

## **PSTA Admissions Policy**

The School is committed to providing a fair, effective and professional admissions service which is consistent with good practice as defined in the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education; Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education, Chapter B11 Research Degrees and Part C: Information about higher education provision. The School's policy complies with the Data Protection Act 1998 and relevant equality and diversity legislation affecting the admissions of students. It also complies with the requirements of the UKVI.

This policy is underpinned by the School's commitment to the following principles:

- Providing clear, accurate and transparent admissions information to prospective applicants;
- Operating a fair and effective admissions process;
- Ensuring the consistent application of policy across the School;
- Widening access by encouraging applications from the widest range of educational, professional, social and cultural backgrounds.

### **Admissions Processes**

PSTA operates an annual recruitment schedule.

#### **TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMME**

For MA candidates, the admission process consist of two stages:

Part One takes place immediately after the closing date for the submission of application forms and portfolios at the end of February/beginning of March. The admissions panel includes the Director of Studies (MA), MA Senior Tutors and the Registrar who acts as Clerk of the Board. The admissions panel holds a formal meeting to assess the application forms and portfolios and decide which applicants will proceed to Part Two of the admissions process, the interview.

Part Two takes place during the eleventh week of the Spring term. The interview panel includes the Director of Studies, MA Senior Tutors the Registrar and a student representative and may include other invited members, at the discretion of the panel. The Registrar acts as Clerk of the Board and is present to make sure that the correct interview procedure is followed. This includes ensuring that all candidates are asked the same questions; relating to their previous educational and work experience, their understanding of the subject, their reasons for wishing to take the course. The portfolio submitted by the candidate is discussed in detail at this stage. Overseas candidates have the option to be interviewed by conference call.

The admissions panel discusses the candidate following each interview and a summary assessment is recorded. A panel member will complete an MA grading form during the interviews, recording their individual assessments.

At the end of the interviews the final selection takes place. The selection is based on the summary assessments, and the considerations listed under admissions criteria (see below) are taken into account. The balance of the group of students applying and the range of specialisations are also taken into consideration as well as the departmental

ability to meet each candidate's requirements. The panel also takes note of the formal nature of the interviews, and the fact that candidates may not do themselves justice. (The references and work submitted become especially important in cases where candidates are obviously very nervous). A second interview may be arranged in exceptional circumstances.

Following the school regulations, the candidates for the number of places allocated are then listed according to their grading. A reserve list is then agreed in case the successful candidates do not accept the places offered.

After the interview stage when decisions have been finalised, successful candidates are offered a place in writing and are requested to confirm their acceptance in writing directly. Deferred entry may be considered, although the School cannot guarantee that the programme's tuition fee will not change during the deferment period.

#### Entry requirements for MA Applicants

There are two sets of criteria for entry requirements for MA students depending on previous qualifications:

1. Normally, candidates for the MA courses must have obtained an appropriate undergraduate degree or equivalent qualification.
2. In the case of applicants without an undergraduate degree, admission decisions are made according to one or more of the following
  - a. the portfolio of work submitted
  - b. the successful completion of a project undertaken by the applicant in the year prior to her or his admission
  - c. the successful completion of at least one full time year of the course as a diploma student at the School.

For all candidates, the following factors are taken into account

- a. The potential contribution that a candidate might make to the scheme of study and to the subject;
- b. Demonstration, through the presentation of the application form of an understanding of the nature of the subject and the reasons for wishing to undertake the course;
- c. Professional aspirations;
- d. Artistic work from previous courses, or self-motivated study;
- e. Evidence of broader interests;
- f. References. Referees are contacted at this stage if further clarification is required.

Proficiency in written and spoken English is essential. Applicants whose first language is not English must satisfy the admissions panel that they can express themselves in both written and spoken English sufficiently well to enable them to pursue the course satisfactorily. The school requires international students to take a remedial English course reaching at least B2 level which is equivalent to an overall score of 6.0 and 5.5 in all 4 components of the IELTS test.

## RESEARCH DEGREES PROGRAMME

An outline of the admissions process is available for download on the website and any questions may be directed to the Registrar or Director of Research.

The application process passes through five stages:

- Initial contact and suggested informational interview(s)
- Application received and assessed in relation to minimum academic qualifications
- Consideration of the application, proposal and portfolio (if applicable) by the Admissions Committee
- Interview with the Admissions Committee
- Consideration of applicants by the PSTA RDC for final approval by the UWTSD RDC

Stage 1- Prospective applicants are encouraged to engage on an informal basis before submitting their formal applications. Interested parties are encouraged to arrange informational interviews with the Director of Research. This process of encouraging potential applicants to engage in an informal manner is found to be successful in determining whether those exhibiting interest are suited for applying to the programme or should perhaps be directed into other avenues of study or engagement with The School. It is also an opportunity to begin discussing student expectations and needs in relation to research at The School.

Once an application has been made, applications for admission are assessed in two stages (2 and 3 below).

