

Admissions - Research Students

UPR SA02 version 14.0

Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 13.01 of UPR SA02, with effect from 1 September 2024.

Summary of significant changes to the previous version

Amendments have been made to reflect correct organisational structures, update website links terminology and clarify processes where necessary.

Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This document (UPR SA02) has been approved by the Academic Board with effect from 1 September 2024¹.

¹ **Academic Board Minutes** 684.2, 16 June 99; 716.1, 1 December 99; 731.3, 15 March 2000; 795.2, 14 March 2001; 861.2, 6 March 2002; 956.2, 5 March 2003; 62.2, 10 March 2004; 139.8, 9 March 2005; 257.3, 1 March 2006; 346.2.10, 7 March 2007 and 479, 12 March 2008; 667, 10 March 2010; 9, 16 March 2011; 123, 14 March 2012, 292 and 304.1.2, 19 June 2013; and 359, 12 March 2014; 480, 11 March 2015; 512, 24 June 2015; 621, 22 June 2016.

- 1.2 UPR SA02 may be amended only with the prior approval of the Academic Board and/or, as appropriate, the Standing Working Party on UPRs.

2 Scope

- 2.1 UPR SA02 applies to applicants, research students and to staff admitting research students to the University and governs the admission of all research students (full-time and part-time) including research students who will be based overseas.

2.2 Research Centres

See section 8.2.

3 Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following definitions will apply:

3.1 'applicant':

a person applying to the University of Hertfordshire for admission as a research student;

3.2 'research student':

a person enrolled by the University who has applied, or intends to apply to the Research Degrees Board of the Academic Board for registration of a programme of work leading to a research award of the University;

3.3 'programme of research training':

the programme of study specified in the Research Degree Schedule which applies to the research degree for which the research student has registered, or wishes to register a programme of work;

3.4 'international student':

a person from a country outside the United Kingdom.

4 Role and Responsibilities of Committees and Boards

4.1 Academic Board

Subject to the overall responsibility of the Board of Governors, the Academic Board is responsible for determining the University's principles, policies, regulations and procedures relating to the admission of all students to University programmes. The Academic Board receives reports on the outcomes of the University's student recruitment activities and the activities of the University's admissions services.

4.2 Recruitment and Admissions Policy Review Committee

The Recruitment and Admissions Policy Review Committee is a committee of the Academic Board and is responsible to the Board for reviewing the University's policies for the recruitment and admission of students and making necessary recommendations to the Board.

4.3 Research Degrees Board

The Research Degrees Board is a committee of the Academic Board. Its responsibilities include, but are not limited to, monitoring and reviewing the operation of the University's policies, procedures and practices for the admission of research students and for related matters and for making a report to the Recruitment and Admissions Policy Review Committee not less than once in each Academic Year.

(Note for guidance:

Deans of School have overall responsibility for the admission of research students (see section 8). Unless indicated otherwise in the text of this document, those matters which remain the responsibility of the Research Degrees Board have been delegated to Associate Directors (Doctoral College)

4.4 Chair of the Recruitment and Admissions Policy Review Committee

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Recruitment and Admissions Policy Review Committee to advise the Academic Board and the Chief Executive's Group on the further development of the University's admissions principles, policies, regulations and procedures.

5 General Principles of Admissions

- 5.1 The admission of individual applicants is at the discretion of the University. It should be noted that the University regards decisions concerning whether an applicant satisfies the general principles of admission set out in section (5) and the entry requirements for the research degree for which registration will be sought, to be matters of academic judgment.
- 5.2 In exercising this discretion, the University will be guided by the following principles which will be applied to applicants, including those with prior experience:
- i the applicant's chosen area is consistent with the University's current research strategy;
 - ii the University has the necessary expertise amongst its staff to provide a programme of research training in the applicant's chosen area;
 - iii the University is able to provide the necessary resources from the time of the student's admission until the conclusion of their period of registration (the provision of such resources being subject to the student's satisfactory progress on their programme of research training);
 - iv the applicant meets the criteria for eligibility set out in UPR AS10² and relevant Research Degree Schedule for the award for which they wish to register a programme of work;
 - v there should be a reasonable expectation that anyone admitted as a research student has the potential to complete successfully a programme of research training;
 - vi in considering each individual applicant for admission, evidence will be sought of the applicant's personal, professional and educational experiences that

² UPR AS10 'Research Degrees – Generic Institutional Regulations'

provide indications of their ability to meet the demands of, and benefit from, a programme of research training;

- vii the University aims to ensure in the admission and treatment of applicants and students that no-one receives less favourable treatment because of characteristics protected by UK legislation³ or because of family or care responsibilities, social class, trade union activity, being an ex-offender or other unreasonable grounds.
- viii in considering each individual applicant for admission to a programme, evidence will be sought of the applicant's identity. The University will register the applicant in the full legal name as it appears in a document provided by a Government Agency. For example their passport or full UK photo driving licence where a passport is not available.

