



University Admissions Policy: Fraudulent applications

June 2019

1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1. City, University of London (the University) is not prepared to admit applicants on the strength of information believed to be either fraudulent or plagiarised, and reserves the right to reject or cancel an application under these circumstances.
- 1.2. The University also reserves the right to:
 - request additional information to verify an application;
 - put the application process on hold whilst investigating the alleged/suspected fraudulent application and/or plagiarism;
 - reject an application if it is proven, or if the University has reasonable belief, that the information provided within the application is false, or if the applicant refuses to provide the requested information;
 - terminate a student's registration if he/she is found, after registration, to have submitted a fraudulent application to the University.
- 1.3. It is a condition of acceptance of a place at the University that the information provided by the applicant for the purposes of assessment must be accurate. This is outlined in the [University's terms and conditions](#).
- 1.4. This information will be retained and used in accordance with the law and may be shared with UCAS or other bodies for the purposes of verifying the identity, qualifications or references of an applicant.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1. As per the Fraud Act 2006, there are three forms of fraud:
 - Fraud by false representation
 - Fraud by the failure to disclose information, and
 - Fraud by the abuse of position.
- 2.2. An application is deemed as being fraudulent when a person (or persons) conspire to deceive another person or group of persons into believing that a claim made by that person or group is genuine, when in fact it is false. For example, this could comprise false information given on an application regarding qualifications or experience, or the provision of a fake certificate or reference to support an application, false information to support a fee status, or the deliberate omission of relevant information, e.g. the non-inclusion of information regarding previous qualifications, or some other act of deception.
- 2.3. For a fraud to occur there only needs to be an intention to gain or cause a loss to someone else not an actual gain or loss.
- 2.4. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged inclusion of material derived from the published or unpublished work of another person (such as from the internet or from another applicant), whether this is intentional or unintentional.
- 2.5. Examples of fraud within the application process may include (but are not limited to) the personal statement, reference, qualifications and work experience.
- 2.6. This is not restrictive and may cover any act of deception intended to result in personal or financial gain associated with being admitted to the University.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy statement applies to the admission of applicants to all undergraduate and postgraduate (taught and research) courses at the University.

- 3.2. The policy includes all information pertaining to the applicant, even if it is received through alternative sources; such as agents or pathway providers. Any applicant information received through these routes will be the responsibility of the applicant themselves.
- 3.3. These procedures could also be applied to the case of a current student if the University has grounds to believe that he/she obtained their place based on fraudulent information.
- 3.4. This policy does not cover suspected academic misconduct by registered students. This is dealt with under the *Academic Misconduct Policy and Guidance and Assessment Regulations*.

4. UNDERGRADUATE PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

4.1. UCAS similarity detection for personal statement

- 4.1.1. UCAS check all personal statements using a similarity detection system, Copycatch. Each incoming personal statement is compared against a library of personal statements already in the UCAS system and a library of sample statements collected from a variety of websites. Any statements showing significant levels of similarity are reviewed by members of the UCAS Similarity Detection Service.
- 4.1.2. Institutions are then notified on a daily basis of any cases where there are reasonable grounds to suspect plagiarism. At the same time, an applicant is also notified that the personal statement has been identified as potentially plagiarised.
- 4.1.3. The decision about what action, if any, to take regarding notified cases rests with the individual institutions.
- 4.1.4. It is the responsibility of a senior member of the University Admissions Office to note this information on an applicant's record on the student record system and contact the applicant in relation to the results.
- 4.1.5. The applicant will typically have 14 days to respond.
- 4.1.6. Should the applicant provide a response, this explanation and accompanying evidence will then be considered by the Admissions Office and the Admissions Tutor, alongside all other elements of the application. It is ultimately the Admissions Tutor's responsibility to determine whether there is a case to be answered.
- 4.1.7. If the information provided by the applicant is sufficient to demonstrate there has been no plagiarism, then this will be communicated to the applicant and their application will be considered in the normal way.
- 4.1.8. If the Admissions Tutor adjudges that an offer cannot be made, the applicant will receive a rejection of their application and will be provided with the details of the [Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).
- 4.1.9. If the applicant does not respond during this timeframe then their application will be rejected.
- 4.1.10. The University reserves the right to reject any applicant in line with the agreed processes outlined in the Admissions Policy.

