, information may be shared with other appropriate bodies such as UKVI, Student Finance England / the Student Loans Company so that further action may be taken where required.

This applies whether the student has been classed as a Home or Overseas fee payer, or has any other fee status or no fees are payable as part of their studies. Where the student is in breach of UK immigration law and/or they have falsified or withheld information supplied to the University regarding their immigration status, the University reserves the right not to accept future applications from that student.

4. Deferred entry

The University welcomes applications from students wishing to defer their offer for up to one year at the discretion of the relevant School/Faculty.

5. Contacts

You are welcome to contact us throughout the admissions process. Please email the Doctoral College at doctoralcollege@plymouth.ac.uk including your full name, date of birth, and University reference number (if issued).

Last updated: March 2021