

## **B1. ADMISSIONS POLICY**

For prospective students on programmes and awards validated by Plymouth University this section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations (CAPR) has been agreed by the University (as the awarding institution) as meeting its admission policy and regulatory requirements. The shades sections below form GSM London regulatory and policy framework as applied to Plymouth University and GSM London (The College) awards.

Related guidance and codes of practice can be found at the QAA Code of Practice, Admissions in Higher Education. Chapter B2. Recruitment, Selection and Admissions to Higher Education (HE).

### Purpose and scope

- 1.1. This section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations (CAPR) explains how the College assesses applications from those who wish to enrol on its programmes.
- 1.2. This policy applies to applications by prospective students for all levels of study and in all programmes of study or courses of the College, and the recruitment of any student on or after July 2017 regardless of the date of the application giving rise to the registration or enrolment.

### Definitions

- 1.3. 'Application' means the College has received a person's completed and signed application form which will consider admitting the person to a College programme.
- 1.4. 'Programme' means any standalone approved curriculum that contributes to a qualification from a degree-awarding body or otherwise carries academic credit.

### Introduction

#### *Overview*

- 1.5. Throughout the work and life of its members, the College is committed to fairness, transparency and equal opportunities. It aims to create a caring voice for social justice which challenges and works to eliminate unnecessary, unfair or unlawful discrimination on any grounds including gender, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs, religious beliefs or practices, disability, marital status, family circumstances, parental/carer status, spent criminal

convictions, age, or any other inappropriate ground. Please see our Dignity, Diversity and Inclusion Code of Practice.

- 1.6. Therefore, for all prospective students, the College's admissions process aims to:
  - (a) attract the most talented students, regardless of background, and prepare them to be confident citizens and potential leaders in an increasingly globalised work environment;
  - (b) create a student body that is balanced and diverse in culture and experience;
  - (c) recruit students who have the ability to successfully complete their chosen programme; and
  - (d) maintain high academic standards in teaching and learning.
- 1.7. The College will achieve these aims by:
  - (a) recruiting students from a wide range of backgrounds who the College believes, in addition to meeting entry requirements and demonstrating ability, have the potential and motivation to succeed on its programmes and who can make a valuable contribution to College life;
  - (b) fostering a diverse learning community committed to social justice in which our students will meet people from different cultures, thereby enhancing their skills of critical reasoning, teamwork and communication;
  - (c) encouraging applicants, especially those who can demonstrate the motivation to succeed, to focus on the strengths they bring to the College, and who are committed to the challenge of forward thinking and the high standards of learning and teaching which the College sets itself;
  - (d) carefully assessing each application in a fair and consistent way, and offering places to prospective students who satisfy entry requirements and have the potential to succeed; and
  - (e) giving course advisors, admissions officers and any third-party agencies working on its behalf the required training and expertise in home and international entry requirements.

### *Principles*

- 1.8. The College aims to provide accurate information and advice to prospective students concerning its opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate study which will help them make an informed choice regarding the programmes that most suit their interests and skills.
- 1.9. The College recognises that making an application for Higher Education is an important decision and it is committed to providing potential prospective

students with accurate and clear information from the outset. Such information will include entry requirements, financial costs, and the availability of financial support.

- 1.10. The College will agree annually the number of students it can recruit at each level of study from the UK, the EU, and from outside the EU. Regardless of where in the world the student originates, the College will apply the same threshold of academic standards. The UK Government may regulate the number of UK and EU students that the College can admit and the College's planning processes take note of such restrictions.
- 1.11. In applying the policy, the College aims to follow the principles of transparency, efficiency, professionalism and courtesy.

*Prospective students requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom*

- 1.12. To comply with the relevant UK legislation, if an applicant is found not to be in a position to meet all UK visa requirements for the anticipated full duration of their programme, the College reserves the right to refuse admission or set additional conditions to the applicant so that these can be met.
- 1.13. If an applicant requires student entry clearance or leave to remain (a visa) to study in the UK, then their failure to take up an accepted offer of a place, withdrawal from the programme before its stated completion date or another change of circumstance, is likely to affect their permission to come to, or remain in, the UK.
- 1.14. To comply with the relevant UK legislation and immigration regulations, the College will notify the immigration authorities, where relevant, of any non-arrival, or late arrival, of an applicant and of any subsequent changes to a student's enrolment status.
- 1.15. All prospective students requiring a visa to study in the UK must not currently be, nor have ever previously been, in the UK for any purpose without valid immigration permissions. If, either during the process of admitting a student or subsequent to that student enrolling upon their programme, the College is informed that the applicant/student is (or has previously been) in the UK without such valid permissions, it may be required to inform the immigration authorities or withdraw the offer of a place or withdraw its sponsorship of the individual's visa.

