

Owner:	Doctoral College
Version number:	1.4
Date of Approval:	May 2014
Approved by:	Academic Standards Committee
Effective date:	August 2023 (for Academic Year 2023-24)
Date of last review:	May 2021
Due for review:	2023-24

This document is part of the Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures which govern the University's academic provision. Each document has a unique document number to indicate which section of the series it belongs to.

3B - Recruitment, Selection and Admission (Postgraduate Research Degrees): Policy and Procedure

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 These policy and procedures outline the University's commitment to the admission of students to postgraduate research degree programmes offered by Bournemouth University (BU).
- 1.2 These policy and procedures are available to all University staff, and those involved in the research degree admissions process are required to comply with them.
- 1.3 Bournemouth University is committed to ensuring that its selection policies and procedures are transparent, followed fairly, courteously, consistently and expeditiously; that information concerning applicants remains confidential between designated parties, and that decisions are made by those equipped to make the required judgements.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The Research Degrees Committee will review these Admissions Policy and Procedures annually. Academic Standards and Education Committee will recommend any policy changes to Senate for approval.
- 2.2 The Doctoral College takes overall responsibility for the development of admissions policies and procedures for research degree programmes. Extensive consultation takes place with the Faculties and agreed changes are disseminated to professional and academic staff.
- 2.3 Academic and professional staff in the Faculties assess the abilities, aptitudes, skills, qualifications (including English language proficiency) and experiences of applicants that indicate their potential to succeed on their research degree programme and use this as a guideline - along with the University-wide, and subject specific, benchmarks for entry - to determine if a student can be admitted to the University research degree programme.
- 2.4 **All University staff have access to and, are required to comply with, the University's policies and procedures.**

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 All documents can be accessed [here](#)
- 3.2 Other documents with direct relevance to this are:
 - 3A - Standard Admissions Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees
 - 6A - Standard Assessment Regulations: Postgraduate Research Degrees
 - 8A - Code of Practice for Research Degrees

- *3P - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and UK Credit Transfer (UKCT): Policy and Procedure*
- *3C - Admissions - Appeals and Complaints: Policy and Procedure*
- *11F - Students Complaints: Policy and Procedure*
- *11K - Student Disciplinary: Procedure*
- Equality and Diversity Policy

Policy

4. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Bournemouth University's policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of research degree students are based on the following principles:
- the University's commitment to academic standards;
 - the identification of students who are likely to succeed in the University's programmes;
 - equity of opportunity for all applicants. There shall be no discrimination against any applicant in relation to age, colour, creed, disability, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, nationality, race, sexual orientation or social class, or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010;
 - fair, consistent and transparent application of the University's policies and procedures by staff who are well trained and have access to, and comply with these documents.

- 4.2 Policies and procedures related to admissions are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to support the mission and strategic objectives of the University, and that they remain current and valid in the light of changing circumstances.

4.3 Academic Standards

- 4.3.1 Entry criteria, which may vary from research degree programme to research degree programme, are set by Doctoral College and Faculties using University-wide and subject-specific benchmarks and are widely published.

- 4.3.2 For research degree programmes that are jointly ratified by the University and a Professional Body, criteria for entry will also meet any requirements specified by the Professional Body.

- 4.3.3 Applicants whose first language is not English will be required to demonstrate competency in the four components of English: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, normally by means of a recognised qualification, such as IELTS, or completion of the University's Pre-sessional English for University Study Programme. Normally, for the majority of research degree programme, applicants will be required to provide evidence of IELTS (Academic) 6.5 (with a minimum of 5.5 in each of the four component scores) or equivalent. It should be noted that the language requirement may be higher for some research degree programmes, in particular those which require a high level of communication skills.

- 4.3.4 Applicants to certain programmes will be required to undergo selection tests, occupational health and/or Disclosure Barring Service and Barred List checks, the outcomes of which will be taken into consideration as part of the admissions process.

4.4 Success in the University's Programmes

- 4.4.1 There should be a reasonable expectation that anyone admitted to a research degree programme will be able to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme and achieve the standard required for the research degree award.

- 4.4.2 The ability to successfully complete and benefit from a research degree programme should be the basic criterion for admission, and this is not necessarily best evidenced by the highest possible entry criteria or equivalent.

4.4.3 In considering each individual applicant for admission to a research degree programme, evidence should be sought of personal, professional and educational experiences that provide indications of ability to meet the demands of the research degree programme.

