

Undergraduate Admissions Statement

1. Admissions Process

This Statement should be read in conjunction with University's Admissions Principles and Procedures (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/admissions-policy.html>).

Year of admissions cycle – 2012

Courses covered

BSc Honours in Physics (F300)
MSci Honours in Physics (F303)
MSci Honours in Physics with Study in Continental Europe (F304)
MSci Honours in Physics with Industrial Experience (F305)
BSc Honours in Physics with Astrophysics (F3F5)
MSci Honours in Physics with Astrophysics (F3FM)
MSci Joint Honours in Maths and Physics (GFC3)
BSc Joint Honours in Physics and Philosophy (FV35)
MSci Joint Honours in Physics and Philosophy (FVH5)
BSc Physics with a Preliminary Year of Study (F308)

Admissions Team

Professor Stephen Phillipps (Admissions Tutor)
Professor Ashraf Alam
Dr Joel Goldstein
Dr Ben Maughan
Dr Massimo Antognozzi

For Maths and Physics, the assessment will be undertaken by the Undergraduate Admissions Office team, in consultation with the Admissions Tutor.

Outline of assessment methods

All UCAS forms are considered independently by at least two members of the Admissions team. All applications are considered on an equal basis, without regard to the category or type of educational institution attended. In assessing the merits of each application, all sections of the form are taken into account. We do not apply a numerical tariff on which to score and rank candidates, but judge each application 'in the round'. All applicants are contacted within 4 weeks of receipt of application, to establish contact and inform the applicant of the process to be followed.

When assessing an application the Admissions Team will consider the following:

- A candidate's academic potential, and their potential to succeed on our programme
- The personal statement
- The reference
- Exceptional circumstances and/or the educational and social context in which an applicant applies, where there is clear evidence that this may have adversely affected academic achievement.

School Visit Days and other correspondence with applicants

Selected applicants who are considered for an offer will be invited to a pre-offer visit day, before a decision is made. The visit is to allow students to find out more about our course content and the University. Candidates to whom offers are to be made are informed following attendance at a visit day. Details of offers are confirmed through UCAS. Unsuccessful candidates are also informed through UCAS.

Although there are other opportunities to visit the School of Physics, such as University Open Days, if a candidate is invited to attend a visit day then they are expected to attend even if they have attended one of these other University events. This is because the visit day is specifically tailored to prospective students, as well as giving the admissions team an opportunity to clarify issues that may not be clear from the application forms and to help decide on the details of any offer that may be made. Allowance is made however for a candidate that cannot make a visit day due to any exceptional circumstance, if this is the case then the

applicant should inform the Admissions Team as soon as possible.

Additional assessment: (a) interviews

In rare cases where we cannot reach a decision based on the information in the UCAS form, candidates may be called for interview.

Additional assessment: (b) tests/written work

Procedures for specific categories of applicant

Non-standard applicants (eg those not taking A-levels or examinations with an accepted standard of equivalence), whose UCAS forms suggest they have the potential to succeed on one of our programmes are considered on an individual basis. We welcome applications from mature students taking an Access course, or who may be taking a limited range of A-levels, although clear mathematical knowledge and ability need to be demonstrated.

Applications for deferred entry will be considered on exactly the same criteria as those for immediate entry, but a limit has to be set on the number of places that we can offer for deferred entry, in fairness to applicants applying the following year.

Overseas students (i.e. those from outside the EU) are not in direct competition with home students (i.e. those from within the EU). We may ask overseas applicants to do some written work if there is any difficulty in assessing either their standard or their competence in English. If we are satisfied that successful completion of our course is well within their powers, they will normally be made an offer, the conditions of which will be the same as for home candidates.

We also welcome applications to the Physics with a Preliminary Year programme (F308) from such applicants who have not had the opportunity to gain mathematical skills as yet. Applicants in these categories who we believe have the potential to succeed on our courses may be interviewed by two members of the academic staff (at least one of whom will be an admissions tutor). Although interviews include some standard questions to facilitate comparison, the procedure is designed to provide an opportunity for each applicant to discuss their individual experience and qualifications.

The School of Physics does not have any specific admissions targets for non-standard applicants, all decisions are made on merit, with offers made to those students we feel would most benefit from our degree programmes.

Cross-School/joint course admissions arrangements

For Maths and Physics, the assessment will be undertaken by the Undergraduate Admissions Office team, in consultation with the Admissions Tutor.

Successful applicants to Joint Honours courses will be invited to an Open Day.