### *Admission of minors*

- 1.16. Successful prospective students who will be 17 years old or younger at the point of first enrolment should be aware they are applying to study in an adult environment. The College may therefore be required to apply some limitations to their activities at the College until they reach their 18th birthday. Please see <http://www.gsmlondon.ac.uk/b3-young-or-vulnerable-applicants>.

### *Changes to legislative and regulatory frameworks*

- 1.17. In the interests of fairness and transparency, the College aims to eliminate making changes to its admissions policy and procedures mid-cycle. However, external agencies (including those of the UK Government) may amend or update their own regulations or guidance.
- 1.18. If required to do so, the College will comply with such changes and reserves the right to vary its admissions policy or procedures accordingly. In such cases, the College will explain the change it is making, the context of the change, and how the change is likely to affect prospective students.

### Procedures

- 1.19. The procedures through which the College assesses applications and offers places are designed to:
- (a) be fair and transparent;
  - (b) reflect the requirements of the discipline and, where relevant, the professional body;
  - (c) be easily understood by prospective students;
  - (d) be consistently applied across all College programmes.
- 1.20. The College website explains the application process, including application and acceptance deadlines, for each programme. It includes links to the relevant page to apply for the chosen programme for further information including programme fees.
- 1.21. Prospective students may be interviewed by a course advisor (in person or by telephone) or Admissions Officer, who explains the application process and describes the documents they need and how to apply for funding. Interviews or advise sessions with other staff, including academic staff where appropriate, may form part of the application process.

- 1.22. Specialist finance officers are also on hand at College campuses to advise prospective students about funding their studies including applying for student loan funding.
- 1.23. College communications about applications, offers and acceptance make clear what students must do to register and enrol on the programme. When a student is accepted and then completes their registration, the College sends an email and may be followed up by letter if required with more details including:
- (a) programme start dates;
  - (b) timetable;
  - (c) fee and payment information; and
  - (d) actions to complete before the programme begins.

*Entry requirements*

- 1.24. The College will publish annually the typical academic admissions criteria for all its programmes. This information will be included in both its print and digital prospectuses and also on the relevant Faculty web site. Where applicable, this information will also be published on the UCAS Programme Search service.
- 1.25. Typical academic admissions criteria are set at programme approval and may be varied by the Faculty Board. The Education Committee will additionally consider the strategic and cross-faculty implications that may arise as a result of a proposal to alter typical academic admissions criteria.
- 1.26. Faculties will periodically review these criteria in consultation with relevant members of professional service staff. Such criteria will not normally be changed during an admissions cycle. The criteria published on the College website will be the most up to date and will always take precedence over that contained in hard-copy publications, or third-party web sites.
- 1.27. Typical academic admissions criteria represent the usual level of academic attainment an applicant is expected to achieve before being admitted to that programme. These criteria are not intended to guarantee that all prospective students who satisfy the criteria may be offered a place, nor that all applicants to be made an offer will receive an identical offer to each other.
- 1.28. Where an applicant does not meet the typical entry requirements for a programme, the Admissions tutors have the discretion to vary the weight they give to examination results and other indicators of achievement and potential (for example, extra-curricular activities, motivation for the subject, work or voluntary experience). They therefore have discretion to vary the offer they make, provided this remains consistent with the principles of fair access and with this policy.

- 1.29. The College is committed to giving full and fair consideration to all relevant academic qualification information presented by each applicant. The College expresses its typical academic admissions criteria in terms of a range of the most commonly presented qualifications, but it welcomes applications from candidates who have (or who will achieve) an equivalent standard in a range of other qualifications, including those offered internationally.
- 1.30. The College publishes on its website broad qualification equivalency guidance for a substantial range of qualifications available worldwide.