4.5 **Equal Opportunities**

4.5.1 All Bournemouth University's policies and procedures for the recruitment and admission of students are designed to meet the University's commitment to Equal Opportunities for both students and staff and to widening participation. The *Equality and Diversity Policy* states:

"Bournemouth University (BU) aims to create a work and study environment for students, staff and visitors to BU where different values and beliefs can be freely expressed and openly discussed and will do what it can to encourage open and respectful debate around equality and diversity issues."

4.6 **Fair, consistent and transparent application of policies and procedures**

4.6.1 All applications (including those from staff, their relatives or others associated with the University) will be considered on equal merit and using transparent entry requirements, both academic and non-academic, to underpin the judgements that are made during the selection process for entry.

4.6.2 Each Faculty, with administrative support from the Doctoral College, is responsible for the recruitment and admissions of all of its research degree students and the number of places available each Faculty is agreed between the Faculty and the University Management. The Doctoral College is responsible for processing all research degree applications.

4.6.3 The Faculties, with administrative support from the Doctoral College, must implement University policies and admissions criteria in relation to the recruitment of all research degree students: Home, EU (non-UK) and International students.

4.6.4 Admission decisions will be based on the information supplied by the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all pertinent information is supplied on their application. The omission of such information, or the supply of inaccurate information, may invalidate the application and, where relevant, any subsequent offer of a place.

4.6.5 All policies and procedures are published on the University website and are available in hard copy upon request to the Faculty Postgraduate Research Administrators or the Doctoral College.

5. **RECRUITMENT**

5.1 **Publication of Information**

5.1.1 Bournemouth University strives to ensure that promotional materials are relevant, accessible and accurate at the time of publication, are not misleading, and provide as much information as possible to enable applicants to make informed decisions about their options. The Doctoral College will work with the Marketing & Communication department to develop processes which ensure the accuracy of all information published by the University.

5.1.2 Bournemouth University will endeavour to provide information in a suitable alternative format for those applicants with particular disabilities.

5.1.3 Faculties and the Doctoral College should work with International Marketing & Student Recruitment Team to plan and co-ordinate recruitment activities aimed at non-UK research degree students, both overseas and in the UK and ensure that all staff attending such events are briefed on appropriate processes and procedures.

5.2 **Fees**

- 5.2.1 Bournemouth University is committed to a fair and transparent policy in respect of all fee charges made to students, whether tuition fees or additional programme related costs. The University's Fees Board meets quarterly and is responsible for setting fees for BU's research degree programmes.

6. SELECTION

6.1 Criteria for Entry

- 6.1.1 The University's minimum admissions criteria are set out in the University's Admissions Regulations (*3A - Standard Admissions Regulations: Research Degrees*) and published on the University website. The University reserves the right to alter the criteria. However once the criteria are made public for a specified intake/calendar period, they will not be changed except in exceptional circumstances.

- 6.1.2 Those programmes that lead to a professional qualification or registration may also have to satisfy the requirements of the relevant professional body.

- 6.1.3 Any changes to entry requirements for a research degree programme are agreed by Faculty Research Degrees Committee and, where appropriate, the Research Degrees Committee.

6.2 Data Protection

- 6.2.1 Information concerning applicants remains confidential to those processing the application and no aspect of any application will be disclosed to other parties unless authorised to do so by the applicant. Where a reference is requested directly by the University, the referee will be informed that the applicant is entitled to read any reference that they may supply.

- 6.2.2 In particular applications by members of staff, their relatives or others associated with the University will not be disclosed to anyone not directly involved in the decision-making process.

7. APPEALS

- 7.1 Should an applicant wish to lodge an appeal regarding the University's admissions process, they should follow the guidelines set out in *3C - Admissions - Appeals and Complaints: Policy and Procedure* available electronically via the website or on request.

- 7.2 It should be noted that appeals may only be raised with regard to the University processes and procedures and not in relation to matters of academic judgement.

Procedure

8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 8.1 Applicants who require additional learning support (such as those with a disability, specific learning difficulty, medical condition, mental health issues and developmental disorders) will be selected using the standard criteria. However, such applicants must contact the University's Student Services Additional Learning Support to help them make an informed decision about what support may be available before accepting an offer of a place at the University.

- 8.2 When considering the issue of support, EU (non-UK) and international students will have access to the services we offer all students with an additional learning need. Further information about the support available can be found by looking at the Student Services Additional Learning Support website
<https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/learning/disability-additional-learning-support>.

