# Durham Centre for Academic Development

# FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

# Admissions Policy - 2025-26 Academic Year

## Scope

The Foundation Programme Admissions Policy applies to the admission of students to Durham Centre for Academic Development, Foundation Programmes. Foundation Programmes are offered as full undergraduate degree programmes, with an additional year of academic preparation, known as Year 0. Successful completion of Year 0 allows students to progress to level 1 of their undergraduate degree without further application.

## Principles

The Foundation Programme supports both the University’s Strategic Plan (2017-2027) and the Undergraduate Admissions Strategy, particularly regarding the Access and Participation Plan[[1]](#footnote-1) and **Fair Access**[[2]](#footnote-2). It is designed for students from under-represented groups in higher education, who have the potential to achieve the standard for admission to Durham, but who, because of educational disadvantage or disruption, do not have the level of attainment or access to qualifications required for entry to a Durham University course. Priority is given to applicants from areas of low participation in higher education, low household income or low socioeconomic status (based on Acorn and Polar data), although other **under-represented groups** within higher education[[3]](#footnote-3) will also be considered, through the practice of **widening participation**.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Foundation Programme courses are not intended to allow applicants to side-step the normal competitive process of admissions. All applicants must be able to demonstrate eligibility, academic potential, and the reasons why they have been unable to achieve the academic progress and attainment they are capable of. This information must be clearly provided within either the personal statement and/or reference. Please note, we will accept substitute personal statements in line with the University’s admissions process <https://www.durham.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/how-to-apply/writing-a-personal-statement/>. We reserve the right to request additional evidence on academic potential and/or disadvantage. Applications which do not provide both evidence of eligibility, academic potential and how academic potential has been negatively impacted, will not be considered for a place.

## Information, Advice and Guidance

Information, advice, and guidance are provided by the Foundation Programme’s admissions team and applicants may be invited to participate in informal discussions in person, by telephone, or online, to discuss their personal circumstances and study options. Information, advice and guidance discussions may be used to inform decisions on applications.

## Selection Policy

Priority is given to applicants from areas of low participation in higher education (LPN), low household income or low socioeconomic status (Based on Acorn and Polar data). Applications from other under-represented groups within higher education and from mature students (over 21 years of age at the start of the course) are also welcomed.

Applications will be considered in the following priority order:

1. Applicants from areas of low participation in higher education (LPN based on Polar 4 data).
2. Applicants with low household income or low socioeconomic status (based on Acorn and FSM data).
3. Mature applicants (over 21 years of age at the start of the course)
4. Applications from other under-represented groups within higher education.

Young students, those under 21 years of age at the start of their course, are required to provide formal qualifications. However, we will consider individual circumstances in deciding the relative merit of qualifications. Mature applicants, those over 21 years old when the course starts, may also be required to provide formal qualifications based on the course for which they have applied, and may be required to evidence literacy and mathematical competence.

All applicants are normally expected to successfully complete any courses currently being studied which are relevant to their application. Some progression routes have essential and/or desirable entry criteria. A full list of these criteria can be found on the Foundation Programme website (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/dcad/study/foundation/>). Some progressing departments may also request admissions tests (e.g. LNAT for Law and ABRSM for Music). Applicants for any Foundation Programme course may be required to complete pre-offer assessment activities.

Students who do not have English as a first language are required to demonstrate English Language ability. Foundation Programmes courses normally require a minimum IELTS (or University approved equivalent) overall score of 6.0, with no element below 5.5. However, some Foundation courses may require a higher IELTS.

The suitability of applicants will be considered based on a combination of application, reference, personal statement, informal discussion, assessment of suitability (e.g. English test) and/or interview (as permitted by the University Undergraduate Admissions Policy[[5]](#footnote-5)).

Applicants who will not turn 18 years of age before 1 September following their registration at the University will not be offered entry. However, in some cases, the University admits students who are 17 at the start of their degree programme but who will turn 18 before 1 September following their registration at the University. Conditions that apply to such students can be viewed here: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/undergraduate/study/apply/under18entrants/>

The Foundation Programme follows the University Policy on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

## Progression Routes:

The Foundation Programme liaises with receiving departments regarding student progression. There are different levels of input from progressing departments.

Progression routes change depending on University Policy and student demand.

## Admissions Procedure:

All full-time applications are made through the UCAS system. Part-time applications are made via the University Application Form. Normally all applicants are invited to participate in an information, advice and guidance session. This may take place before or after the UCAS application. Information, advice and guidance discussions may be used to inform decisions on applications. Other supporting information may be required, and applicants are normally required may be required to complete online writing assessment. All applicants will normally be required to participate in an interview, which may be in person, or online. Assessments and interviews normally take place between December and March. Students who are invited to complete an assessment and/or interview, but do not do so, will not be offered a place.

## Glossary of Terms:

### Access

Activity to support underrepresented groups to access higher education. This may include:

* sustained and progressive programmes of targeted outreach with schools, colleges, and job centres
* broader collaborative activities with employers, third sector organisations and other education providers.
* Activities may include summer schools, peer mentoring schemes or progression agreements.

Access is the first stage in the whole student lifecycle.

Under-represented groups

Groups of students who share the following particular characteristics where data shows gaps in equality of opportunity in relation to access, success or progression:

* students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income or low socioeconomic status
* mature students
* disabled students
* care leavers.

National data indicates that there are additional groups of students with particular equality gaps and support needs that can be addressed in an access and participation plan. These are also included in our definition of underrepresented groups:

* people estranged from their families
* refugees

Widening Participation

Widening participation. Improving the representation of under-represented students in higher education at a national level.

Definitions taken from Office for Students (OfS) <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-glossary/> (accessed 14.10.2019)

1. <https://www.dur.ac.uk/about/strategy2020/other/access/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As defined by OFFA (see Glossary) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. As defined by OFFA (see Glossary) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. As defined by OFFA (see Glossary) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [www.dur.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/policy](http://www.dur.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/policy) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)