Stage 2- Assessment of application in relation to minimum entry requirements (see below). This is carried out by the Registrar. Applications fulfilling entry requirements are forwarded to members Admissions Committee, for consideration. The Admissions Committee includes the Director of the School, Director of Educational Development, Director of Research and Registrar, who acts as Secretary of the Committee.

Stage 3- Members of the Admissions Committee meet to share views on potential candidates and a short-list of candidates for interview is drawn up. At this stage applications are assessed based on the following criteria: educational and professional background; applicant's personal statement; 1000 word research proposal covering

context, area of enquiry, methods, proposed plan for research, potential outcomes and impact of the research, proposed timescale, ethical issues arising and bibliography. The Committee will also be looking for evidence of motivation and potential to complete the programme and details of funding. Portfolios will be assessed at this stage in the case of those applying for arts practice as research degrees.

After this stage of assessment is complete, applicants will be given one of three results:

1. They will be invited for a formal interview
2. They will be informed that their application has not been successful
3. They will be invited to reapply the following year if they wish, after strengthening their application.

#### Stage 4- Formal interview

The Admissions Committee, which will include a student representative at this stage, then conducts formal interviews to further explore an applicant's qualifications, motivations and potential and offer an opportunity for the candidate to discuss any questions they may have. The Committee satisfies any questions raised in reference to the application or portfolio of the applicant. It is also an opportunity for further assessing whether the student will benefit from the particular method of research undertaken at The School and their potential to move through the stages of the research project in order to prepare them for leadership in the field of the traditional arts.

The interview is also the forum for gaining further information which will allow the panel to determine the applicant's suitability in relation to the following more general criteria:

- applicant's ability to present their ideas orally
- applicant's ability to relate their practical artwork to their research proposal and consider the possibilities of arts practice as research
- applicant's ability to meet the required fees

The Admissions Committee will also take this opportunity to explain further and answer any questions about:

- the nature of research at The School
- the working and research environment
- resources available to researchers
- provisions for supervision and the operation of the supervisory team
- The School's expectations of the student including their required attendance during the initial year and in the years following

Once the interviews have been completed the Admissions Committee will make their final decision about the applicant and letters will be sent to inform candidates of their status following this stage.

Stage 5- Research proposals of successful applicants are presented to the RDC for review and final submission for approval to the UWTSD RDC.

Once all documentation in relation to applicants is in place, offer letters will be sent to those who have been successful.

## Entry requirements for research applicants

### Standard Entry

The normal minimum entrance requirement for applicants for candidature for research degrees is an upper second class honours degree or a Master's degree relevant to the proposed research project awarded by a UK or other recognised University or higher education institution, or by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA).

### Non-standard Entry

Applicants who do not possess the normal minimum entrance qualifications

– where an Honours degree of a UK or other recognised University or higher education institute or of the CNAA is held at a level below that of an upper second classification and the student does not hold a relevant Master's degree;

*alternatively,*

– where another qualification or experience is held at a level which the School considers to be equivalent to, or higher than, that of an upper second class Honours degree of a UK University;

may be considered for candidature on their merits. In these cases the School will follow the processes outlined for non- standard applicants in the UWTSD Code of Practice for Research Degrees to determine the academic attainment and suitability to undertake research of the student prior to study commencing. Please refer to Appendix to Admissions Policy: UWTSD Code of Practice and Academic Quality Handbook Admissions.

In addition to the above entrance requirements, in their application and during interview candidates must be capable of satisfying the Admissions Committee with regard to their proficiency in English at a level necessary to complete the programme of work in English and to prepare and defend a thesis in that language. Proficiency in English of candidates whose first language is not English is normally evidenced by a minimum IELTS score (or equivalent) of 6.5 at entry with a minimum of 6.5 in the reading and written components and a minimum of 6.0 in the listening and speaking components, with an overall score of 6.5 or above. Candidates will be asked to provide such evidence as is deemed necessary by the School.

### Further information

The School follows an equality and diversity policy and it does not discriminate in any way on grounds of Race, Ethnic Origin or Nationality; Gender; Age; Disability; Marital Status; Religion or Belief; or Sexual Orientation.

All applicants are assessed on the same criteria and the final decision is based on the objective estimate of the candidate's merit and potential to make a positive contribution to the subject, and to the School.

If there are any significant changes to the courses, the School will inform candidates. Applicants will then have the option of withdrawing their acceptance of a place.

#### Applicants with disabilities or specific learning needs

The School will support the application of students with disabilities and/or specific learning needs and make a determination as to whether reasonable adjustments can be made to accommodate their needs wherever possible.

Students are encouraged to disclose any disability during the application process (as prompted on application forms) and throughout their time at the School as early as possible to the appropriate persons. With the student's explicit consent, disclosed information may be shared and used to determine reasonable adjustments and compensatory measures. Students are made aware that declining to share information may limit the School's ability to ensure that appropriate and timely support arrangements are put in place.

#### Applicants declaring criminal convictions

The School has a duty to ensure the safety of its student and staff community. The application process requires applicants to disclose unspent convictions. Failure to declare a criminal conviction may result in the application being refused and if students are convicted of a criminal offence after they have applied, they must inform the School. Continuing students will be expected to declare a criminal conviction immediately. The application will be assessed in the first instance on the basis of standard and non-academic selection criteria. The relevance or otherwise of any criminal conviction(s) will be considered before a final decision is made.

