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Unconditional Offer Scheme 2014

This scheme allows us to target the very brightest students in certain subject areas, who demonstrate exceptional academic performance in their schooling to date, taking into consideration the views of their current institution and teachers. It provides them with an unconditional offer to continue their academic career at Birmingham, if they make Birmingham their firm choice.

We believe these outstanding applicants will make a significant contribution to the academic work of the University and will gain immensely from their time with us. We hope that the unconditional offer will demonstrate to these outstanding students our confidence that they have the necessary qualities to excel through one of our degree programmes. We also hope that the unconditional offer will alleviate some of the pressure students feel at this time and will enable them to focus on achieving the excellent grades that will become part of their curriculum vitae.

Although we are very proud of the scheme we do remind applicants that not being made an offer under this scheme does not exclude them from a standard conditional offer of a place with us.

FAQs

Open all sections

Why are you making unconditional offers to some applicants?

We are looking for the best students to come to the University of Birmingham and we are using past and predicted academic performance as one method of identifying such people. Having identified them, we want to show that we will value their contribution to the University and we believe that they will gain immensely from their time with us. We hope that students will be particularly attracted to studying here because the unconditional offer demonstrates our belief that they have the necessary qualities to succeed on one of our degree programmes.

How do you choose which applicants will receive an unconditional offer?

We are choosing applicants with the best academic profile in terms of achieved and predicted academic success. We are looking for outstanding applicants whom we can be confident will make a significant contribution to the academic work of the University. The criteria for receiving an unconditional offer vary across the University, as different criteria are set for different programmes. However, each criteria will include a minimum GCSE and AS level attainment level as well as a minimum A level prediction threshold, in addition to an excellent personal statement and reference.

What if the applicant doesn't have AS results?

Ideally we would like the referee to include grades to date in the referee section of the application form if AS results have not been cashed in. However, if there is no indication of AS performance we will consider the applicant for our unconditional offer scheme on the basis of their GCSE (or equivalent) achievement and A level predictions.

What if the applicant doesn't have GCSEs?

If an applicant doesn't have GCSE qualifications or equivalent year 11 results we will not be able to consider them for the unconditional offer scheme as we must have evidence of academic previous achievement. However, such an applicant could be made a standard conditional offer if they were suitable.

What if the applicant isn't taking A levels?

We will consider other qualifications under our unconditional offer scheme providing that the applicant has suitable attained results and predicted grades and that these are included on the application form. Other qualifications we typically expect to be able to consider for an offer under the scheme are: International Baccalaureate Diploma, BTECs, Cambridge Pre-U, combinations of qualifications (BTEC plus A level/s, pre-U subjects plus A levels, etc.).

Are there any qualifications you will not consider for an offer under the scheme?

We are unable to consider applicants who are taking Access and Foundation qualifications for an offer under the scheme. This is because these qualifications are typically taken in one year and therefore predicted grades are either unavailable or based on a very small amount of study. We are also unable to make an offer under this scheme where an applicant needs to achieve English proficiency as part of their currently incomplete qualification. Such applicants can of course be considered for a standard conditional offer.

Why is this not for all courses?

Individual departments have been given the option whether or not to be involved in the scheme, and those that accepted have been included.

Why does the applicant have to choose you as firm?

This is a two-way agreement – we believe the applicant to be capable of achieving good grades and that s/he will continue to do their best to do so. This merits an unconditional offer. By making the offer unconditional, we are taking some of the pressure off the applicant during the exam period. In return, we expect the applicant to show their commitment to us and make us their firm choice.

How can you be sure that the predicted grades will be achieved?

We accept that predictions are not always correct, but our research shows us that those predicted the best grades are very likely to achieve them. Also, we are respecting the judgement of the applicants' teachers: those who currently know them best from an academic viewpoint. Whilst we cannot be certain that the applicants will achieve their predicted grades, their applications are assessed in a holistic way, taking into account all of the information supplied, including the applicant's previous achievement, the teacher's reference and the candidate's personal statement.

What if the applicant doesn't get the predicted grades?

We will still accept them – an unconditional offer is just that, unconditional. We are demonstrating our belief in the applicant and we expect that the applicant will repay that confidence by continuing to work hard and achieve good grades.

Do students still actually need to get an A level: a completely unconditional offer implies that they do not? What about if they are ill or suffer a bereavement?

An unconditional offer is unconditional and the student will be accepted irrespective of their final grades. However, these offers are being made to students who are predicted to achieve exceptional grades in their A levels and have a history of high performance. We believe that their ambition to achieve will ensure that they continue to work to attain high A level grades that will be part of their curriculum vitae throughout their working lives.

Doesn't the unconditional offer send out the message that it doesn't matter what grades the student ultimately achieves?

In many subject areas, and if the student is eligible for **A2B (/undergraduate/advice/a2b/index.aspx)**, there is still the opportunity to gain a scholarship if the student achieves excellent grades. Unconditional offers are only made to individuals who have already demonstrated their motivation. We believe that this focus and determination to achieve is very unlikely to disappear because of an unconditional offer. We hope that the offer will give students more self-belief and confidence in their own abilities.

What advantage is there to the applicants of an unconditional offer?

What we are doing will take away the uncertainty of achieving a place at University for these students and thus allow them to concentrate fully on doing the best they can in their A levels and other examinations. We also want the students to start building their relationship with the University as soon as possible so they make an excellent transition from School/College to University study.

Are applicants able to defer their unconditional offer to 2015 entry?

No, the unconditional offer is only available to those who will take up their place in 2014.

Is there anything else that an applicant would need to do to accept their unconditional offer?

Applicants simply need to accept Birmingham as their firm choice on UCAS Track before 7 May 2014.

How does this impact on A2B applicants?

A2B (/undergraduate/advice/a2b/index.aspx) candidates are also being made unconditional offers if they meet the agreed criteria for the programme. However, to obtain the A2B scholarship they will need to complete the A2B module and meet the standard prospectus offer. This will be made explicit in the letter sent to them, and they will be advised to contact the Access to Birmingham Officer if they have any further questions.

Can I be considered for the scheme if I am an overseas applicant?

Unfortunately we cannot consider applicants who require a visa to study in the UK for an offer under this scheme.

Which subjects are included in the scheme this year?

Accounting and Finance	Economics	Mathematics
African Studies & Anthropology	Education	Mechanical Engineering
American and Canadian Studies	Electronic, Electrical and Computer Engineering	Metallurgy and Materials
Biomedical Material Science (BJ95)	English	Modern Languages
Biosciences	Environmental Science	Philosophy
Business Management	European Politics, Society and Economics	Policy, Politics and Economics
Chemistry	Geography (not Single Honours programmes)	Political Science and International Studies
Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology	Geography/Geology JH	Religion & Theology
CURS (Urban and Regional Studies)	History of Art	Social Policy
Drama	History	Social Work
Earth Science (not Single Honours programmes)	Joint Honours	Sociology

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