

Admissions Policy

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Policy Statement

The Royal Agricultural University is a specialist Higher Education Institution whose mission is to be the centre of excellence for developing the leaders of tomorrow in sustainable development relating to the rural economy and food chain, and to provide leadership regionally, nationally and internationally through its education, research and knowledge exchange activities.

The University aims to offer the highest possible quality in its academic provision, and an outstanding student experience to all members of the student body with high levels of student retention, progression, successful completion and employment.

This Admissions Policy supports these goals by providing equal opportunity to all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a programme of study appropriate to their ability and future aspirations.

The University welcomes applications from everyone irrespective of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or social or economic background. All applicants will be treated on their individual merit, and the University aims to recruit students from a wide range of backgrounds who have the potential to complete their programmes successfully and make a valuable contribution to University life.

This Admissions Policy addresses the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) and complies with the expectations and indicators of the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality: Chapter B2 Admissions.

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This policy applies to the admission of students to the University's undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research programmes, wherever and by whomever they may be delivered. All members of staff with responsibility for the admission of students are required to comply with the policy.

Version Control

Version number	Purpose/change	Name and job title	Date (DD/MM/YYYY)
2	Annual revision	Katerina Emmanouilidou	06/2017
3	Further revision in line with VC and AB comments	Katerina Emmanouilidou	12/2017

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Responsibility for Admissions

This policy on admissions to Higher Education provision at the RAU is approved by the Academic Board and reviewed by the Board on an annual basis. Details of the outcome of admissions are included within the annual Student Performance Report presented to both Academic Board and Governing Council.

The Director of Operations has strategic responsibility for admissions to the University, with operational responsibility delegated to the Assistant Registrar for Admissions and Student Records who leads the Admissions Office.

All student applications are processed through the Admissions Office, who will confirm decisions on an applicant's suitability for study on a particular programme in conjunction with the Programme Manager.

Where an applicant is presenting with non-standard entry qualifications, the Admissions Office is responsible for arranging an interview between the applicant and a member of the Programme Management Team prior to confirming any offer of a place to the applicant.

All offers of places at the RAU must be made from the Admissions Office. Any offer made to a student by any other means will be deemed invalid. Any official offer made and accepted cannot be withdrawn without the applicant's agreement except in the case of a cancellation of the programme of study, in which case the University will endeavour to offer a place on a suitable alternative programme, or where information provided by the applicant is subsequently found to be incorrect. Offers of places on Collaborative programmes leading to an award of the RAU, but delivered by partner institutions, will be made by the appropriate officer of the partner institution, in line with their own admissions policy requirements which are approved at validation as being equivalent to those operated by the RAU itself.

Information for applicants

The University is committed to making admissions information and entry criteria for each individual programme of study available through the RAU website, through printed publications and at Open Days and Higher Education 'taster' days. Clear, up-to-date standard entry criteria for each programme is contained within such sources with any changes made to entry requirements or standard offers since the publication of printed materials being communicated as soon as possible via the University website (and UCAS website where applicable).

However, the University recognises that there are many individuals who, for a variety of reasons, have not gained the qualifications generally understood as being required for entry to higher education, or who have achieved qualifications and awards not specified within the standard entry requirements publicised for each programme.

The University therefore welcomes mature students (aged 21 or over for undergraduate entry or aged 25 or over for postgraduate entry) without traditional qualifications and encourages any suitably motivated individuals to apply for a programme of study. The University also welcomes applicants with a wide range of academic qualifications, both from within and outside the UK/EU, who feel they have achieved the necessary academic requirements for entry to a programme of study at the University.

Admissions Process and Procedures

Applications for all full-time undergraduate programmes must be made through UCAS. The University will give equal consideration to all undergraduate applicants submitted via UCAS by the 15th January. Applications received after this date will be considered on a programme by programme basis if places remain available.

Applications for part-time undergraduate programmes and all postgraduate programmes should be made directly to the University using the relevant UK or International Postgraduate Application form available from the RAU website or by contacting the [admissions](#) office for a paper copy.

On receipt of an application for a programme of study, the Admissions Office will consult with the relevant Programme Team and determine an appropriate offer to be made. Such offers may be conditional or non-conditional depending on whether the applicant is deemed to meet, or could potentially meet, the published entry requirements for the programme of study. Any conditions will be clearly notified to the applicant, and, where the application has been made via UCAS, the University will, as far as possible, make such conditional offers to applicants using the UCAS tariff.

Applicants must be competent in the English language and all courses require at least GCSE English at grade C or an equivalent qualification.

International students for whom English is not their first language must provide evidence of English language competence according to the programme they apply for.

- Undergraduate programmes: IELTS min. overall 6.0 with no element below 5.5 (or equivalent)
- Postgraduate Taught programmes: IELTS min. overall 6.5 with no element below 5.5 (or equivalent)

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- Postgraduate Research programmes: IELTS min. overall 6.5 with no less than 6.0 in writing and no less than 5.5 in any other component (or equivalent)

Information on English Language requirements for individual programmes can be found on the University's website.

