Royal Holloway
University of London

Admissions Handbook

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1 General

1.1 Royal Holloway, University of London (The College) is committed to admitting high-quality students by identifying merit and potential and ensuring that its admissions process is fair and transparent.

1.2 This Admissions Handbook supports the goals, vision and aims of the College as laid out in our Strategic Plan. It complies with relevant legislation and is guided by the principles outlined by the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group and by the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Admissions (2012)

2 Admissions Policy

At Royal Holloway we are committed to operating an admissions process which is demonstrably fair, transparent, professional and underpinned by appropriate and robust institutional structures. Admissions decisions are based on merit, irrespective of background.

In support of fair admissions, Royal Holloway strives to:

- ensure that admissions decisions are based on an applicant's achievements and potential
- embed fair admissions processes both centrally and across the College to ensure equality of educational opportunity regardless of the background of applicants
- promote admissions processes that enable the fair and equitable treatment of each individual applicant without either direct or indirect discrimination
- give full consideration to applications
- guarantee that admissions decisions are consistent and that each stage of the admissions process is carried out with honesty and integrity by appropriate staff with relevant and up-to-date knowledge and expertise
- create parity of esteem between GCE A-level and other pre-HE qualification routes and fully recognise a wide range of international, access-based, and vocationally-related qualifications, and other indicators of potential
- ensure the effective operation of the admissions process
- make explicit the criteria by which admissions decisions are made
- encourage and support applicants from diverse backgrounds by minimising procedural and financial obstacles to entry
- clearly document admissions decisions

3 Admissions Criteria and Selection

Entry Criteria

3.1 We update our entry requirements on an annual basis in response to changing academic requirements. Inevitably this means that sometimes our requirements do not reflect the information published in the hard copy of our Prospectus. We therefore recommend that applicants look at the information in the course listings in our online course finder (http://www.rhul.ac.uk/coursecatalogue/home.aspx) as the source of the most up-to-date information. Our undergraduate academic entry requirements are also published on the UCAS website www.ucas.co.uk.

3.2 Changes in entry criteria need to gain the support of the Academic Department and the Student Recruitment Operations Group. Changes which gain this support will be presented to the Academic Planning Committee for approval, normally by the Admissions Manager on behalf of all parties. The Academic Planning Committee will approve changes in criteria on behalf of Academic Board and will report all such changes to Academic Board at the next appropriate meeting.

3.3 The College considers a wide range of qualifications for entry on to its programmes, taking advice and guidance from sector-wide products and publications such as UK NARIC, The British Council and UCAS publications. Entry requirements are determined based on the academic standard that is needed to successfully complete the course and have been compiled based on our experience of the qualification(s) and the success of students who have previously completed the course.

3.4 The minimum entry requirements for admission to a Postgraduate Taught degree at the College is normally a UK first or second class honours degree or a recognised international equivalent. The entry requirements for admission to a Postgraduate Research degree at the College vary by discipline. The entry requirement for such courses is normally a UK Masters degree or a recognised international equivalent however in some cases a first or upper second class honours degree may be accepted. Applicants with other qualifications and/or experience will be considered on an individual basis. Entry requirements for each course will be published on the College's website.

3.5 As a minimum, applicants for full-time undergraduate programmes will normally be expected to have been educated to General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) or an equivalent qualification in either the UK or internationally that is deemed acceptable by the College.

3.6 All applicants for undergraduate programmes are normally required to demonstrate a good standard of general education, normally equivalent to 5 GCSE passes at grades A* to C. This includes acceptable levels of literacy and numeracy, normally equivalent to at least Grade C at GCSE in English and Mathematics. Individual programmes may have additional requirements, and these are outlined in each programme entry in the Undergraduate Prospectus and on our website.

All applicants are expected to demonstrate a suitable standard of English Language proficiency prior to enrolling at the College. Applicants who have not achieved the required standard at the point of application will be made an offer that is conditional upon achieving it. Details of the

accepted English Language qualifications and the required levels for each qualification will be published on our website.