#### International applicants

Each applicant is assessed on an individual basis, according to the evidence provided on the application form and supporting documents. Each applicant must meet the School's requirements in addition to any requirements placed upon the School by government/legislative bodies. These include the requirement of Tier 4 (General Student Visa) sponsorship as defined by the Home Office.

As part of the School's UKVI Tier 4 Sponsor License, the School is required to view and maintain copies of all international students' current passport and visa along with photocopies of their qualifications, the original of which should have been viewed by the Registrar. The Registrar will also store any other documentation received in support of an application.

International students requiring a visa are subject to an admissions interview either face to face or by conference call. International students will have to reach the required IELTS test standard as described above. To apply for a visa, candidates will have to show evidence that they can at least fund one year of tuition fees and 9 months of maintenance. Applicants will also have to provide a letter to the School to confirm that they will have the funds to support themselves throughout their studies. A CAS number is usually issued once a candidate has accepted a place on the course and has provided evidence that they have reached the necessary IELTS score from a UKVI recognised centre.

## Appeals and complaints procedure

The School is committed to fair, transparent and consistent admissions practices. The School does not provide automatic feedback to every unsuccessful applicant, but written feedback can be provided upon request. Unsuccessful applicants are strongly encouraged to check the School's website for details of both standard offer levels and any specific entry requirements before requesting feedback. Applicants are advised that requests for feedback should be made in writing to the Registrar, within 20 working days following notification of the original admissions decision. The School ensures that the Entrance Exam Committee responds in writing to each request for feedback within 20 working days of receipt of the request. Requests for feedback must come from the applicant as the School does not respond to request for feedback from those advising applicants.

Following the provision of feedback, an applicant has the right to appeal the selection decision, providing that there are sufficient grounds for an appeal. An appeal will only be considered where there are adequate grounds. This includes substantial new information which, for good reason, was not made available either on the original application or during the selection procedure and where new information is significant and directly relevant to the original decision. Please note that the new information must relate directly to the original application and cannot include activities or achievements which have taken place or been ratified subsequently. This can also include evidence that the School's published admissions procedure on the website has not been followed. Where an applicant believes that they have been discriminated against in relation to a protected characteristic as defined under the Equality Act 2010 as the result of an Admissions decision. The School recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act and is committed to eliminate any unlawful discrimination, be it direct or indirect discrimination, whether by perception or by association with a protected characteristic (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).

Appeals against an admissions decision based on the academic judgement of the School's staff about an applicant's suitability for entry to a particular programme or appeals put forward on any grounds other than those specified above will not be considered. The School will not consider appeals that are based on errors made by individuals i.e. inaccurate predictions of future grades; disputes about the grading of formal examinations; comments made by referees; etc. The School will not be able to consider appeals where a decision not to admit an applicant is based on restrictions imposed by external organisations such as restrictions imposed by UK Visas and Immigration. An applicant should seek feedback from the School before deciding whether or not he/she has grounds to appeal the admissions decision. An appeal will not be considered until after an applicant has received formal feedback. Appeals must be received within 20 working days following the provision of feedback from the Admissions Committee. An appeal should be submitted in writing to the Registrar, stating clearly the grounds for appeal and outlining the case in full. Appeals must be made by the applicant and not a third party. The School will not respond to requests from anyone other than the applicant. Once received, the Admissions Committee will review the record of the application and will respond in writing, normally within 20 working days. If the appeal is upheld the School will take such reasonable action as is

appropriate and the applicant will be informed of the outcome. If the appeal is not upheld, the School will communicate the reasons for the decision to the applicant in writing. No applicant will be discriminated against in any future application on the basis of appealing a previous admissions decision.

A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction about the University's admissions policies and procedures which have been used to reach a selection decision or about the actions, or the lack of actions, by the School or its staff. A complaint will not result in the amendment of an admissions decision. However, if in the course of investigating a complaint the Admissions Committee believes there are grounds for an appeal against the selection decision, the Registrar on behalf of the committee, may advise the applicant to submit a formal appeal. Complaints must be received within 20 working days of the conclusion of the admissions process against which the complaint is being made. A complaint should be submitted in writing to the Registrar, and should include the nature of, and reasons for, the complaint; any steps already taken to resolve the matter, if appropriate; details of any response received to date and a statement as to why the response(s) is not satisfactory and an indication of the outcome which is sought. The complaint must be made by the applicant and not a third party. The School will not respond to requests from anyone other than the applicant. Once received, the Admissions Committee will investigate the complaint and will seek to resolve the complaint or explain the situation and will respond in writing, normally within 20 working days. If the complaint is substantiated, the School will take such reasonable action as is appropriate and the applicant will be informed of the outcome. If the complaint is not substantiated, the School will communicate the reasons for the decision to the applicant in writing. No applicant will be discriminated against in any future application on the basis of submitting a complaint.