All applications are therefore considered on an individual basis, with Guidance on non-standard entry, including details of the Assessment of Prior Learning or Experience process and on acceptable non-A2 level and first degree equivalents required for entry available from the Admissions Office.

International qualifications (non-UK) are assessed according to the information provided by UK NARIC- the designated UK national agency for the recognition and comparison of international qualifications and skills.

Applicants need to reply to the offer/s made to them. Full-time undergraduate applicants need to provide their replies via UCAS Track by set deadlines. Direct entry applicants (PT undergraduate and Postgraduate) need to reply using the RAU applicant portal. Applicants with multiple applications will only be able to accept/hold one offer at any given time.

The University reserves the right to refuse admission to applicants who have not met the entry criteria, or who are considered on justifiable grounds to be unsuitable for a place on a particular programme or for attendance at the University in general, and may at this stage offer an alternative programme more suited to the individuals' achievements and/or needs.

All applicants are entitled to receive feedback on their application, regardless of its outcome. Requests for feedback should be addressed in the first instance to the Assistant Registrar for Admissions and Student Records. Requests for feedback will normally be responded to with a period of ten working days of receipt.

Deferred entry applications

The University accepts applications for entry more than 12 months later e.g. apply in 2016/7 admissions cycle for entry in September 2018. These applications are expected to present a good reason for requesting deferred entry. For example: the applicant intends to use the gap year to gain relevant work experience, travel overseas to improve their language skills etc.

Applicants who have met their academic offer in full and decide to defer their entry after their place has been confirmed will need to apply in writing to the admissions office explaining the reason for requesting a deferral. The University will advise its decision to the applicant in writing.

Meeting Offer Conditions

Full-time Undergraduate applicants who meet the conditions of their firm choice will be informed initially through UCAS. The University will also confirm their place in writing providing at the same time (or shortly after) information regarding their registration.

Part-time undergraduate and all Postgraduate applicants who meet their conditions must first provide the admissions office with their official results by

writing to the admissions office. The admissions office will then confirm their place in writing and provide them with the required registration information.

Undergraduate applicants who apply to the University during the Clearing process can only apply for one course. The University will communicate its decision via UCAS Track. If the applicant is successful the University will write to confirm the place and will send related information about the registration process.

Entry with Advanced Standing / Accreditation of Prior Learning

Acceptance of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and/or Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) for credit purposes is at the discretion of the University. It is the candidates' responsibility to provide all information in support of a claim for either APCL or APEL, and to pay the appropriate fee for the assessment, and award, of credit. Such credit will not normally be awarded where the prior learning or experience took place more than ten years prior to applying to the RAU (See the Teaching Quality Handbook, Part 7: Credit Accumulation and Transfer).

The University does not award marks for credit obtained through prior learning or prior experience, and restricts the total amount of credit that can be claimed to two-thirds of the award in question, excluding dissertation or personal research elements which must be completed at the RAU. Of this total amount, a maximum of 50% (one third of the degree award concerned) may be claimed through APEL. APL credit may be recognised in one of two ways:

- a. providing exemption from individual modules within a programme of study, or
- b. providing exemption from a complete stage of a programme of study thus enabling an applicant to enter directly into a higher stage (for example, exemption from year one of a three year degree, with entry directly into year 2 or exemption from the taught elements of a Masters degree enabling entry direct into the research stage).

Minimising Barriers to Admission

Entry routes to a programme of study will include the widest possible range of criteria to enable each applicant's capabilities to be fully assessed. The following factors, in no particular order of importance, will be used when deciding whether to make an offer for a particular programme:

- applicant's past academic performance
- objective assessment of any factors affecting past performance
- ability of applicant to benefit from the proposed programme(s) of study
- work and/or life experience or skill-based knowledge
- past educational history and academic potential in this context
- applicant's understanding of the programme(s) they have applied for and the appropriateness of their application
- number of places available
- academic and/or personal references provided in support of an application
- applicants prior experience of higher education

All candidates will be expected to have achieved GCSE English Language Grade C or equivalent. Undergraduate applicants are also expected to hold a minimum

of 5 GCSEs incl. Mathematics at Grade C or equivalent on commencement of their studies.

In respect of undergraduate applications, the University accepts the full range of qualifications as the basis for admission, as defined in the UCAS tariff guide for higher education application, providing the qualification is deemed appropriate for the specific programme which is being applied for. International qualifications are assessed against the UK NARIC comparability information to UK equivalent qualifications.

For postgraduate taught programmes, applicants are normally expected to have a good honours degree. Specific entry criteria for programmes can be found on the RAU website. Mature applicants with significant relevant work experience and lower academic qualifications may also be considered, following a personal interview with the course manager.

The Admissions Office will advise on the suitability of a specific qualification for any application to a particular programme of study.

Applicants with disabilities or specific learning needs

The University is committed to achieving equal opportunities for all of its students and actively encourages potential students who may be disabled or have specific learning needs to make an application to study at the Royal Agricultural University. The University aims to create a supportive environment in which improvements to services and facilities, and progress towards a fully inclusive environment, are constantly sought.