6 Research opportunities associated with agreements other than those involving the provision by the university of educational services

- 6.1 Where an agreement involving a research opportunity, such as a Research Studentship or a Research Assistant post, requires that the individual enrolls as a research student of the University and subsequently seeks registration as a research degree candidate, an offer will not be made to the individual unless they have made an application for admission as a research student and that application has been considered in accordance with the requirements of this document.
- 6.2 Where the individual's application for admission as a research student is rejected, they will not be appointed to the research opportunity.

7 Additional Principles Governing Admission

7.1 Applicants with disabilities

(See section 14)

The University is committed to developing educational opportunities which can be accessed by all suitably qualified applicants and welcomes applications from disabled people.

7.2 Applications from people who are at risk or who may be a risk

- 7.2.1 Where the risk is deemed to be solely to the applicant, to enable the applicant to come to an informed view of their ability to meet the demands of a programme of research training, reasonable efforts should be made to provide them with appropriate advice and assistance either from the University's own services or from other appropriate external agencies.

³ The following are protected characteristics under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

- 7.2.2 Where it is believed that an applicant might constitute a risk to the University, the matter must be referred by the Dean of School (or nominee) to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), who will normally consult the Vice-Chancellor for risk assessment and decision.
- 7.2.3 Whilst the University would not seek to further penalise an ex-offender or any other applicant who might be a risk, there will, nevertheless, be occasions where it will be appropriate for an academically suitable applicant to be refused entry to the University other than on academic grounds, for example, where the requirements of an external body prohibit the admission of ex-offenders or where the applicant might constitute a risk to other people.

7.3 Applications to outside the United Kingdom

Prior to the issue of an offer letter to an applicant who will be based outside the United Kingdom, the Dean of School should seek the approval of the Research Degrees Board using the relevant form. This is to ensure that all appropriate academic matters, skills training and ethical requirements have been considered and are in place to support the applicant on enrolment.

7.4 Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

- 7.4.1 From 1 November 2007 the UK Government introduced the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS). Having an ATAS certificate is mandatory for some postgraduate research students to study certain specified subjects in the UK.
- 7.4.2 Where applicable the University will issue all non-UK/Irish applicants to whom it offers a place with a completed University ATAS Information Sheet to enable them to apply for ATAS clearance. The document will be issued at the same time as their offer letter.

7.5 UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI)

- 7.5.1 Students are expected to have met, as necessary, any visa and other requirements of the UKVI.
- 7.5.2 When the University is satisfied that the academic and financial requirements to undertake a research degree have been met by the applicant, the University will raise a 'Certificate of Acceptance of Study (CAS)' under Tier 4 of the Points Based System operated by the UKVI.

7.6 Applicants who are debtors of the University

The University reserves the right, at its absolute discretion, to refuse admission to individuals who are debtors of the University. The University may consider/re-consider an application when the debt has been paid in full, but is not bound to do so.

7.7 Criminal offences and convictions

Once an offer has been made applicants may be required to declare any criminal convictions. During the period between an applicant's acceptance of an offer from the University and their registration as a student of the University of Hertfordshire, they are required to advise the Dean of Students immediately if they have been charged with or convicted of a criminal offence.

8 Roles and responsibilities in relation to the admission of Research Students

8.1 Deans of School are responsible for the admission of research students. Where admission is being sought for a dual award and/or for an applicant to study in their home country, the Research Degrees Board must be consulted prior to an offer being made to the applicant and the issue of an offer letter (see sections 10.4 and 10.5).

8.2 In certain cases the resources required to support a research student will be provided by a Research Centre. In such circumstances, it may be appropriate that the relevant Director of Centre will assume the responsibilities assigned within this document to Deans of School.

8.3 Delegation of authority

Deans of School are permitted to delegate authority to admit research students to nominees in accordance with the following regulations and procedures:

- i the nominees must either be the Associate Dean of School (Research) or another member of the Research Degrees Board;
- ii the Dean of School must notify the Director of the Doctoral College and the Director of Academic Services, in writing, of the name of any person to whom they have delegated authority;

8.4 Where the Dean of School or their nominee is absent

In the absence of the Dean of School or the person to whom authority has been delegated (see section 8.3), advice should be sought from the Director of Academic Services where the signing of an offer letter is deemed to be urgent.