4.2. Anti-fraud checking on qualifications from UK educated applicants

- 4.2.1. It is the responsibility of the Admissions Office to ensure that all undergraduate applicants who are admitted to the University have verified qualifications.
- 4.2.2. Most qualifications are verified by UCAS. In this instance, where a qualification has been verified by UCAS, no further checking is required.
- 4.2.3. Where applicants have disclosed qualifications not verifiable by UCAS, the relevant member of the Admissions Office will attempt to validate this information using the verification tools available to them.

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- 4.2.4. For UK educated applicants, the main source for this information is the Learner Records Service (LRS) provided by the government.
 - 4.2.5. Where an applicant is suspected to have provided information on their application which does not match the information on the verification tool, the relevant Admissions Officer will write to the applicant to query the discrepancy.
 - 4.2.6. It is the responsibility of the Admissions Officer to set an appropriate period of time for the applicant to respond to this query, this is typically 14 days.
 - 4.2.7. If the applicant does not respond during this timeframe then their application will be rejected.
 - 4.2.8. Should the applicant provide a response, this explanation and accompanying evidence will then be considered by the Admissions Office and the Admissions Tutor, alongside all other elements of the application. It is ultimately the Admissions Tutor's responsibility to determine whether there is a case to be answered.
 - 4.2.9. If the information provided by the applicant is sufficient demonstration to be adjudged as evidence, then this will be communicated to the applicant and he/she will receive confirmation of the offer.
 - 4.2.10. If the Admissions Tutor adjudges that an offer cannot be made, the applicant will receive a rejection on their application and will be provided with the details of the [Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).
 - 4.2.11. The University reserves the right to reject any applicant in line with the agreed processes outlined in the Admissions Policy.
- 4.3. **Anti-fraud checking on qualifications from non UK educated applicants**
- 4.3.1. Where an applicant's qualification information is not verifiable by UCAS, the applicant will be required to provide formal evidence of their qualifications. This formal evidence will typically be requested by the relevant Admissions Officer.
 - 4.3.2. All information provided to accompany an application is processed on file in line with the [University's Privacy Notice](#).
 - 4.3.3. Where an Admissions Officer has concerns on the legitimacy of the information provided, they are within their rights to request further information from the applicant.
 - 4.3.4. Where an applicant is suspected to have provided information on their application which does not match the information on the verification tools used for our assessments, the relevant Admissions Officer will write to the applicant to query the discrepancy.
 - 4.3.5. It is the responsibility of the Admissions Officer to set an appropriate period of time for the applicant to respond to this query, the University's standard term is 14 days.
 - 4.3.6. If the applicant does not respond during this timeframe then their application will be rejected.
 - 4.3.7. Should the applicant provide a response, this explanation and accompanying evidence will then be considered by the Admissions Office and the Admissions Tutor, alongside all other elements of the application. It is ultimately the Admissions Tutor's responsibility to determine whether there is a case to be answered.
 - 4.3.8. If the information provided by the applicant is sufficient to address the suspicions raised, then this will be communicated to the applicant and the application will be considered in the normal way.
 - 4.3.9. If the Admissions Tutor adjudges that an offer cannot be made, the applicant will receive a rejection on their application and will be provided with the details of the [Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).
 - 4.3.10. The University reserves the right to reject any applicant in line with the agreed processes outlined in the Admissions Policy.

4.4. Anti-fraud checking on accompanying information

- 4.4.1. The University considers a number of other information sources when making a decision on an application. This would include references, passport information, immigration history and other identification documents.
- 4.4.2. Where an applicant is suspected of providing information which may not be legitimate, the University reserves the right to request further explanation from the applicant.
- 4.4.3. Where an applicant is suspected of providing information on their application which does not match the information on the verification tools used for our assessments, the relevant Admissions Officer will write to the applicant to query the discrepancy.
- 4.4.4. It is the responsibility of the Admissions Officer to set an appropriate period of time for the applicant to respond to this query, the University's standard term is 14 days.
- 4.4.5. If the applicant does not respond during this timeframe then their application will be rejected.
- 4.4.6. Should the applicant provide a response, this explanation and accompanying evidence will then be considered by the Admissions Office and the Admissions Tutor, alongside all other elements of the application. It is ultimately the Admissions Tutor's responsibility to determine whether there is a case to be answered.
- 4.4.7. If the information provided by the applicant is sufficient to address the suspicions raised, then this will be communicated to the applicant and the application will be considered in the normal way.
- 4.4.8. If the Admissions Tutor adjudges that an offer cannot be made, the applicant will receive a rejection on their application and will be provided with the details of the [Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).
- 4.4.9. The University reserves the right to reject any applicant in line with the agreed processes outlined in the Admissions Policy.
- 4.4.10. The University reserves the right, at any time, to process a rejection on an application in line with the Admissions Policy.
- 4.4.11. Should the University suspect that fraudulent activity has taken place outside of UCAS, it reserves the right to report this information to independent authorities.
 - 4.4.11.1. In this instance, this would be reported internally and externally to *Action Fraud*.

5. POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES AND PROCESSES

- 5.1. All cases of suspected fraud will be managed between the relevant postgraduate taught admissions leads, typically the Head of Academic Services or Admissions Manager, and the University's Head of Admissions.
- 5.2. The process of investigation will vary depending on the nature of the suspected fraud, however it may include:
 - Asking the applicant for further information to verify their application;
 - Requesting certified copies of supporting documents if not already received
 - Verifying language certificates with the awarding body (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL);
 - Seeking confirmation from a third party (e.g. contacting an awarding institution to confirm the applicant's grades or attendance);
 - Contacting referees to confirm information provided or check authenticity.
 - Using online degree verification tools.
- 5.3. Following the investigation by the School, if parts of the application cannot be verified the applicant will be contacted in writing and given the opportunity to provide further supporting information.
- 5.4. The applicant will be given 14 days to respond to this request.

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- 5.5. If no response is received by the end of this period the application will be automatically rejected and the applicant will be informed in writing.
- 5.6. If a response is received within 14 days, it is for the Admissions Officer to validate the information with appropriate colleagues and reach an appropriate decision on whether the applicant can demonstrate the evidence required to be made an offer.
- 5.7. The Admissions Officer and fellow admissions colleagues reserve the right to discuss this information with areas of expertise in this area, both internally and externally, in line with the [Terms and Conditions for Study at City, University of London](#)
- 5.8. If there is evidence to suggest the application contains fraudulent information and the applicant has not yet been made an offer, the applicant will be rejected and will be provided with the details of the [Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).
- 5.9. If at the time that the fraud is detected an applicant has already received an offer of a place for postgraduate study, the offer will be withdrawn and the application rejected. In both cases the applicant will be informed in writing.
- 5.9.1. If a current postgraduate student is suspected of providing fraudulent information to gain entry, the University Admissions Office and the School will agree an appropriate course of action. Students who have already registered at the University are subject to the [Terms and Conditions for Study at City, University of London](#), and may have their registration terminated under section 5.2, or may be subject to the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#).
- 5.10. The University Admissions Office will be informed of all cases of suspected fraud.

6. CURRENT STUDENTS

- 6.1.1. If a current student is suspected of providing fraudulent information to gain entry, the University Admissions Office and the School will agree an appropriate course of action. Students who have already registered at the University are subject to the [Terms and Conditions for Study at City, University of London](#), and may have their registration terminated under section 5.2, or may be subject to the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#).
- 6.1.2. The student may also be subject to the Student Disciplinary Regulations *and, in certain programmes which are regulated by PSRBs, the fitness to practise policy*.

7. REPORTING FRAUD

- 7.1. The suspected fraud will be reported to the Director of Internal Audit for reporting to Action Fraud and notifying the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee where appropriate.
- 7.2. The Director of Internal Audit will be consulted to any investigations commencing.
- 7.3. Students committing fraud aren't just breaching university rules and regulations and therefore being subject to those sanctions, they are breaking UK law and therefore could find themselves subject to UK law and the penalties that could be applied there.

8. MONIES

- 8.1 Any money paid to the University during the application (most typically as part of a deposit) will not be refunded, if the University can demonstrate fraud has taken place.
- 8.2 Any financial costs incurred by the applicant to support their studies (including accommodation and travel costs) will not be refunded, if the University can demonstrate fraud has taken place.
- 8.3 Where a current student has had their registration terminated, that student should see the [Student Disciplinary Regulations](#).

9. TRAINING

- 9.1. The University is responsible for ensuring that all admissions staff have access to the relevant information to support the implementation of this policy.
- 9.2. The University is responsible for ensuring that all admissions staff are supported in the implementation of the procedures attached to this policy.

10. RIGHT TO APPEAL

- 10.1. Any applicant whose application is rejected within the scope of this policy will have the right to appeal against the decision using the [University's Admissions Complaints and Appeals Procedure](#).
- 10.2. Any registered student who has been excluded on the grounds that he/she has gained their place fraudulently will have their case managed through the [Student Disciplinary Regulations and Policy](#), which includes a right to appeal against the University's decision.

Maintained by: Head of Admissions

Owned By: Admission Office (Student and Academic Services)

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