IMPERIAL

Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy

Contents:

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Admission to Postgraduate Research Programmes at Imperial College London:

1.1.1. Consistently rated amongst the world's top universities, Imperial College London is a science-based institution with an international reputation for excellence in both teaching and research.

1.1.2. We provide both discipline-based and multidisciplinary postgraduate research programmes in science, engineering, business and medicine leading to the award of MPhil (one year programme), PhD, MD(Res) and EngD. These programmes are designed to prepare our research students for their future careers, whether in academia or industry. They are intended to benefit students of high ability, whatever their ethnic or national origin, religion, politics or gender in accordance with our Equal Opportunities Policy. In order to cope with, enjoy and succeed on these programmes, our students need to be extremely well-qualified on entry, see Section 3. This Postgraduate Research Admissions Policy is approved and monitored by the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and is considered in line with the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) UK quality code, Advice and Guidance: Admissions, recruitment and Widening Access, as published in November 2018.

1.2. Equal Opportunities Statement:

1.2.1. The University's mission is to maintain excellent standards of achievement in teaching and research in order to attract and admit students of the highest calibre, and its national and international reputation relies on the people who make up its diverse and high-achieving community. In pursuing its aim of excellence, Imperial adheres to a comprehensive policy of equal opportunities which ensures that it does not discriminate against any individual, from the first point of contact through to graduation. Selection for entry is based on consideration of academic ability, motivation for study, interest in the subject area and the potential both to benefit from

the experience and to contribute to University life. All applications are considered and evaluated on the basis of individual potential.

2.   APPLICATION ROUTES AND DEADLINES

2.1.   How to Apply:

2.1.1.   All applications for admission to our postgraduate research programmes should be submitted online via the University website: www.imperial.ac.uk. Receipt of an application will be acknowledged, following which an initial assessment will be made by Admissions. The application will then be forwarded to the relevant Department which will consider suitability for a place. Applicants may be considered for two programme/research choices in one application round and these may be considered in parallel (i.e. simultaneously).

2.2.   When to Apply:

2.2.1.   Those wishing to study for a research degree can apply at any time in the year. The majority of research students start at the beginning of October, but an applicant can be admitted at any point in the year. Applicants are advised to consult the departmental website for information regarding the research interests of the Department and to make contact with a potential supervisor before making a formal application. International applicants should note that obtaining a visa can be a lengthy process and should ensure that they allow enough time to fulfil immigration requirements before the start date of their formal registration with the University.

3.   ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

3.1.   Academic Requirements:

3.1.1.   We welcome applications from those who already possess the required qualifications or those who expect to obtain them before the research degree programme commences. Candidates will be required to have satisfied both the University general entrance requirements and the individual research programme requirements before they can join their chosen degree programme. Applicants should consult the individual departmental web pages on www.imperial.ac.uk for more specific guidance. The following paragraph outlines the University's minimum general entrance requirements for entry to our postgraduate research degree programmes:

- The University normally requires at least an upper second class honours degree **and** a Master's degree from an approved UK university / institution, or degrees approved by the University as of comparable standards awarded by recognised overseas universities / institutions in subjects deemed appropriate for the programme to which admission is sought**.**

   OR

- An MSci or MEng degree awarded with at least upper second class honours.

   OR

- A qualification at FHEQ Level 7 such as; a registrable qualification in Medicine **or** a Master's degree, awarded by an approved UK university / institution, or qualifications approved by the University as of comparable standards awarded by recognised overseas universities / institutions in subjects deemed appropriate for the programme to which admission is sought.

    OR

- A professional or other qualification obtained by written examinations and approved by the University for admission.

3.1.2   The Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions and Head of Admissions in consultation with Faculty MRA representatives, are responsible for publishing clear and definitive guidance to departments regarding the comparability of international qualifications and academic standards. This guidance may be subject to annual and/or periodic updates based on new information, best practice and established sector norms and approval will be overseen by the Admissions Sub-Committee.