2. Criteria for assessing applicants

Entry Requirements

Academic entry requirements for standard qualifications (A-level, SQA, IB, Access, BTEC, Welsh Bacc, 14-19 Diploma, GCSEs) can be found in the online Undergraduate Prospectus

http://www.bris.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2012/sections/PHYS/dept_intro.

Other qualifications, including international qualifications, will be considered on their individual merits; further information is available at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/international/study-at-bristol/how-to-apply/country-specific/>.

Academic Record Criteria

Academic attainment in Mathematics and Physics are most important for a Physics degree, and assessment under this heading also takes account of both the appropriateness of the additional subject(s) offered and the grades predicted or obtained. We would expect to see high grades in Science and Mathematics subjects as well as English at GCSE level. We do not accept General Studies or Critical Thinking at A2 level as entrance qualifications.

We welcome applications from candidates with International Baccalaureate or other equivalent qualifications; in these cases we expect Mathematics and Physics to be studied at higher level.

In assessing the strength of an applicant's academic record, we follow the general guidelines set out in the University's Widening Participation policy as outlined in the University's Admissions Principles and Procedures. We recognise that academic performance should be judged in the context of the overall levels of achievement in the candidate's school or college, as described in section 7.4 of the Admissions Principles and Procedures.

Account is also taken of medical evidence and any other mitigating factors that may have affected examination performance, or constraints that have limited the choice of A level programmes.

We consider grades of all examinations previously taken, including GCSE, Standards etc.

Contextual information

We take an holistic approach to all applications, ensuring that the educational and social context in which an applicant applies is taken into consideration, where supported by clear evidence that this may have adversely affected academic achievement. This may include time spent in Local Authority care, information about which is provided in the UCAS application.

We also consider evidence of clear motivation to study. This may include attendance at a University summer school, a targeted Access Scheme (such as Access to Bristol), or participation in Aimhigher outreach activities. Consideration will also be given to applicants who have completed a targeted Access scheme at another university, under the 'Mutual Recognition Scheme'.

We do not take the following into consideration when making admissions decisions: the school type attended by an applicant or whether an applicant's parent has any experience of higher education.

Personal Statement Criteria

The Admissions team looks for evidence in the personal statement that applicants are well informed, and appreciate the importance of Mathematics in a Physics degree and explain why they want to pursue a degree in Physics.

Statements about other achievements, specific interests and aspirations will be considered in relation to availability of opportunities to the applicant.

We will also take note of any other information that candidates consider to be relevant and wish to present in this section of the UCAS form.

Reference Criteria

The reports provided by schools and colleges provide valuable information from those who have worked closely with the applicant in an academic setting. We look for strong, though not necessarily unqualified support from referees, together with an assessment of mathematical ability and of potential for further study.

Information about the candidate's particular achievements, and challenges faced, are also taken into account when evaluating information about actual or predicted examination performance.

Criteria for international applicants (if different)

International applicants will be subject to the criteria as detailed in this document, as and where relevant to their individual cases.

English Language requirements can be found in the Undergraduate Prospectus

(<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/>) and via the University Policies

(<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/admissions/language-requirements.html>) webpages.

Applicants are not discriminated against on the grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion, disability or age.

3. Offers

The number of offers we can make is limited by the entry targets set by the University. We use statistical data from previous years to determine how many offers we should make in order to reach our entry targets. The number of offers will vary from year to year according to the number of deferred entrants from the previous admissions cycle and in response to any adjustments made in the entry target.

The final decision is made for each applicant individually, taking into account all of the criteria used for assessment. Candidates with Baccalaureate or other national qualifications are made offers comparable with those made to A-level candidates using the University guidelines on equivalences published in the Prospectus. Typical offers for A-levels and other UK qualifications can be found in the Entry Data in the online UG Prospectus

http://www.bris.ac.uk/prospectus/undergraduate/2012/sections/PHYS/dept_intro. Offers to applicants with non-standard qualifications will be made equivalent to the published A-level offer.

Variations in offer level

We may make lower offers based on whether an applicant is deemed to have experienced educational disadvantage, as defined in section 7.5 of the University's Admissions Principles and Procedures.

4. Other

Transfers between BSc and MSci courses are possible up to the end of year 2. Transfers between other single or joint honours courses are usually possible, but remain at the discretion of the School(s).

We will, occasionally, accept suitably qualified students who wish to transfer from another institution directly into year 2.

Professor Nick Brook
September 2011