As non-UK students may not be eligible for public funding to support their learning needs, there may be circumstances when the University will ask the student to contribute to the

funding of their support. If this occurs, research degree students will be asked to confirm in writing that they are aware of the support available from the University and of what they would be expected to provide.

9. RECRUITMENT

9.1 Information to prospective students

9.1.1 As well as written information, the University also provides information regarding individual research degree programmes on the University website.

9.1.2 Information about welfare, guidance and support available to research degree students is accessible on the website and by request to the Doctoral College, Student Services & Academic Services or Faculty Postgraduate Research Administrators. Specific information on research degree student support is sent directly to applicants at offer stage.

9.1.3 Research degree programme information is accessible via the University website. Further information about specific areas of research can be obtained from the Academic Supervisors, the Faculty Postgraduate Research Administrators or the Doctoral College.

9.2 Fees

9.2.1 Bournemouth University is committed to a fair and transparent policy in respect of all fee charges made to research degree students, including additional programme related costs. Information on such charges is included with the offer letter to each applicant and on the University's website.

9.2.2 Fees are set annually by the University's Fees Board and are subject to the University's Fees Policy.

9.2.3 Full information about fees and bursaries is also available on the University website. Information on the eligibility and application process for research degree studentships and scholarships is also available on the University website.

10. SELECTION

10.1 The Research Degree Application

10.1.1 Enquiries about postgraduate research degree programmes, including advertised studentships and scholarships, should be made to the Doctoral College.

10.1.2 Applicants for all postgraduate research degree programmes should apply via the University's online admissions system, accessible via the University website unless otherwise stated. All applications for research degrees must include a research proposal following the guidance available from www.bournemouth.ac.uk/doctoral-college.

10.1.3 It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all pertinent information is supplied on their application. Incomplete applications may not be considered.

10.1.4 The Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrators are the main point of contact throughout the research degrees application process. All formal communication with the applicant in relation to the application process must be made through the Doctoral College, to ensure that the University's selection policies and procedures are followed fairly and consistently for all applicants. **Offers can only be made to applicants via the Doctoral College once the application process has been fully completed - under no circumstances can any offer be made otherwise.** The process is set out in Appendix 1.

10.2 Assessment of Eligibility for Entry

- 10.2.1 All applications will initially be considered by the nominated member of staff for the Faculty, normally the Deputy Dean (Research and Professional Practice), (or the equivalent role with responsibility for overseeing Faculty research degree activity), and, if appropriate, passed to an academic Supervisor(s) for full assessment and shortlisting. Each applicant's personal statement, research proposal and academic reference(s) are considered alongside their academic profile. Successful applicants will be invited for interview.
- 10.2.2 The University acknowledges every research degree application and applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application. Unsuccessful applicants requiring feedback on their application should contact the Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrators.
- 10.2.3 Applicants are asked to provide details of at least two referees, both of whom should normally be able to provide an academic reference. The Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrators will contact the referees to request references either prior to or after the interview. Applicants are asked to advise the University if they wish to be informed prior to references being requested.
- 10.2.4 Additional references may also be requested in order to inform the admissions process.

10.3 **Interview**

- 10.3.1 If an applicant meets the criteria for entry and is shortlisted, they will be required to attend an interview at Bournemouth University. The interview will normally be carried out by the appropriate Supervisors and independent senior academic. The interview will be used by the academic staff to assess the abilities, aptitudes, skills, and review qualifications (including English language proficiency) and experiences of the applicant that indicate their potential to succeed on their research degree programme.
- 10.3.2 If an applicant is unable to attend the interview in person (e.g. because they are resident overseas), in some cases a telephone or video conferencing interview, or other alternative selection process, may be used.

11. **OFFERS AND PRE-ENROLMENT**

11.1 **Offers**

- 11.1.1 A formal offer will be made to successful applicants in the form of an offer letter sent via the Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrator. Offers may stipulate specific conditions to be met prior to an unconditional offer being made to the applicant.
- 11.1.2 **Offers can only be made to applicants via the Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrators once the application process has been fully completed - under no circumstances can any offer be made otherwise.**
- 11.1.3 Applicants will be informed that on acceptance of an offer of a place at Bournemouth University they will be required to abide by the University Rules and all associated regulations, policies and procedures. Applicants are required to familiarise themselves with these before accepting any offer. All University rules and associated regulations, policies and procedures may be accessed via the University's website or by request to the Doctoral College.
- 11.1.4 Applicants who require an immigration visa and or other external clearance (e.g. ATAS) will be responsible for obtaining the necessary documentation themselves.
- 11.1.5 Postgraduate research degree applicants who fail to meet the conditions of their offer or those who fail to secure a visa will be given one further opportunity to meet those conditions/secure a visa or to have the deposit returned.