3.2.   Special Cases

3.2.1.   The University may consider applications where the individual's qualifications are at the required level, but where the grades achieved do not meet the University's normal minimum entry requirements. In such circumstances, it will be at the discretion of the admitting Department to make a special case, which will only be valid for someone who demonstrates additional merits, such as, but not limited to; research activity, publications, or considerable work experience that is deemed to compensates for the degree grades being below the minimum requirement. If the Department wishes to offer a place to such an applicant, the Programme Director will make a case to the Director of Postgraduate Studies (or department equivalent) for consideration. Once a decision has been made it will be conveyed to the Programme Director (or equivalent) and a decision will be submitted for approval. Subject to these requirements being fulfilled, an offer of admission may then be made.

3.3.   Admission with Advanced Standing

3.3.1.   Research degree students may be permitted to register with advanced standing where approval is gained to:
a)   transfer their research degree registration status from another university / institution to Imperial College London
b)   recognise accreditation of prior (experiential) learning undertaken as an Imperial employee/staff member

Applicants accepted under the above arrangements will register with curtailed registration periods, but are required to follow a programme of study at the University of not less than 12 months (full-time mode of study) or 24 months (part-time mode of study). For further details see the Admission with Advanced Standing for Doctoral Students Policy [https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/apl/Admissions-with-Advanced-Standing-for-Doctoral-Students-Policy.pdf]

3.4.   English Language Qualifications:

3.4.1. All programmes in the University are taught in English. To obtain maximum benefit from studies at the University **all** students must fulfil the University minimum English general entry requirement (referred to in the published English requirements as the Standard Level) from a University approved test. Some Departments may:

A) Operate a Departmental English entry requirement above the University minimum (referred to in the published English requirements as the Higher Level). Applicants should view the departmental pages for specific information regarding the required English level.
B) Not accept the 'exemptions' to English entry requirements published by the University.
C) Not accept the University's pre-sessional English programme as a route to fulfilling the English entry requirement.

3.4.2. Students coming to the University for postgraduate study must normally have a minimum of grade B (pre 2017) or grade 6 (post 2017) in GCSE English Language or an acceptable alternative English Language qualification accepted by the University before admission can be confirmed.

3.4.3. Overseas applicants for whom English is not the first language must provide evidence of a satisfactory command of English before commencing the programme. Full details of our English language requirements can be found here:
www.imperial.ac.uk/study/english-language

3.4.4. In addition to the above, students will also be assessed by the University's Centre for Academic English after they have registered and arrived at the University. After this assessment, students may be required to attend internal classes (free of charge), and may also have a further assessment as an integral part of their studies. This is to ensure that they are able to carry out their research successfully, are properly prepared to write the thesis and are able to defend it in the viva voce examination.

3.4.6. Overseas applicants who meet the English entry requirements, but who would like to improve their confidence in English are recommended to undertake the University's pre-sessional English programme prior to commencement of their research programme at Imperial. Once enrolled at Imperial, they may wish to attend in-house language classes which are available free of charge to all non-native English speaking students.

4. SELECTION POLICIES & PROCEDURES

4.1. Timetabling of Selection:

4.1.1. Selection for research programmes occurs throughout the year and all applications are given careful consideration. Some programmes may have specific deadlines, for example when combined with a one year Master's programme. Some Departments and schemes will restrict applications to particular times, either due to funding requirements or because the students are all admitted at a specific time. Students should look at the Departmental websites or the websites relating to that particular scheme for detailed information.

4.2. Selection Criteria:

4.2.1. While the specific selection criteria vary by research programme there are however, certain general points which are equally applicable to all departments.

(i)   Interviews

4.2.2.   All applicants must be interviewed before a formal offer of admission is made. This interview must be conducted by at least 1 and normally 2 members of staff in addition to the Director of Postgraduate Studies or the Head of Department or nominee. Interviews may be conducted as a video conference or teleconference if it is not possible for the candidate to visit the Department. Further information about an individual Department's interview processes, including its policy and practice on interviewing applicants based overseas are detailed on the individual departmental websites.