*English-language proficiency*

- 1.31. All programmes at the College are delivered in English.
- 1.32. The College requires successful prospective students to demonstrate that their ability to understand and to express themselves in English (including in reading, writing, speaking and listening) is sufficient to enable them to achieve the full benefit from studying at the College.
- 1.33. The College will publish annually its minimum English language proficiency criteria for all its programmes along with a list of those tests of English that it recognises as satisfying (when passed at the appropriate level) this requirement. This information is set out in the separate document, 'English language proficiency requirements'. The criteria published on the above web page will be the most up to date and will at all times take precedence over that contained in hard-copy publications, or third-party web sites.
- 1.34. The published information identifies the minimum level of proficiency in English that successful applicants must demonstrate before being admitted to the College. The selection process is competitive and individual offers may be made that require an applicant to achieve a standard higher than the minimum.

**NOTE: The College's Centre for English Language and Skills provides English-language programmes designed to support applicants whose English proficiency is below the required standard.**

*Assessment and selection*

- 1.35. Admission to the College is generally not a competitive process. The College has places for students who meet the entry requirements and are committed to succeed in the programme.
- 1.36. In the interests of fairness and transparency, all applications are assessed on their own merits, and according to the relevant criteria for the programme they have applied to, by designated staff of the College. Wherever possible, the College aims to acknowledge receipt of applications within two (2) working days.

1.37. The College will take into account all the information provided on the application form, including certification, to assess the application against the relevant criteria. This assessment will normally include existing, verifiable academic achievements and the context in which they have been achieved, any predicted academic achievements, English-language proficiency, the applicant's personal statement or research proposal, previous work experience and academic/professional references.

1.38. The College may request examples of candidates' written work, may also choose to interview candidates, and may also set admissions tests to further assess their suitability for the programme applied to. Applications from candidates who lack the standard programme entry requirements are positively encouraged. In such cases, Admissions Tutors will use the non-standard entry (NSE) route for all admission and must be satisfied that the applicant has the necessary potential, knowledge or experience and motivation to follow the programme successfully.

To be considered applicants may need to be able to demonstrate/pass:

- Evidence of full-time work experience
- An employer reference
- Interview
- Academic interview (if required)
- The exact criterion is set out on each web page within 'entry requirements'.

1.39. In the case of prospective students for research degrees, such an interview may additionally be used to discuss in detail the applicant's suitability for their chosen project. The College, when assessing applications for research degrees, will only make an offer to an applicant where a suitable supervisor/supervisory team can be identified for the full period of enrolment. (This will take account of any study leave or other temporary absence that is already known to the College.)

*Notifying prospective student of decisions*

1.40. Prospective students will initially receive an acknowledgement email (when remote) or letter (if present at the time of application) from the College on our receipt of the completed application.

1.41. Thereafter, the College will send the decision to the applicant. Decisions will normally be sent to prospective students in writing (by e-mail or letter depending on whether they are present or not) within five (5) working days of our receiving

their completed application or by UCAS's fixed timelines. The decision notified to the prospective students will be:

- (a) informing them if the College needs more information before reaching a decision on their application; and
- (b) if successful, an offer of a place – our written offer will say how the students can accept this offer and enrol.
- (c) If unsuccessful, a rejection letter will be sent. This will detail how to receive feedback on our decision

Decisions for undergraduate programmes will be sent initially via UCAS if applicants have applied via UCAS.

- 1.42. The College may, at its discretion and in line with the relevant criteria, make a candidate an offer for a different programme to that applied to. Such decisions may be made where it decides that the applicant would be better suited to the alternative programme, or where the applicant has already covered some of the content of the programme originally applied to. This is known as a 'cross offer'.
- 1.43. Our written offers are made by email (if the applicant is not present) or by letter (if the applicant is present). They include, or refer applicants to, details of:
- (a) programme fees;
  - (b) programme dates;
  - (c) terms and conditions of the offer;
  - (d) acceptance and registration deadlines;
  - (e) the process for transferring or deferring a place.
- 1.44. If an applicant is made an offer by the College, the offer will set out clearly if it is conditional on the applicant achieving a stated academic or other standard, or on the provision of suitable references, or on evidence demonstrating the applicant has satisfied all non-academic conditions.
- 1.45. In all cases, if the College requires evidence to inform its decision whether or not to admit an applicant that is in a language other than English, the applicant is responsible for giving the College a notarised translation into English and for arranging submission of the original and translated copies to the College.
- 1.46. Prospective students made a conditional offer may not enrol with the College, nor embark on their programme, nor begin any research in connection with their programme, until all conditions have been fully satisfied and they receive an unconditional offer, and then not until the stated start date of the programme.