3.7 Applications from candidates without the normal, formal qualifications will be considered on an individual basis and all aspects of the application will be taken into account when making a decision. All such applications will be considered by the member of academic staff responsible for the course. Where applications are based on prior experience, the following will apply:

- Any previous study or experience must be cognate with the course the applicant is applying for;
- an applicant's prior learning will be assessed for entry to any programme at whatever level by the relevant member of academic staff;
- responsibility lies with the applicant in identifying, demonstrating and providing evidence of any claim of experience or prior learning;
- where it is proposed to allow entry with credit, this will need to be assessed and approved in accordance with the College's Academic Regulations.

Selection

3.8 The College welcomes applications from students who hold a wide range of qualifications, both traditional and non-traditional. Applications from mature students with relevant work experience are welcomed and will be considered on an individual basis. Applications are considered on a holistic basis with the entire application being considered when deciding whether to offer an applicant a place.

3.9 All applications to the College are assessed by either the relevant Admissions Officer or the allocated Admissions Tutor for the course. Where the applications are assessed by an Admissions Officer, they will work to criteria provided by the allocated Admissions Tutor.

3.10 All applications will be considered in line with the College's Equal Opportunities Policy and all decisions will be made in accordance with this Policy.

3.11 All applications will be considered on an equal basis, against criteria which will be determined by the Admissions Tutor at the beginning of the admissions year. When assessing the academic suitability and potential of applicants, we will consider the following information, as provided on the application form:

- Achievement in awarded qualifications;
- Predicted achievement in qualifications which are currently being studied;
- Personal/supporting statement;
- Reference(s).

3.12 The College will consider applicants for second year entry on an individual basis. Vacancies for second year entry are extremely limited and may not be available in all departments. Applicants wishing to apply for second year entry should demonstrate a strong academic performance in their current course and will normally be required to meet the first year entry requirements for the course they are applying for. Any applicants wishing to apply for second year entry must do so via UCAS.

3.13 Where a course requires applicants to attend for interview, this will be published on our website and, for undergraduate courses, the UCAS website.

3.14 Where an interview is required to determine suitability for a course, the following will be adhered to:

- The interviewer(s) will have received appropriate training on conducting fair and effective recruitment and selection processes;
- The interview will be conducted in accordance with the College's Equal Opportunities Policy;
- All applicants will be assessed against a standard set of criteria and the interviewing Department will complete and retain interview assessment forms for each candidate.

3.15 Offers made to applicants must normally be in line with the standard published offer for that course and may not vary significantly from this. Varying levels of offer may be made to take account of individual circumstances, where an applicant is unable to achieve the standard published offer.

3.16 All applicants who are successful in gaining an offer of a place at the College will be notified of this, in writing, by the Admissions Office. This letter represents the formal offering of a place and a legal contract is formed between the applicant and the University on the basis of the terms and conditions of the offer.

3.17 If the College is unable to make an applicant an offer of a place on their chosen course, it may be possible to make an offer on a similar alternative course. This may happen at both the initial offer stage and at 'Confirmation' once results are known. If this is the case a change of course offer will be made and the applicant will be notified of this.

3.18 All undergraduate applicants who are made an offer of a place will be invited to attend a specified UCAS Day, unless they have already attended an interview/selection day. Departments will organise and run the course specific UCAS Days.

3.19 Applicants who are made an offer of a place will be given a deadline by which to meet the conditions of offer. In the event the applicant does not meet their conditions by the date stated it may not be possible to hold their offer of a place open.

3.20 Historical trends and data will be used to determine the number of offers to be made for each course. Where a course attracts a high ratio of applicants to places, applications may be held until the application deadline to allow for equal consideration. In the case of postgraduate courses, high levels of applications may result in the need to implement an application deadline. In such cases the deadline will be published on the course pages of our website.

3.21 Applicants who fail to meet their conditions of offer by a small margin may be considered at 'Confirmation' subject to available space on the course, once those who have met their offer have been accepted. Applicants who fail to achieve the College's minimum entry requirements will not normally be accepted (see section 2).

3.22 The College may consider applicants with qualifications that are lower than the published standard entry requirements at 'Clearing', should a course still have vacancies. Applicants who fail to meet the College's minimum entry requirements will not normally be accepted at 'Clearing' (see section 2).

3.23 All International fee paying students will be required to pay a non-refundable deposit to unconditionally accept their offer of a place at the College.

3.24 Applicants who have previously registered on and failed a course will not normally be reconsidered until a minimum of one year has passed. Even where this period has passed, the College reserves the right to refuse readmission.