(ii)   The References

4.2.3.   References can be an important additional source of information of an applicant's suitability for study, experiences to date and verification of credentials for Selectors consideration. This may assist Selectors in determining who is called for interview and in determining whether an offer is made. The assessment of previous academic performance is of particular value, as are indications of the strength of an applicant's motivation to study the chosen subject at higher degree level. A professional reference can also be of use in establishing an applicant's postgraduate career development and is a requirement for certain programmes which stipulate relevant experience as an entry requirement. Departments reserve the right to process an unsuccessful outcome on an application prior to the receipt of references, where in their academic judgment the receipt of acceptable references would have no bearing on that outcome. A referee's judgement on an applicant's English language competency for study at the University is beyond the purview of the reference and will not be considered, as this formal admission requirement must be satisfied in accordance with 3.4 of this policy. Additionally, any reference provided to the University will be considered data owned by the referee and not the applicant. As such, references are provided confidentially and will not be supplied or made available to an applicant, either directly, or under personal or subject access request.

(iii)   The Research Topic and Supervision

4.2.4.   In order to assist in the processing of applications applicants should identify the research area (and if appropriate, specific project) and the Department in which they wish to work. They should also include the name of their potential supervisor if they have already been in contact with an academic member of staff and reached an agreement about a suitable topic.

(iv)   The Supporting Statement

4.2.5.   The supporting statement should outline; the motivations for applying for the area of research, relevant academic and professional experience to date, interests, future career aspirations, as well as the ability to gain from and contribute to the University community

4.3.   Applicants with disabilities or special educational needs:

4.3.1.   The University's policy is to consider all applications solely on academic grounds. However, any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary will be put in place to

enable all students to compete on an equal basis. It is important therefore that the University is informed of any disability well in advance so that early discussion can take place to determine the reasonable adjustments that it may be possible to put in place. Every effort is made to ensure that our research programmes are accessible, but occasionally, due to the nature of the programme competency standards, it may not be possible to make the necessary adjustments to enable an individual candidate to undertake a particular research programme. We therefore encourage those with disabilities to contact us as early as possible and preferably before making an application, indicating the research area they are interested in together with the nature of the disability so that a meeting can be arranged to discuss any adjustments that may need to be made. The Disability Advisory Service (DAS), works closely with the Registry, the Student Accommodation Centre and academic departments to provide a variety of support initiatives that enable students to access their studies successfully. The Disability Advisers are available to discuss on a confidential basis any issues of concern which people with disabilities may have and can advise on necessary documentary evidence that may be required.

4.3.2.   Further information on the University's Disability Advisory Service can be found here: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/prospective-offer-students/ with further information regarding the University's Equality, diversity and inclusion governance, support, services and activities available here: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/

4.4.   Criminal Convictions:

4.4.1.   All initial decisions on an applications are based on the entry and selection requirements of the programme. Applicants who are made offers of admission to the University and who indicate their intention to accept that offer of admission will be required to declare whether they have any relevant unspent criminal convictions. While the University does not wish to penalise individuals with a criminal conviction the University does have a duty of care to its community and there may be occasions when an academically suitable applicant may be denied enrolment at the University or have an offer of admission withdrawn. Any such cases will be reviewed by a panel of staff as set out in the Policy for Admission of Ex-Offenders.

4.4.2.   The relevant Policy for the admission of applicants who disclose a criminal conviction can be found here:

https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/admissions/23-entry/Policy-on-the-Admission-Registration-and-Enrolment-of-Ex-Offenders-2023.pdf

5.   CHECKING THE STATUS OF AN APPLICATION

5.1.   The acknowledgment email sent to applicants following receipt of the application contains information regarding how to track your application via the University's online system.