8.5 Withdrawal of delegated authority

8.5.1 A Dean of School will not be deemed to have withdrawn delegated authority until:

- i the relevant Associate Director (Doctoral College) has received written notification of the withdrawal and
- ii the Dean of School has notified the member of staff from whom delegated authority is being withdrawn.

8.5.2 The Dean of School must also send written notification of the change to the Director of Academic Services.

9 Applications

9.1 All applications must be made on the relevant University application form.

9.2 On behalf of the Research Degrees Board, Associate Directors (Doctoral College), in consultation with the Director of Professional Doctorate Programmes or relevant Research Tutor, are required to specify for their respective discipline areas: guidelines and operating procedures, the format and content of any additional material that applicants are required to submit with their application forms, together with the name of the member of staff to whom applications must be sent.

- 9.3 An individual will not be deemed to have made an application to the University until a completed postgraduate application form, together with all of the additional material specified by the relevant Associate Director (Doctoral College), has been received by the member of staff designated for this purpose by the Associate Director (Doctoral College).

10 Consideration and Rejection of Applications

- 10.1 Admissions decisions, which includes the consideration of applications and the interviewing of applicants, will involve at least two (2) members of University staff who are aware of the general principles of admissions (see section 5), where one of these members is either Associate Director (Doctoral College), Associate Dean (Research) or Research Tutor.
- 10.2 Within the framework of procedures for the admission of research students determined by the relevant Associate Director (Doctoral College) on behalf of the Research Degrees Board, the Dean of School will make appropriate provision for the consideration of applications and the interviewing of applicants and will specify the arrangements for considering applications from prospective research students who will be based outside the United Kingdom
- 10.3 Where an applicant has declared a disability, the Dean of School (or nominee) will also consult the Disability Adviser.
- 10.4 Where the application relates to a dual award which would be made by the University of Hertfordshire and another Higher Education institution, the prior approval of the Research Degrees Board is required. The Dean of School (or nominee) will submit a proposal for approval by the Research Degrees Board.
- 10.5 Where, following enrolment, a research student wishes to change the focus of their research and/or the content of their programme of research training, that proposal will be considered in accordance with the principles, policies, regulations and procedures set out in this document and that proposal may be rejected on the grounds given in this document.

10.6 Rejection of applications

Where an application is rejected, written notification is sent to the candidate on behalf of the Dean's nominee e.g. the Research Tutor and must include the rationale for the decision.

10.7 Request for the review of an admissions decision of a Dean of School/Head of Department (or nominee)

(Note for guidance:

Where an applicant is a minor (under the age of **18**) the applicant may designate a parent or guardian to act on their behalf.)

- i The University regards decisions concerning whether an applicant satisfies the general principles of admission set out in section (5) and the entry requirements for the research degree award for which registration will be sought, to be matters of academic judgment.

- ii A Dean of School (or nominee) should always be prepared, in response to a request by an applicant, to review their decision and, where they judge it appropriate, to offer the applicant a first or further interview by another suitably qualified member of the University's academic or research staff who has not been involved in the earlier decision to reject the application.
- iii Any applicant who is dissatisfied with the decision of a Dean of School (or nominee) should be advised to consult the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), either personally or in writing, to request a review.
- iv Where the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) considers it appropriate, they may direct that the applicant be called for interview.
- v The applicant may appeal to the Vice-Chancellor in writing if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of the review (see 10.7, ii) and must be advised of this right in the University's written response to their representations to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).

10.8 Complaints

(Note for guidance:

Where an applicant is a minor (under the age of **18**) the applicant may designate a parent or guardian to act on their behalf.)

- i The process for dealing with requests for the review of an admissions decision is set out in section 10.7.
- ii Complaints by applicants concerning the administration of the admissions policies, regulations and procedures set out in this document (UPR SA02) or the processes that it describes or other issues that have arisen will be progressed by means of UPR SA16⁴.
- iii A copy of UPR SA16⁴ must be provided to anyone wishing to make such a complaint.

11 Entry Requirements

Entry requirements and the criteria used to determine applicants' eligibility to register for a research degree are set out in UPR AS10² and the relevant Research Degree Schedule.

12 Information to Prospective Applicants

The University will ensure that all information and publicity material associated with research degree programmes is clear, accurate and of sufficient detail to inform applicants' choice and follows the guidance issued, from time-to-time, to Higher Education institutions by the Competition and Markets Authority (**CMA**)⁵.