3.25 Applications will not be accepted from anyone who has previously been a student at the College and has had their registration as a student of the College terminated for academic/non-academic disciplinary offences. Any such applications that are received will be rejected without consideration.

3.26 An applicant who has already obtained an Honours Degree or an Integrated Masters Degree will only be admitted to a programme which the College has judged to be sufficiently different from that already completed.

Disabled Students

3.27 Decisions on admission to programmes of study at Royal Holloway are made on the basis of academic qualification and, if relevant, previous academic or professional experience. The College is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and does not discriminate on grounds of race, gender, age, marital status, details of dependants, nationality, disabilities, sexual orientation, religion, political belief or social origins.

3.28 It is recommended that students declare any disability on application so that the College can assess the level of adjustments and support required from the earliest opportunity. Consideration of applications from students who declare a disability will be based on the same criteria and principles as for other candidates.

3.29 Interviews/selection days are designed to be accessible to all students and therefore should an applicant who has declared a disability be invited to interview, adjustments can be made in consultation with the Educational Support Office.

3.30 Applicants who require adjustments or assistance when attending an interview/selection day or a College UCAS or Open Day should notify the Admissions Office of their needs in advance of the day to enable necessary arrangements to be made.

3.31 Applicants who are successful in gaining an offer of a place at the College will be sent a support pack by the Educational Support Office, identifying all the support available to them. This will include a support questionnaire to help the College identify the applicant's support requirements. Reasonable adjustments will be made for disabled applicants in consultation with the Educational Support Office to enable them to successfully complete their chosen course.

Deferred Entry

3.32 The College welcomes applications from students who wish to undertake a 'gap year' and therefore wish to apply for entry in the following year.

3.33 Applicants who apply for deferred entry will be considered using the same criteria as applicants for the current year. The applicant will be expected to adhere to the relevant application and decision deadlines during the admissions cycle in which they apply. Applicants who apply for deferred entry will be contacted in the Spring prior to their entry and will expected to reconfirm their wish to accept a place.

3.34 Offers of a deferred place will not normally be made in Clearing unless the applicant meets the standard published entry requirements for the course.

3.35 Applicants will normally only be permitted to defer for one year. If an applicant wishes to defer for a second year they will normally be required submit a new application.

Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances

3.36 Applicants who feel that they have mitigating/extenuating circumstances which need to be disclosed to the College should do so by letter to the Admissions Manager, ensuring that any relevant supporting information is enclosed (e.g. medical documentation). Where mitigating/extenuating circumstances are in connection with a qualification or its results, the applicant should include a letter from their school or college in additional to any further supporting information.

3.37 Applicants should ensure that the relevant exam board is notified of any mitigating/extenuating circumstances, prior to the issue of results. The College should also be notified of any mitigating/extenuating circumstances prior to the issue of results. It may not be possible to give any consideration to mitigating/extenuating circumstances divulged after the issue of results.

3.38 The College reserves the right to assume that the relevant exam board has taken account of mitigating/extenuating circumstances and therefore that appropriate adjustments have been made and are reflected in the results. The College may further consider an applicant's mitigating/extenuating circumstances, upon receipt of results, if the applicant has narrowly failed to achieve their offer but there is no guarantee of amendment to a decision as a result.

Re-marks and Examination Appeals

3.39 Applicants who have applied for a re-mark or appeal with an awarding body should notify the College immediately. While the College will make every effort to reconsider applicants whose grades are amended as the result of a successful re-mark, it may not always be possible to hold an offer open pending the outcome of an appeal.

3.40 In the event that a re-mark is successful and the course applied to is full, an applicant may be offered an alternative programme or a deferred entry place.

4 Feedback and Complaints

4.1 Royal Holloway, University of London is committed to providing a high quality, fair and transparent admissions service for all applicants. We recognise, however, that there will be occasions when applicants will wish to establish why their application has been rejected, or believe that they have cause for complaint. Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the College.

4.2 In this context, feedback is defined as the communication from the College to an applicant, on request from the applicant, who has been unsuccessful in gaining an offer of a place. A complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction either about the way in which an application has been handled or the outcome of the selection or fees classification process. In either case, it may concern actions or inaction by the College or its staff. An appeal is defined as a request for a formal review of the outcome of an admissions decision.

