

Owner: Admissions Manager
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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.

3V - Admissions Guidelines

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 These guidelines are for Bournemouth University admissions staff, academic staff and partners with responsibility for interviewing applicants and/or making decisions on applications to BU undergraduate or postgraduate taught programmes. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the University's 3B Admissions Policy (Taught Programmes).
- 1.2 In November 2018, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) published the following 6 guiding principles for Higher Education Admissions:
- I. Policies and procedures for application, selection and admission to higher education courses are transparent and accessible.
 - II. Higher education providers use fair, reliable and appropriate assessment methods that enable them to select students with the potential to complete the course successfully.
 - III. Higher education providers reduce or remove unnecessary barriers for prospective students.
 - IV. Information provided to prospective students for recruitment and widening access purposes supports students in making informed decisions.
 - V. All staff, representatives and partners engaged in the delivery of admissions, recruitment and widening access are appropriately trained and resourced.
 - VI. Providers continually develop widening access strategies and policies in line with local and national guidance.
- 1.3 These guidelines have been written to align with the QAA guidelines and ensure that BU is following best practice.

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 Entry requirements and selection measures such as an interview, task or portfolio review are agreed by the Admissions Group.
- 2.2 The UK Admissions Team (UKAT) and the International Admissions Team (IAT) are responsible for:
- Selecting applicants for interview in accordance with the University's published admissions policies and procedures
 - Scheduling interviews (online and on-campus)
 - Coordinating virtual meeting bookings/ physical room bookings
 - Booking professional panel members
 - Booking student ambassadors
 - Inviting applicants to interview
 - Sending communication to applicants in relation to interviews and ensuring communication complies with consumer protection regulations.

- 2.3 Admissions staff and academic staff with decision-making responsibility must ensure decisions are transparent, consistent and fair in accordance with Bournemouth University's *3B - Admissions Policy (Taught Programmes)*.
- 2.4 When interviewing applicants, BU academic staff and professional colleagues are responsible for ensuring applicants are interviewed equally and fairly as stipulated in the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and in accordance with the regulations set by the relevant professional or accredited body.

3. ACCESSING OTHER RELEVANT BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 All documents can be accessed [here](#)
- 3.2 Other documents with direct relevance to this are
- *3B - Admissions Policy (Taught Programmes)*
 - *3C - Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy*
 - *Safeguarding Policy (welfare of under 18 students on campus)*
 - *BU Equality and Diversity Policy*

Guidelines

- 4.1 Other than in exceptional circumstances (e.g. where additional selection measures take place or where additional information is needed in respect of the application), admissions staff will make a decision within 10 working days of a complete application being received.
- 4.2 If an application needs to be referred to an academic member of staff for consideration (for example where RPL consideration or additional selection measures are required), the academic member of staff will respond within 5 working days.
- 4.3 Where additional selection criteria are required, an email outlining the next stage of the process should be sent within 10 working days. This timeframe may be exceeded in exceptional circumstances (such as peak application periods).
- 4.4 To avoid applicant perception of the decision-making process being "too quick", decisions should be delayed by the minimum recommended turnaround time as advised by the latest market research. This applies to UK UG applications (main cycle), Late/Extra UG or a PGT application and EU or Overseas applications.
- 4.5 For UCAS applications, admissions staff should aim to send a decision to UCAS by the 31st March for applicants who have submitted their application by the January Equal Consideration Deadline.
- 4.6 BU has zero tolerance to applicants being rejected by default. Admissions staff must proactively monitor their applications and make every effort to ensure decisions are made on time.

5. USE OF INTERVIEWS AS PART OF THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

- 5.1 When considering the use of an interview as part of the selection process, the University should be confident there is a sound rationale and purpose. If an interview does not appear to add value or if it is not a requirement of a professional or accredited body, it can create an unnecessary barrier to recruitment.
- 5.2 There are two types of interview used at Bournemouth University as part of the admissions process:
- **Selection interviews** are used where the application form cannot itself fully demonstrate an applicant's potential to succeed or where the course is highly competitive with high volumes of applications with similar grades or where an interview is required by a professional or accredited body. This type of interview is adopted by the Faculty of Health & Social Sciences.

- **Recruitment interviews** provide applicants with the opportunity to make a more detailed assessment of their choice and have face-to-face discussions about academic content. Although the interview is not considered a selection interview, the applicant and interviewer may agree that the applicant does not have the potential to succeed on the course following this discussion. As this is not a selection interview, this decision must be a mutual one. If a mutual decision cannot be reached the applicant must be offered a place on the course they have applied for.

5.3 Marketing and Communications will ensure that the website, UCAS website and relevant application communications make it clear which type of interview is being used and how it forms part of the decision-making process. Admissions staff will ensure that applicant communications for FHSS interview programmes clearly state they are selection interviews. Failure to do so will be a breach of consumer protection regulations.

6. INTERVIEW FORMAT

6.1 The format of the interview should create a positive environment in which applicants are given the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability.

6.2 Interviews could take one of the following formats:

- Individual or group interview (online/telephone)
- Individual or group interview (face-to-face)

6.3 The interview format may vary depending on applicant need. The peak period of the cycle is normally between 1st December and 31 March each year.

6.4 In accordance with BU's commitment to inclusivity, an in-person interview should be offered at the request of an applicant if they are unable to attend an online interview in person due to one of the following reasons (dependent on requirements of the relevant professional or accredited body):

- They are unable to participate in an online interview as a result of a disability or medical condition
- Other extenuating circumstances approved by the Admissions Manager

7. INVITING AN APPLICANT TO AN INTERVIEW

7.1 In order to be confident the University is adhering to consumer protection regulations and a full audit history is recorded against the application, invites to interview should be sent by admissions staff only and should include the following information:

- date and time the applicant is required to attend / be available online (with an internet connection that is capable of holding a video interview);
- the duration of the interview;
- the location of the interview for both virtual and face-to-face events, including where to login or report to;
- the structure of the day and what to expect;
- details of any activity to be undertaken in preparation for the interview;
- any documentation applicants are required to bring with them;
- the consequence of non-attendance/non-response;
- travel information, directions and parking availability;
- method for informing admissions staff of additional support requirements.

7.2 Where possible, alternative dates should be offered to candidates who are unable to attend on a specific date.

7.3 Invites to interview should be sent to the applicant at least 14 calendar days prior to the interview in order to give the applicant the best opportunity to prepare. Due to decision-making deadlines, this notice period may not always be possible, however staff should ensure that the applicant is given a minimum notice period of 7 calendar days. Interviewing staff must not carry out an interview unless the applicant has received sufficient notice, except for in exceptional circumstances where the applicant has requested to be interviewed or during Clearing.

8. CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW

- 8.1 Interviewers may be members of academic staff or external colleagues in a relevant job role.
- 8.2 The interview panel should ideally consist of two interviewers (one of which must have undertaken BU recruitment and selection training) and reflect a balance of ethnicity and gender where possible.
- 8.3 Online interviews should take place with appropriate technical support available and as limited background disturbance as possible. Face-to-face interviews should take place in appropriate surroundings, taking into consideration accessibility for students with physical and mental disabilities.
- 8.4 An appropriate 'check-in' and waiting/holding area should be identified for both virtual and face-to-face interviews, and admissions/reception staff should be informed of the interview arrangements in advance
- 8.5 For face-to-face interviews, a risk assessment should be carried out by Admissions staff prior to the interview and interview staff should have access to health and safety information such as fire safety and emergency procedures.
- 8.6 In order to generate a positive applicant experience, a member of the programme team should introduce themselves to candidates prior to the interview for both online and face-to-face interviews. This could be an introductory talk at the start of the day. Applicants should be advised of the relevant emergency evacuation plan for the building in which their interview is taking place.
- 8.7 All efforts should be made to ensure the interview is conducted without interruption.
- 8.8 Applicants should be asked to present photographic documentation as proof of their identity. If they are unable to do so, candidates should be asked to confirm at least two of the following:
- Full name & DOB
 - Student ID Number
 - Home address (First line and Postcode)
 - Course applied for & Start year
 - Email address or contact number

9. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

- 9.1 Interviewers should ensure that questions cannot be interpreted by the applicant as having a sexual, racial, social, political, gender, age or religious bias (e.g. questions about marital, financial, parental, domicile or social status or ethnic origin) and any reference to the following should be avoided:
- The applicant's appearance. The nature of a disability or additional learning need (unless raised by the applicant)
 - The applicant's qualifications including English language ability (these will have already been checked by admissions)
 - Other institutions the applicant has applied to
 - The applicant's personal commitments (family/carer/part-time employment)
- 9.2 If an applicant has significant gaps in their education or employment history, this will be clearly indicated on the interview schedule.
- 9.3 For reasons of fairness, selection criteria must be clearly defined prior to the interview and a scoring system used to rate applicant responses.
- 9.4 An interview score sheet will be agreed with the Admissions Manager at the start of the admissions cycle and must be used to evaluate all candidates within that admissions cycle.

- 9.5 Admissions staff need to be clear how to interpret the final score and what the criteria is for an offer, a waiting list or an unsuccessful decision.

10. DECISIONS AND FEEDBACK

- 10.1 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the interview by admissions staff within 5 working days of the interview.
- 10.2 The outcome of the interview should be clearly indicated on the interview tracker. An unsuccessful outcome must be accompanied with a suitable rationale for non-selection for the purposes of feedback.
- 10.3 Interview score sheets should be returned to Admissions within one working day of the interview so that applicants can be notified of the outcome as soon as possible. Interview trackers will be checked by admissions staff and then archived according to the relevant data retention policy.
- 10.4 Interview outcomes will be monitored by the admissions management team to ensure any decisions (successful or unsuccessful) have been made in accordance with these admissions guidelines and the University's *3B - Admissions: Policy (Taught Programmes)*.

11. APPLICANTS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- 11.1 Applicants should be given the opportunity to highlight any requirements for additional support in advance of the interview.
- 11.2 Applicants may have accessibility requirements or need adjustments to equipment or other materials and reasonable adjustments should be made to ensure compliance with the University's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 11.3 The Additional Learning Support Team (ALS) should be consulted if staff are not confident that the applicant's support needs can be met or reasonable adjustments cannot be made.
- 11.4 All applicants will be judged on their academic suitability for the course based on agreed selection criteria and consideration relating to additional support requirements will remain separate to this academic decision.

12. UNDER 18 APPLICANTS ATTENDING INTERVIEW

- 12.1 Applicants attending an interview may still be minors at the point at which they are interviewed and interviewers should be aware of the potential sensitivities of interviewing minors. Staff should refer to BU policies on safeguarding vulnerable groups at <https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/important-information/safeguarding-vulnerable-groups>
- 12.2 In accordance with the University Safeguarding Policy, programme leaders/admissions tutors should conduct a risk assessment at the start of each academic year which, as well as identifying risks to be mitigated or removed, provides an opportunity to consider and identify alternative working practices. Risk assessments should be submitted online at <https://risk.bournemouth.ac.uk/>.
- 12.3 Applicants who will be under 18 by the start date of their course will receive an Under 18 Information Pack when they apply in accordance with the BU Under 18 Policy. Admissions will provide a list of expected starters who will be under 18 by the start of term to the Education Service Manager one month before each intake.

13. IMPACT OF SELECTION METHODS ON RECRUITMENT

- 13.1 The Admissions Manager will monitor the following data to ensure selection methods are not having an adverse effect on recruitment.
- a) Pre-interview withdrawal rates
 - b) Offer rates and reject rates
 - c) Offer rates and reject rates of under-represented groups

13.2 ThePVC Education and Quality will be notified if any of the above data indicates that a selection method is creating an unnecessary barrier to recruitment.

14. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

14.1 This policy was reviewed according to the University's *Equality Analysis Procedure* in July 2019.

14.2 Contact details for further admissions information, policies or procedures:

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