6.   ACCEPTING OUR OFFER AND CONTRACT OF ADMISSION

6.1. All offers for a place on postgraduate research programme are transmitted electronically via the University's applicant portal, subject to the details outlined in 5.1. Any offer of a place made by the University is made on the basis of the applicant's:

- Acceptance of the University's rules and regulations as published and amended from time to time. Acceptance of the following statement: *The University prospectus and website describes the programmes offered by the University. Further documents describe the educational services offered by the University, the regulations governing the conduct of students and details of registration and assessment. Further details can be found at* http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/terms-and-conditions/. *The University takes all reasonable steps to provide the educational services described in the prospectus and in the documents listed, but it does not guarantee the provision of such services. Should industrial action or circumstances beyond the control of the University interfere with its ability to provide educational services, the University undertakes to use all reasonable steps to minimise any resultant disruption.*

- Payment of the fees required for the programme and any other fees for services offered by the University and accepted, such as accommodation.

- Ensuring that statements made in applying for entry are accurate, as the discovery of false statements or omissions may lead to the offer being withdrawn (or in the case of students registered, to their registration being terminated).

7. FEEDBACK TO UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

7.1. The University receives a large number of applications for every place and, as entry is very competitive, it is unable to make offers to all applicants. The University acknowledges that it is important that unsuccessful applicants are informed as early as possible so that they can consider other options. We will provide feedback to all unsuccessful postgraduate applicants at their request, but we may not always be able to provide a level of specificity requested.

7.2. When to request feedback:

7.2.1. Feedback can only be requested during the application cycle in which the application was made.

7.3. How to request feedback:

7.3.1. Applicants should request feedback by emailing the appropriate department quoting their full name, University ID number and the programme applied for. Please note the University cannot provide feedback to third parties such as parents, guardians, teachers or referees without the express written permission of the applicant.

7.4. How you will receive feedback:

7.4.1. Feedback will be issued via an email (normally within 15 working days of a request being made).

8. APPEALS AND COMPLAINTS

8.1. Please note that you may not appeal against the academic or professional judgement of those making a decision but you may appeal the decision if you believe an

administrative error has occurred in the processing of your application.   For further information see: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/complaints-from-applicants/Procedure-for-dealing-with-complaints-by-applicants-2022.pdf

9.   APPLICANT CONDUCT

9.1   The University is committed to ensuring that any and all interactions with our applicants are conducted in a professional, courteous and respectful manner in line with Imperial Expectations. The University will also expect applicants to conduct their interactions with the University and its community in line with these principles.

The University will not tolerate inappropriate, offensive or abusive behaviour during the admission process or communications deemed to be malicious and that have the potential to bring the University's reputation into disrepute. Hostile or inappropriate behaviour, including excess levels of contact will be viewed seriously and may adversely affect the consideration of an applicant for admissions, an appeal or a complaint.

The University will normally warn an applicant if their behaviour, communication or interactions are judged to be inappropriate prior to taking any further action, but may in extreme cases take action with no warning. Such actions may include rejecting an application made, or withdrawing an offer made. Conduct that constitutes a criminal offence may also be reported to relevant authorities.

10.   DATA PROTECTION

10.1   The University will process applicant data in line with the Privacy Notice for Students and Prospective Students, which can be access at: https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/admissions/Privacy-Notice-for-Students-and-Prospective-Students.pdf and in accordance with any applicable data protection laws in England and Wales, including from 25 May 2018 the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR). The University is the data controller of your personal data. The University has appointed a Data Protection Officer, who can be contacted via email at dpo@imperial.ac.uk, via telephone on 20 7594 3502 and via post at Imperial College London, Data Protection Officer, Faculty Building Level 4, London SW7 2AZ.

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Contact for queries:	Head of Admissions
Cross References:	Policy for the recruitment of ex-offenders
	Applicant Complaints Policy
	General and Academic Regulations
	Privacy Notice for Students and Prospective Students
	Special Case Policy
Notes and latest changes:	Formatting changes made on 12 April 2016
	Updates QAEC Oct 2018
	Updates QAEC Oct 2019
	General updates and formatting changes June 2024