Feedback

4.3 Applicants who are unsuccessful at gaining an offer of a place will be sent an email explaining the reason that they have been unsuccessful. This will be provided within 48 hours of the decision being sent to UCAS.

4.4 The College makes great efforts to provide clear minimum entry requirements for all its courses. These can be found in our Prospectus (paper and online), on our website and on our UCAS Entry Profiles. The College expects applicants to have read the available information on entry requirements and assessment criteria before requesting further feedback, as in many cases this will explain why their application has been unsuccessful.

4.5 Requests for further, individual, feedback must be made by the applicant and should be sent Admissions Office within 8 weeks of the notification of an unsuccessful application. Requests for further feedback will be acknowledged, and then addressed as soon as workload allows. Where applicable, further information will be sought from the academic Department before providing feedback.

4.6 In some cases, lack of success will be due to the level of competition for places rather than any specific weakness in an application, and consequently, we will not be able to advise applicants on how to strengthen any subsequent application.

4.7 In all cases, it will be made clear to the applicant that, even if another application will be considered, there is no guarantee that an offer will be made, even if the points raised in the feedback are addressed by the applicant. Previous applications are not kept for reference. There will be no discrimination against any applicant who requests feedback.

4.8 Requests for feedback from a third party will not be accepted and no information relating to an individual applicant will be released.

4.9 Further correspondence will not be entered into, and the decision will not be reviewed. If the applicant feels the admissions process has not been followed correctly, they must use the complaints procedure.

Complaints

4.10 Applicants have no right of appeal against a decision not to offer them a place at the College. Provided that the decision can be shown to have been reached fairly and in accordance with the College's published selection criteria, the original decision will not be overturned. However, should an applicant believe that the College's admissions principles and procedures have been inconsistently or incorrectly applied, this complaints procedure provides a mechanism for objective review for both undergraduate and postgraduate applicants.

4.11 Complaints may only be made by individual applicants. They may not be made by a representative, a parent, a school or any other third party.

4.12 This procedure sets out how applicants may seek to have a complaint addressed. It should be recognised that the vast majority of applicant complaints can be handled fairly, amicably, and to the satisfaction of all concerned without recourse to the formal complaints procedure.

4.13 In the first instance, applicants with a complaint should raise it informally with the relevant member of staff in the Admissions Office. If this course of action proves unsatisfactory, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed (see below).

4.14 The College will seek to ensure that all complaints are treated seriously and constructively. It will also seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly, with fairness and consistency and with due regard to the College's Equal Opportunities Policy. If a complaint is upheld, the College will take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and will do so promptly. If a complaint is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the applicant.

4.15 There will be no discrimination against any applicant who makes a complaint.

4.16 Applicants lodging a complaint and those against whom complaints are made may expect complaints to be dealt with confidentially and with respect for their privacy. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the complaint.

4.17 Anonymous complaints will not be dealt with under this procedure. Staff who receive anonymous complaints will be expected to use their discretion and judgement as to how to handle such complaints.

4.18 The complaints procedure provides for both informal and formal stages in the handling of a complaint. At each stage of the process, the person to whom the complaint has been referred shall, if it is upheld, wholly or in part, apply such remedies as are within her/his powers. If s/he considers that the remedy is outside her/his powers, s/he shall refer the matter to the appropriate authority. If s/he feels unable to fulfil the requirements of the complaints procedure objectively because of prior involvement in the case, s/he will refer the matter to a more senior colleague.

4.19 The Admissions Manager will monitor, on an annual basis, formal complaints which have been referred to her, and will be responsible for implementing, or recommending changes to systems or procedures suggested by the nature and pattern of the complaints received. Such records may contain: age, gender and ethnicity (if known) of complainant, programme of study applied for, summary of complaint and summary of outcome. The outcome of such monitoring may also

inform other processes or activities such as arrangements for interview or standard correspondence with applicants.

Formal complaints procedure

4.20 If a complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily on an informal basis, the applicant should write to the Admissions Manager outlining the nature and details of his/her complaint.

