



A Common Framework for colleges and faculties and departments

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The Common Framework was developed in the light of wide consultation across the collegiate university on the report by the Working Party on Selection and Admissions entitled "Undergraduate Admissions: Policy and Procedures" published in November 2005. In this document the word "faculty" is used as shorthand for both faculties and departments, depending upon how individual subjects are organised. The Framework was [ratified in July 2006](#).

(a) Admissions procedures in all subjects and in all colleges should be informed by three high-level objectives:

To attract applications from the most academically able individuals, irrespective of socio-economic, ethnic or national origin;

To ensure applicants are selected for admission on the basis that they are well qualified and have the most potential to excel in their chosen course of study;

To ensure that the prospects of admission are not affected by the college an applicant has chosen or been assigned to through an open application.

(b) For each subject, the procedures and criteria for deciding on shortlisting and admission should be agreed by the relevant faculty in consultation with the relevant subject tutors in colleges.

(c) Procedures may vary between subjects, depending on the number of applications, whether there is pre-interview testing, whether they are part of a Joint School and other factors that the faculties in question may regard as relevant. In all subjects, procedures should be seen to be fair for candidates and should ensure that the best candidates are selected.

(d) All colleges should apply the agreed procedures and criteria for each subject consistently.

(e) In every subject, there should be a high degree of coordination by the relevant faculty and amongst the colleges. This should include robust arrangements for redistributing candidates between colleges before interview and at the final offer stage, so that the strongest candidates are able to find a place somewhere in the system.

(f) All subjects should have an agreed standard conditional offer.

(g) Contextual information in a common format (in particular, concerning school performance) should be provided to colleges by the Undergraduate Admissions Office so that this may be taken into account as systematically as possible.

(h) Final decisions on who should be interviewed and who should be offered a place should rest with individual colleges, giving due consideration to the guidance of the relevant subject faculty (see (i) (v) and (xii) below).

(i) In deciding on what procedures are appropriate for particular subjects, faculties and colleges should have regard to the following:

Shortlisting for interview

i) The potential for the more popular subjects to be more stringent in their shortlisting so as to allow

adequate time for interviewing those who have been shortlisted.

ii) Where pre-interview testing has not yet been introduced, the potential for pre-interview testing to assist with shortlisting.

iii) The need to plan such testing carefully in accordance with the principles set out in paragraph 33 of the Working Party's report, especially to ensure that as far as possible they test for aptitude and do not dissuade good candidates from applying.

iv) The benefits to be had from central banding of candidates by the relevant faculty, based on information in application forms, pre-interview test results (where these exist), written work where requested and the assessment of ability and aptitude. For very large subjects, such banding for logistical reasons may need to be done for groups of colleges.

v) Colleges to be guided but not bound by such banding; but where a college wishes to interview a candidate below the shortlisting threshold, it should explain this to the relevant faculty.

vi) Faculties should provide guidance to colleges on how they should consider submitted written work (both at shortlisting and at interview stage).

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Interviews

vii) The desirability of each shortlisted candidate having a minimum of two interviews, and where appropriate in two separate colleges, and for these interviews, where possible, to be arranged in advance.

viii) Candidates applying to Joint Schools should be interviewed by at least one tutor in each of the subjects that make up the Joint School. This may be in a single panel, or by subject tutors separately, or in some other combination.

ix) The need for agreed interview criteria and an agreed interview mark scale, with guidelines to be provided by the Undergraduate Admissions Office.

x) Before considering moving to college-blind interviewing¹, in view of its administrative implications for colleges, faculties should consult with the Undergraduate Admissions Office.

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Final offers

xi) The benefits to be had from central banding by the relevant faculty at the final offer stage, based on the information already used for shortlisting and the additional information available as a result of interviews and any testing during the interview process.

xii) Colleges to be guided but not bound by such banding. However, where a college wishes to offer a place to a candidate below the selection threshold, this should be done only on the basis of additional qualitative information that may not have been picked up in the banding exercise. It should not result from the application of criteria different from those that have been agreed by the faculty. Where a college wishes to offer a place to a candidate below the selection threshold it should explain this to the relevant faculty by reference to the selection criteria.

xiii) Where a college wishes to take a candidate who falls below the agreed standard conditional offer, the college should inform the relevant faculty and explain the individual's case with reference to the selection criteria.

xiv) Whilst successful candidates will normally be made an offer at a college where they have been interviewed, it may be necessary to redistribute some candidates to colleges where they have not been interviewed. In such cases, the candidates should be given the opportunity to visit the college offering the place prior to their having to make a decision.

j) Timely sharing of all relevant information about candidates in each subject is critical. To achieve this, a common, effective and properly resourced IT system should be made available to all faculties and colleges.

k) The collegiate university should monitor the applications from and offers made to UK students according to socio-economic background, ethnicity, gender, age, and school type. Where these do not reflect the qualification profile of particular groups, colleges and faculties should consider how the position could be addressed.

l) Colleges and faculties should maintain well-targeted programmes to improve access for under-

represented groups, with these programmes to be coordinated centrally.

(m) In considering overseas candidates, colleges and faculties should aim to apply the same criteria and as far as possible the same procedures as in the case of UK applicants.

(n) In all subjects, faculties should give serious consideration to the possibility of open offer² schemes. Colleges would be asked to opt in to these schemes.

To show that they are complying with this Common Framework, faculties will be required to report annually to the Admissions Executive (reporting to the Education Policy and Standards Committee (EPSC)) on the procedures in place for their subjects. Faculties will be expected to provide data on how their procedures are working in practice: one important indicator might be the extent of redistribution of candidates between colleges. It will be for EPSC to "sign off" on each subject or Joint School; and where EPSC feels unable to do so, it will indicate in which areas action is needed. EPSC will expect divisions to identify clearly the person or persons in their faculties who are responsible for admissions for their subjects. Faculties will also be required to agree any significant changes in procedures which they wish to introduce with the Admissions Executive.

Colleges already have to provide an annual "certificate of assurance" that they are operating their admissions systems fairly and efficiently. In future, colleges will be expected to state in this annual "certificate of assurance" that they are in compliance with the Common Framework as it affects them.

¹ Blind interviews are interviews conducted without tutors knowing their interviewees' college preference.

² Open offers are offers of a place without a college specification. Subject based open offer schemes reduce and may obviate the need for colleges to "over-offer" in particular subjects against the possibility of candidates failing to meet their offer conditions.