All applications to study at the University are considered on academic grounds and candidates who may need additional support are encouraged to discuss their potential requirements with the University as early as possible in the admissions process to ensure these can be fully provided for. Where appropriate the Admissions Office will arrange for the applicant, and any advisor, to meet with the Disability Officer to discuss additional support needs in advance of entry to the University.

Further advice and guidance for students with disabilities or specific learning needs is available from the [RAU website](#).

Applicants with Criminal Convictions

The University requires all applicants with criminal convictions or charges pending to declare these at the point of application. The RAU does not automatically reject such applications, and each case will be considered individually.

Where an applicant declares a criminal conviction, the Admissions Office will write requesting further details on the nature of the offence, the date of conviction and the sentence and invite any relevant comments from the applicant.

On receipt of the information, the Academic Registrar will determine whether the conviction should be set aside and the applicant considered for admission, or whether an Admissions Panel should be established.

Should the Academic Registrar determine an Admissions Panel is required to consider an individual application, the Assistant Registrar for Admissions and Student Records, the relevant Programme Manager and the Head of Department will be invited to meet to consider the application and determine whether or not an

offer of a place may be made. In making their decisions, the panel will be mindful of the University's duty of care to its students and staff. In doing so, they will take account of the nature and seriousness of the offence, the circumstances surrounding the offence, the date of the offence and whether the applicant has demonstrated good behaviour following the conviction.

Where the panel determines the applicant should not be offered a place at University, the applicant will be notified of the outcome and the reasons for the decision, in writing, by the Academic Registrar.

Fee Status Assessments

All applicants who are given an academic offer will be fee assessed by the Fee Status Assessment the Admissions Team. Applicants may be asked to complete and return a Fee Status Assessment Questionnaire if the university does not have enough information from the application to determine the accuracy of the declared fees status.

Applicants who do not provide the required information and evidence will be fee assessed as Overseas by default. More information on the process is provided on the [RAU website](#).

Review of Admissions Decisions

The University always seeks to process applications carefully and efficiently and to assess each application on its merits. However the University is mindful that an applicant may be dissatisfied, for example, about the way their application was handled or about any decision not to offer a place on a particular programme.

Applicants who believe their application may not have been handled appropriately through the admissions process should write to the Academic Registrar setting out the nature of their concerns.

Applicants who have not been offered a place on their preferred programme should initially discuss their case with the Admissions Office who will explain why their application was unsuccessful. Applicants who remain dissatisfied following such discussions may also write to the Academic Registrar setting out their concerns.

Data Protection

By signing an application for study at the RAU (either via UCAS or directly to the University), applicants give permission for the University to use their personal data for the purposes of managing the application, selection and admissions procedures of the University and to maintain student records of applicants for individual programme of study. Such data will also be used to complete statutory returns to bodies such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The University complies with the UCAS regulations and with the Data Protection Act 2001 (DPA) with regard to handling applicant data. However, applicants, and their referees should note that, under the DPA, references on UCAS applications are no longer confidential and details of references will be released by UCAS upon request by the applicant on payment of the appropriate fee. The same approach to confidentiality of references will be used for direct applications to the University, for example for postgraduate study.

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Applicants and their supporters should also note that, again in line with the requirements of the DPA, correspondence from the University about admissions decisions will be made directly with the applicant only, unless written permission has been received by the University to discuss an application with another person (e.g. parent, guardian, careers advisor or school).

Appeals and Complaints against admissions decisions

Should an applicant wish to appeal against a decision not to offer a place on a programme of study, or complain about the way their application has been handled by the University, they should write in the first instance to the Academic Registrar setting out their reasons for the appeal/complaint.

Should the University have broken the law or failed to adhere to any of its own policies and procedures, or there is evidence of bias or prejudice, the Academic Registrar will instigate a formal complaints procedure according to the University's published complaints policy. The University, however, will not normally change a decision not to offer a place on a programme of study should the applicants actual performance, for example in 'A'- level examinations, be greater than that which was predicted at the time of their application.

Staff Training and Development

Successful recruitment and retention of students is a key strategic goal of the RAU and the University is committed to the development and training of all staff, both academic and administrative, involved in the admissions process.

A programme of staff development is required for administrative staff involved in the admissions process and also for newly appointed programme managers.

Disclaimer

The University reserves the right to make variations to programme contents, entry requirements and methods of delivery, and to discontinue, merge or combine programmes, both before and after a student's admission to the University, if such action is reasonably considered necessary by the University.

In the event that, prior to the student commencing the first term of study, the University discontinues the programme, the student may either:

- a. withdraw from the University without any liability for fees, or
- b. transfer to such other programme (if any) as may be offered by the University, which the student is qualified.

If in these circumstances the student wishes to withdraw from the University and to enrol on a course elsewhere, the University shall use its reasonable endeavours to assist the student. |

Signed

Signed: _____

Vice Chancellor

Date: _____