4.21 The complaint must normally be made within 14 days of the actions (or lack of actions) that prompted the complaint. The Admissions Manager will investigate the complaint in consultation with the relevant members of staff and will respond to the complaint normally within 10 working days of a complaint being made. The Admissions Manager will retain a record of the correspondence and any action taken. If it proves impossible to respond fully within 10 working days, the complainant will be informed of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

4.22 If the complaint is about non-selection, the Admissions Manager must satisfy herself that the application was considered fairly and that the decision did comply with the selection policy. Provided that s/he is satisfied that this is the case, a response explaining the context of the decision (e.g., demand for places) and the selection policy that has been applied is acceptable at this stage.

Appealing the outcome of a complaint

4.23 If the applicant is dissatisfied with the response s/he receives from the Admissions Manager, s/he should submit a written appeal to the Director of Academic Services within 10 working days of receiving the response. This should briefly detail: the nature of the complaint; the informal steps already taken (if any); details of the response received; and a statement as to why the applicant remains dissatisfied and, without prejudice to any formal remedy which might be determined, the remedy which s/he is seeking. The Director of Academic Services will investigate the complaint and submit a written response to the complainant, normally within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint. If it should prove impossible to respond fully within 15 working days, the applicant shall be informed in writing of the timescale for the receipt of a full response.

4.24 The Director of Academic Services' decision following completion of this process will be considered as final.

5 Applicants with Criminal Convictions

5.1 The College has a duty of care to its staff and students and therefore all applicants are required to disclose unspent criminal convictions. The decision on whether to accept an applicant who has declared a criminal conviction will be based on the risk posed to staff and students.

5.2 As a part of the application process, all applicants are required to declare any relevant criminal convictions. Relevant criminal convictions are defined as: those convictions for offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, and convictions for offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking.

5.3 Any applicant who declares a criminal conviction as a part of the admissions process will firstly have their application assessed on academic grounds. If the relevant assessor determines that the applicant is eligible for an offer of a place at the College, their application will be placed on hold whilst the criminal conviction is investigated further.

5.4 Applicants who are eligible for an offer and have disclosed unspent criminal convictions will be asked to provide further information about the offence. The declaration will then be assessed for potential risk of harm to others by the Criminal Conviction Panel.

5.5 Applicants to courses that require a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure are required to disclose all convictions, whether spent or unspent including cautions, reprimands, warnings and bind-overs and will be required to obtain a satisfactory disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). The relevant forms and notes will be sent to the applicant with their initial offer.

6 Fraudulent Applications

6.1 The College reserves the right to cancel any application found to contain fraudulent information. In the event an offer of a place has been made, the offer will be withdrawn.

6.2 Should an applicant omit key information from their application, the College reserves the right to treat this as a fraudulent application and thus cancel the application and withdraw any offer of a place.

6.3 If a student is found to have gained their place at the College on the basis of fraudulent information their registration will be declared void and they may be subject to the College's disciplinary processes.

6.4 Subsequent applications from anyone previously found to have submitted fraudulent information to the College will not be accepted and such applications will be rejected.

6.5 Where the College is notified that an applicant has been highlighted under the UCAS similarity detection service, their application will continue to be assessed under the standard assessment process. Such applicants will be contacted and advised of the serious nature of plagiarism and a note will remain on file but no further action will be taken.

6.6 Applications from postgraduate students that are found to be plagiarised will be treated as fraudulent. Such applications will be cancelled and any offer of a place withdrawn.

7 Under 18s

7.1 The majority of students at Royal Holloway are 18 or above, and the academic life and social environment of the College reflect this. However, we recognise that some individuals who have already met the entry requirements for the programme are in a position to commence their university studies at a younger age.

7.2 The College strongly recommends that applicants who will be under 17 years of age on entry consider carefully whether they would be able to benefit fully from the educational and social opportunities which are on offer.

7.3 Applicants who will be under the age of 16 on entry are not permitted to enrol at the College. Any such applications will, where appropriate, be offered a deferred entry place. If this is not possible the application will be rejected.

7.4 Applicants who will be under 18 years of age on the published start date of the programme, and their parents and guardians, must confirm to the College as a condition of registration:

- that they understand the nature of the College and the programme, the circumstances in which the individual would be studying and living, and the limitations of the College's supervisory role;
- that the contractual arrangements for the individual to study at the College are underwritten by a qualified person of adult status;
- that arrangements would be in place to support the individual in an emergency, including the existence of a qualified person in the UK willing to act as guardian;
- that the individual will obey the restrictions that English law places on minors.