11.2 **Deposits**

11.2.1 For some postgraduate research degree programmes, a deposit is payable on acceptance of an offer. Failure to pay a deposit by the date stated in the offer letter may result in the applicant losing their place.

11.2.2 Applicants who pay a deposit, meet their offer conditions but fail to enrol will not be eligible for a deposit refund.

11.2.3 Deferral of enrolment prior to commencing the research degree programme may be granted according to the circumstances of the applicant, normally on one occasion only. For postgraduate research degree applicants, the deposit is non-refundable in these circumstances. Deferral on two occasions will not normally be possible and is likely to require a new application to be submitted.

11.3 Timescales for Decision-Making

11.3.1 Applicants for research degree programmes will be kept informed of the status of their application throughout the admissions process. However, a decision will normally be made on an application within six weeks of receipt of the full application or following an interview.

11.4 Fraudulent Applications

11.4.1 The admissions decision will be based on the information supplied by the applicant. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all pertinent information is supplied on their application. The omission of such information, or the supply of inaccurate information, may invalidate the application and, where relevant, any subsequent offer of a place.

11.4.2 Where an application is suspected to be fraudulent or incomplete to the extent that it is misleading, admissions staff will follow the process in *3B – Admissions Policy: Taught Programmes*.

11.4.3 If an application is found to be fraudulent after the point of entry to the University, the student will be dealt with under *11K - Student Disciplinary Procedure*.

11.5 Changes to the Programme

11.5.1 Where significant changes have been made to a research degree programme, those applicant holding an offer on that programme will be informed of the changes as soon as possible. Such changes may include:

- Changes to start date
- Changes to Supervisory Team

11.5.2 In cases where it is necessary for the University to close or suspend a research degree programme for a given period, applicants and offer holders will be notified immediately and given the option of withdrawing their acceptance or considering alternatives as above.

11.6 Enrolment and Induction

11.6.1 All applicants with a confirmed place will receive welcome information and joining instructions from the Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrators, in advance of the start of their research degree programme wherever possible. This pack includes information about online registration and enrolment processes including information about the University facilities, as well as its rules and regulations.

12. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS

12.1 All programmes have a nominated member of staff, normally the DDRPP (or the equivalent role with responsibility for overseeing Faculty research degree activity), who is responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures are adhered to. The Doctoral College Postgraduate Research Administrators can advise applicants about admissions processes

and the progress of their application. The International Marketing & Student Recruitment Team can advise EU (non-UK) and international applicants.

- 12.2 The Doctoral College will annually review and audit research degree admission's decisions to ensure all admissions policies and procedures are followed.
- 12.3 The profile of research degree students on each programme will be monitored annually by the Doctoral College and fed into the annual Research Degrees Quality Report process to include consideration of age, qualifications, gender and ethnicity of new entrants together with progression and achievement statistics. This will help to inform admissions policy as well as future research degree programme design and development.
- 12.4 Annually, the University surveys applicants who did not accept an offer of a place, in order to inform the admission process. Admission procedures may be amended in light of any pertinent findings

13. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

- 13.1 On-going staff development is offered to both academic and professional staff involved in admissions via Supervisory Development Events and Doctoral College Team, in order to ensure compliance with regulations and consistency of procedures. These events facilitate the dissemination of good admissions practice across the University.

General

14. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- 14.1 Contact details for further admissions information, policies or procedures:
- Doctoral College, Dorset House, Talbot Campus, Fern Barrow, Poole, Dorset, BH12 5BB
Tel: + 44 (0) 1202 968255
Email: doctoralcollege@bournemouth.ac.uk
- 14.2 The QAA Quality Code sets out expectations which express key matters of principle that the higher education community has identified as important for the assurance of quality and academic standards. For further information, refer to:
- Quality Code – Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access
 - Quality Code - Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees
- 14.3 This policy was reviewed according to the University's [Equality Analysis Procedure](#) (BU Equality Analysis Procedure) in July 2019.

15. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Admissions Process

APPENDIX 1 – ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The key stages for a research degree application are outlined below:

