

Special Admissions Policy

1.0 Introduction and background

- 1.1 It is the policy of the University of Northampton to admit students who are able to demonstrate the potential to benefit from, and have a reasonable chance of successfully completing, its programmes of study. It does not assume that ability to benefit must be demonstrated through the formal achievement of specific qualifications.
- 1.2 The Special Admissions Policy provides a framework enabling the University of Northampton to accept applicants onto its programmes who are unable to demonstrate the standard entry requirements or are unable to provide evidence of qualifications but who are deemed to possess the ability to succeed on their chosen programme.

2.0 Purpose and scope

- 2.1 The Special Admissions Policy applies to Home, International and Partner applicants on all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes.

3.0 Definitions

- 3.1 A Special Admission can be defined as where an applicant to a programme is unable to present evidence relating to the general entry requirements but is considered on the basis of an assessment to have sufficient skills, aptitudes, abilities or experience to be deemed to have the potential to succeed on that programme.

4.0 Key principles

- 4.1 The decision to accept a Special Admissions application is a matter for the Admissions Tutor, Programme Leader, Dean, Head of Admissions, Head of International Student Recruitment & Marketing or other designated member of staff acting under devolved authority and operating within the University of Northampton's Admissions policies.
- 4.2 An applicant to Undergraduate Programmes not in full time education may be admitted without recourse to the Admission Tutor or Head of Admissions approval as Special Admission on the basis of certificated learning of 720 Guided Learning Hours from no more than two awards (one in the case of Vocationally-Related Qualifications) at level three in the current National Qualifications Framework (NQF) provided the awards are listed in The Register of Regulated Qualifications.
- 4.3 An applicant to Postgraduate Taught or Research Programmes with an Ordinary or Third Class degree may be admitted without recourse to the Admissions Tutor or Head of Admissions approval as Special Admission on the basis that the applicant can demonstrate relevant post study experience or have achieved professional qualifications at level 6 or above.

- 4.4 Applicants requiring Student Route sponsorship admitted via Special Admissions must in addition meet all necessary UKVI minimum requirements for entry. For specific University criteria related to the Special Admissions of International Students see appendix A.
- 4.5 An applicant who is required to demonstrate English Language ability suitable for their chosen programme may be admitted via special admission if they can demonstrate the required level of English Language ability. This maybe through English Language qualifications, previous study, work experience or other comparable evidence. Individual circumstances will be assessed on a case by case basis and will also take account of UKVI requirements.
- 4.6 The Special Admissions Policy is designed for use by individual applicants and is not designed to be used by whole cohorts. Where there is concern that large volumes of special admissions within a cohort risk undermining the University's standard entry requirements, Admissions reserve the right to limit the numbers accepted through this route.
- 4.7 Admissions may identify and document qualifications that, due to their level, length, content and/or manner of assessment, are deemed to be unsuitable for consideration under the Special Admissions Policy.

5.0 Key responsibilities

- 5.1 Admissions Tutors have responsibility for making the case for Special Admissions evidenced through appropriate assessment (such as interview, the setting and assessment of written or other assignment designed to test skills, or an equivalent process).
- 5.2 Senior Admissions Tutors or programme specialists have responsibility for ensuring that all Special Admissions are handled equitably and transparently and that they follow designated policies and processes. All Special Admissions must be signed off by the Admissions Tutor or programme specialist.
- 5.3 The Head of Admissions has responsibility for the management and oversight of the Special Admissions policy to ensure institutional-wide consistency, equitability and transparency are maintained. All Special Admissions must be signed off by the Head of Admissions (or nominee).

6.0 Links to related UN Policies/Guidance/Regulations

- 6.1 Special Admissions Guidance
6.2 Admissions Policy
6.3 Academic Regulations

7.0 Links to related external documents (e.g. QAA)

- 7.1 UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access
- 7.2 Tier 4 of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/343718/T4_Guidance_08-14.pdf

8.0 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – International Student Special Admission Guidelines
- 8.2 Summary Sheet

Appendix A – International Student Special Admission Guidelines

Admissions and all others involved in the process of student recruitment should aim to facilitate actively the enrolment of suitably qualified students. This brief notes offers guidance in support of that ambition.

The following principles govern these guidelines:

- These flexibility criteria are designed to provide a framework for the consideration of students on the threshold of meeting the entry criteria.
- Each case which falls within the flexibility criteria will be considered on an individual basis.
- Any student considered under the English Language flexibility criteria will be interviewed by an academic tutor or other suitably qualified member of the University and only offered admission if deemed suitable for entry by that member of staff¹.
- A student may only be admitted via Special Admission on either Academic Qualifications or English Language. Applicants who do not meet the entry requirement in both criteria are not eligible for consideration under Special Admission.

The following flexibility measures may be considered for International Students:

A. Academic Qualifications:

- a. An allowance of up to 10% can be applied when assessing international applications within and outside of Clearing for applicants who hold the appropriate entry level qualification for their chosen programme.
- b. During Clearing international applicants will be given comparable treatment to UK/EU applicants.

B. English Language²:

- a. For undergraduate programmes, applicants with strong academic qualifications and who achieve an IELTS (or equivalent) score no greater than 0.5 lower than the overall entry requirement for their chosen programme OR applicants who are no greater than 0.5 lower in individual elements may be considered as long as they achieve the overall English language entry requirement.
- b. For postgraduate taught programmes, applicants with strong academic qualifications and who achieve an IELTS (or equivalent) score no greater than 0.5 lower than the overall entry requirement for their chosen programme OR applicants who are no greater than 0.5 lower in individual elements may be considered as long as they achieve the overall English language entry requirement.

¹ Staff undertaking this role will be provided with support from the Head of EFL

² For standard English Language entry requirements please see Appendix 1 of the Admissions Policy

- c. For postgraduate research programmes, applicants with strong academic qualifications and who achieve an IELTS (or equivalent) score no greater than 0.5 lower than the overall entry requirement for their chosen programme OR applicants who are no greater than 0.5 lower in individual elements may be considered as long as they achieve the overall English language entry requirement.

Criteria for applicants who can be considered under Special Admission:

- Must meet the UKVI minimum overall and in each individual component (currently 5.5 overall and 5.5 in each component).
- Strong academic qualification profile (e.g. 80%+/B grade/equivalent to an upper second class first degree) and who on the basis of this profile appear extremely likely to succeed in their chosen programme.
- Have achieved academic qualifications at levels 4 and/or 5 which were taught and assessed wholly in English (for UG entry) or to first degree level (for PG entry)
- Are normally enrolling on year one (level 4) of a degree or onto a Master's degree. Where students wish to enrol onto a top-up degree (level 6) or be given direct entry to level 5 of an undergraduate degree additional conversations will be held with the Admissions Tutor, an Assistant Director (International Office) and the Head of Admissions or Head of International Student Recruitment & Marketing (or nominees) to consider whether this is a suitable entry point or whether an alternative entry point should be offered.

The Special Admissions Process can identify conditions for entry for these applicants, for example that an applicant may be strongly encouraged or be required to undertake additional academic or English language support.

Summary Sheet:

Policy Title:	
Special Admissions	
Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):	
<p>This policy applies to applicants to all undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research programmes who do not meet the standard entry requirements for those programmes and who can demonstrate sufficient additional skills, aptitudes and abilities to be deemed capable of succeeding on the programme.</p> <p>It applies to all applicants applying to a University of Northampton programme, including those studying via Education with Others</p> <p>This policy is aligned with UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access.</p>	
Owner and Department:	
Dawn Mains, Head of Admissions, Student and Academic Services	
Principal contact:	
Dawn Mains, Head of Admissions	
Dissemination and implementation plan:	
Via SEC and SSECs Via Web	
Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):	
Date of Senate approval:	October 2014 (via Chair's Action)
Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:	October 2014
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