**NOTE: An offer from the College is not a guarantee of funding from any external agency or sponsor including Student Loans Company.**

1.47. Prospective students who have an offer of a place may request that it be deferred to the next intake; such requests should be submitted in writing. No guarantee is made that such a request will be approved. The College normally gives consent if the applicant presents compelling evidence to support their request. The College does not permit more than a single deferral. The College's decision on requests to defer is final.

*Competitive admission*

1.48. If the College receives more applications than it has places available on a programme, the admissions process may be competitive.

1.49. In these cases, the College will notify all prospective students that achievement (or predicted achievement) of relevant qualifications does not itself guarantee an offer of admission. The College may take into account any or all of the applicant's personal statement, research proposal, references, performance at interview (or similar), and test results.

1.50. In addition, to further its commitment to social justice the College may consider the context in which an individual's academic attainment to date has been achieved and may take into account other social contexts.

1.51. In the case of applications for study, the College will consider the following additional contextual factors:

- (a) The applicant has time spent in local authority care.
- (b) The applicant is receiving the 16-19 bursary or equivalent grant.
- (c) The applicant is receiving free school meals in school years 10 to 13.
- (d) The applicant lives in an area with a postcode that falls within the lowest 20 per cent of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (authenticated by the College), or is a member of a travelling family.
- (e) The applicant is applying from an area of low participation in Higher Education.
- (f) The applicant is a first-generation applicant to Higher Education.
- (g) The applicant has a parent/guardian receiving a means-tested benefit or personally receiving such a benefit.
- (h) The relative performance of the applicant's school or college.

1.52. The College additionally recognises the value of access and widening participation programmes in supporting potential applicants with the development of study skills. The College will therefore take into account attendance and completion of

such programmes, whether offered by the College or another institution or group of institutions, or through a national programme (such as Pathways to Law).

- 1.53. Each academic Department or Centre will set out the extent to which these additional contextual factors will be used. As a minimum, individual applicants who meet at least one (1) of the criteria set out above will have their application receive additional consideration. Some academic Departments or Centres may guarantee all prospective students who meet at least one (1) of the above criteria an interview, and some may use these criteria to vary the conditions of any offer it makes.
- 1.54. The use of contextual information was introduced College-wide for the 2015 admissions cycle, and the College is committed to reviewing its impact.

*Applicants with access needs including disabilities*

- 1.55. The College welcomes applications from candidates with an access support need or disability. Such prospective students will be considered against the same criteria as all other candidates following the process outlined above. For further information on our services please see <http://www.gsmlondon.ac.uk/learning-access-and-wellbeing>
- 1.56. If a candidate with a disability or additional support needs is deemed qualified and eligible for an offer of a place, the College will contact them to discuss the additional support they are likely to require in order to manage their circumstances.
- 1.57. Prospective students should be aware that in cases requiring physical adjustments, the College may not be able to implement them in time for the beginning of the academic year for which the application has been made.
- 1.58. If an applicant's access needs are complex, the College may issue a 'conditional offer' – based on academic and other eligibility criteria – which remains subject to investigation as to whether or not it can make suitable adjustments. In rare cases when the College decides it cannot make the adjustments needed to support the applicant, it will contact the applicant directly to confirm this decision.

*Applicants declaring a criminal conviction*

- 1.59. The College has a responsibility to its students, staff and visitors to provide a safe community. In line with this responsibility it reserves the right to deny admission to prospective students whose prior (unspent) criminal conviction(s) suggest they

might pose a danger to the community. Please see

<http://www.gsmlondon.ac.uk/b4-applicants-declaring-a-criminal-conviction>

- 1.60. Additionally, all institutions that offer programmes requiring students to work with children or with adults in vulnerable situations must ensure such students provide a satisfactory Disclosures and Barring Service (DBS; formerly the Criminal Records Bureau) enhanced disclosure before being permitted to begin such a programme.

*Fraudulent and misleading information*

- 1.61. The College expects that prospective students will have provided full, honest, and accurate information on their application form and in all subsequent communications with the College. This includes not omitting relevant information on their application form (for example, qualifications begun but not completed, qualifications resulting in a fail grade, exclusions). Where the College has reason to suspect this may not be the case, it reserves the right to investigate the matter fully.