⁴ SA16 'Student and Applicant Complaints'

⁵ Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013

13 Offers

- 13.1 An offer of a place imposes an obligation on the University to admit the applicant and should not be withdrawn without the applicant's specific consent, except where:
- i the applicant fails to meet the conditions of the University's offer and/or
 - ii the applicant is found to have made a false statement on the application form or has otherwise sought to mislead the University and/or
 - iii the applicant has withheld pertinent information, such as failure in a previous programme of research training and/or
 - iv the applicant has not accepted the offer of a place by the specified deadline and/or
 - v the applicant requires a visa to enter the country but has been unable to meet the University's sponsorship criteria.
- 13.2 An offer of a place must not be made conditional on the applicant withdrawing an application to another institution.
- 13.3 All offers must be made, in writing, by means of an offer letter signed by the Dean of School unless they have delegated authority to a nominee, in which case the letter must be signed by the nominee (see section 8).

(Members of staff must ensure that they do not make an offer of a place to any applicant unintentionally, either in writing or orally, for example, during the course of an interview.)

(Note for guidance:

By signing the offer letter, the Dean of School (or nominee) signifies that they are satisfied that all University requirements have been met and that the necessary resources are available (see section 5.2, iii).)

- 13.4 All offer letters will be constructed using the current version of the template published from time-to-time by the Secretary and Registrar. The template will incorporate a statement consistent with the following:
- "If you accept this offer your tuition fee status will be determined in accordance with current University policy and you will be required to comply with the University's regulations concerning the payment of fees."

(Notes for guidance:

- See section 16.
- The current template for the offer letter referred to in section 13.4 must be obtained from the Doctoral College.

14 Admission of Applicants with Disabilities

14.1 Statement of general policy

- 14.1.1 The University is committed to developing educational opportunities which can be accessed by all suitably qualified applicants and welcomes applications from disabled people.

14.1.2 The University's admissions process is accessible for disabled applicants. The procedures provide opportunities for the discussion of any reasonable adjustments which may be necessary.

14.1.3 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the University will only reject a suitably qualified applicant for a reason related to disability where:

- i the reason is fully justified by the University on the basis of its general principles of admissions (see section 5);
- ii necessary adjustments would not be reasonable.

14.2 Applicants who become disabled whilst they are students of the University - statement of policy

In admitting any applicant to the University, it is implicit that the University will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments to support students who become disabled whilst they are registered at the University of Hertfordshire, in accordance with the principles set out in this section (14.1).

14.3 Disclosure by an applicant of a disability

The University encourages disabled applicants to disclose their disabilities as early in the application process as possible in order to ensure that any necessary support arrangements can be put in place before applicants arrive at the University. The University's 'Statement on Disability Disclosure by Students' is published on-line at:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/life/support-and-wellbeing/student-wellbeing/disability-support/statement-on-disability-disclosure-by-students>

14.4 Students choosing or altering all or part of a programme of research training after admission - statement of policy

14.4.1 Some disabled research students may not have identified precisely, at the time of their application to the University, the content of the programme of research training which they would wish to follow.

14.4.2 In such circumstances, the University will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments to enable the student to pursue their desired programme of research, as if the student were a new applicant for that programme. Similarly, the policies and procedures described above will apply equally to research students who wish to change their programme of research in such a way that a reassessment of needs must be carried out.

14.5 Procedures for the admission of disabled students

14.5.1 Information concerning the procedures for the admission of disabled students may be obtained from Ask Herts <https://ask.herts.ac.uk/> (Telephone 01707 284800) or via:

<https://www.herts.ac.uk/life/support-and-wellbeing/student-wellbeing/disability-support>

14.5.2 Principal/Academic Supervisors

- i Where appropriate, the Dean of School (or nominee) will appoint a Principal/Academic Supervisor or other appropriate member of staff, in advance of entry, so that the Principal/Academic Supervisor (or equivalent) may become familiar with the applicant's additional needs and ease the applicant's entry to the University.
- ii After admission, the Principal/Academic Supervisor (or equivalent) and Disability Adviser will ensure that, as far as reasonably possible, the student's additional needs are met.

15 Competence in the use of the English language

15.1 Statement of policy

It is the University's policy that no research student will be admitted unless they have the competence necessary in the English language to enable them to follow their chosen programme of research training and to submit a dissertation and to be examined in the English language (orally and in writing).

15.2 Applicants are required to provide satisfactory evidence to this effect and the University reserves the right to require applicants to undertake an examination to determine their competence in the English language.

15.3 Applicants from overseas should have a minimum IELTS score of **6.5**, or a minimum TOEFL score of **79**.

16 Determination of applicants' tuition fee status

The determination of applicants' tuition fee status is the responsibility of the Director of Student Administration (or nominee).

Sharon Harrison-Barker
Secretary and Registrar
Signed: **1 August 2024**

Alternative format

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at governanceservices@herts.ac.uk or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.