**NOTE: Cases referred to the College by the UCAS Fraud and Verification Unit will be investigated.**

- 1.62. If, in the course of such an investigation, the College finds that an applicant has made fraudulent or misleading claims in their application, the College reserves the right to withdraw any offer it has made.
- 1.63. If it withdraws an offer for the reasons set out above, the College may also, where appropriate, inform any other relevant professional bodies or third parties about the withdrawal.
- 1.64. If the fraudulent or misleading information is discovered at any time after the applicant has enrolled as a student of the College, the College reserves the right to carry out its own investigations.
- 1.65. If, after completing the investigation, the College finds that there has been a deliberate attempt to use fraudulent or misleading information, or that relevant information was withheld, in order to obtain a place on a College programme, the College may take action to permanently exclude the student. If a student is permanently excluded for the reasons set out above, the College may also, where appropriate, inform any other relevant professional bodies or third parties about the exclusion.

*Feedback, complaints and appeals*

- 1.66. The College (through the Admissions Team) will provide feedback within 10 working days to any unsuccessful applicant on receiving a postal or emailed request. This is after the applicant has received a rejection letter
- 1.67. The College has the right to refuse an applicant admission to any of its programmes. The College's decision is final.
- 1.68. In line with its Complaints and Appeals for Applicants policy, the College will consider formal appeals or complaints against admissions decisions from prospective students only where the prospective student has made:
  - (a) a complaint about the handling of a question or an application for admission such as a procedural error, irregularity or administrative fault; or
  - (b) allegations that the College did not apply its admissions criteria correctly or even-handedly.

Advice

- 1.69. Prospective students may need guidance when choosing a programme. For support, students can meet a fully trained course advisor and a member of the academic staff, where appropriate, at both campuses before making a commitment to a specific programme.
- 1.70. To book an appointment for this advice, the prospective students should contact the Student Recruitment Team ([courseadvisors@gsmlondon.ac.uk](mailto:courseadvisors@gsmlondon.ac.uk)). More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals such as the Admissions Team ([admissions@gsmlondon.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@gsmlondon.ac.uk)).
- 1.71. In addition to promotional literature in hard-copy format and our website, our promotional activities include:
  - (a) in-campus taster sessions to enable prospective students to experience the subject matter's teaching approach;
  - (b) in-campus open days to give applicants information about the programmes;
  - (c) participation at schools' and other Higher Education providers' careers events in the UK and overseas;
  - (d) personal consultation with a course advisor.
- 1.72. Advice for staff on special schemes of work is available from their nominated Academic Policy Partner or Head of Department or Head of Admissions.
- 1.73. If any staff development needs are identified through these discussions, these may be discussed with members of the Educational Development Unit.

Fees

- 1.74. Programme and course fees are published on the College website and detailed in our written offer.
- 1.75. The College is not liable for financial or other consequences arising from action under this policy.

Legal and regulatory context

- 1.76. This policy has been informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UKQC), "Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education". The UKQC is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education institutions and sets out how academic standards are established and maintained and how the quality of learning opportunities is assured and enhanced.
- 1.77. In addition, the policy has been informed by the good practice guides published by Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA).
- 1.78. The College may not be bound by the principles and this policy alone may not provide the procedure to meet all of these principles, some of which may be met by other College policies and procedures.. It uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

Enforcement, monitoring and review

- 1.79. If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce these regulations, their refusal must be reported to the Academic Registrar, who will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.
- 1.80. Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how these regulations are interpreted and applied.
- 1.81. The annual report must include statistical data on the number of application; the outcomes and programmes from which they originate; the length of the process; and the equality characteristics (including sex, disability and ethnicity) of those who apply, and separately those that are successful.
- 1.82. Every two (2) years, the College must review these regulations to ensure that:
- (a) they remain up to date and continue to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;
  - (b) areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies have been addressed; and
  - (c) opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.

## *B.1. Admissions Policy*

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### **Schedule (not part of the policies or regulations):**

Schedule:

Responsible Officer:	Head of Admissions
Approved by:	Board of Directors and Academic Board
Version:	2.0
Date:	June 2017
Monitoring and Review Body:	Academic Board
Effective From:	July 2017
Next Scheduled Review:	June 2019