



ADMISSIONS POLICY

Introduction

Mattersey Hall is a Christian college whose main aim is to help to train, equip and form the next generation of Christian Leaders. In line with the historic aim of the College, this includes providing appropriate training for ministry (understood in the widest sense of that term) and the development of critical skills that enable students to engage with, analyse and evaluate theory and praxis. We do this through a range of programmes, significant among which are the academic programmes – BA, GradDip, MA, DMin, MPhil and PhD – all of which are validated by the University of Chester.

Our admissions criteria are in line with our declared mission statement. We expect, normally, to admit students who can demonstrate both their suitability to train for, or to further their studies in, Christian ministry, and the ability to complete the academic programme.¹ In line with our access and participation priorities,² we are also committed to admitting students underrepresented groups.

Although Mattersey Hall seeks to offer an integrated programme, where formation and academic study go hand in hand, in the case of on-campus undergraduate students, many of the training and formation elements form part of Mattersey Hall's internal College Diploma, which all on-campus students sign up to, and which runs parallel to the degree programme.

For Undergraduate students who are already on the programme, but who are unable to continue with the College Diploma, there is opportunity either to interrupt studies and return to the full programme at a later stage (in consultation with the College's Senior Leadership) or to complete the degree, though without the training and formation elements, normally via Distance Learning.

¹ We will also consider candidates from non-Church backgrounds, where they have legitimate reasons for wanting to study within the particular ethos of Mattersey Hall, and are aware of the implications of studying within that ethos.

² See our Access and Participation Statement on the College website.

Admissions Criteria

In line with the two key admissions criteria – normally, a demonstration of suitability to train for, or further their studies in, Christian leadership and ministry, and the ability to complete the academic programme (though see note 1 below) – we require the following for all students:

- Sympathy with the ethos and priorities of Mathersey Hall.
- Two satisfactory references, including at least one pastoral reference.³

For students who wish to join the BA programme, the following would also apply:

- Entrance requirements for admission to the BA (Hons) programme in Year 1 are, normally, 2 A-levels or equivalent.
- Mature applicants (21+), who do not have formal qualifications, may be admitted to the programme if the Admissions Department and Board of Studies deem them able to complete the programme successfully. As part of this assessment applicants will normally be required to submit an essay on a Biblical subject.
- For on-campus students, and for UK based distance-learning students, normally a satisfactory interview.
- Prospective students are also required to demonstrate an appropriate proficiency in the English language (see *English Language Requirements*, below).
- Prior to enrolment prospective students will also be required to undergo a DBS check to ensure prospective students' suitability for working with children and other vulnerable groups.

For students who wish to join the MA programme, the following are also required:

- One of the following:
 - A recognised first degree in Theology or a cognate subject (normally second class honours or above); or
 - A first degree in a non-theological area and a successfully completed Graduate Diploma; or
 - At least two years of senior leadership experience in a Church or mission context.
- A satisfactory interview
- Demonstration of appropriate proficiency in the English language (see *English Language Requirements*, below).

Information regarding Postgraduate Research Degrees (DMin, MPhil, PhD) are available separately. Students on these programmes go through a process of admission with Mathersey Hall, but need, too, to be approved by the University of Chester, before being admitted to the programme.

³ The pastoral reference will normally be from a Church leader. Where a candidate is not from a Church background another appropriate character reference will be acceptable.

Applications for Accredited Prior Certificated Learning and Accredited Prior Experiential Learning will be considered. These will need to be submitted to the University of Chester for approval.

Information

Information relating to all aspects of College life, including details of programmes, fees, payment deadlines, are publicly available on the College website. We recognise that choosing a Higher Education programme and institution is an important decision, and it is our aim to provide clear, full and accurate information both before and during the application and admissions process, to enable candidates to make an informed choice about whether Mattersey Hall is the right place for them based on reliable evidence.

We will do our best to ensure the accuracy of all published information. Sometimes, though, changes in staffing and in academic programmes, including modules offered, cannot be avoided. Where that is the case, we will inform prospective students as quickly as we can, to enable them, if required, to review their decisions.

The Admissions Process

Applications are made, in the first instance, to the Admissions Team, which is headed up by the Vice Principal. Applications, together with references, are then submitted for approval to the Board of Studies, which decides, on the basis of the published criteria (which includes the content of references), whether or not to proceed with the application, and invite the applicant for interview.

Applicants will be given official notification of the outcome of their application in writing. This will include details of whether or not an applicant has been invited for interview. Unsuccessful applicants will receive a courteous and respectful explanation of the decision, explained in terms of the entry requirements, references and any other relevant criteria. The letter will also contain grounds on which an appeal against the decision may be considered.

The interview serves two important functions, and students being called for interview will be made aware of these things in advance. First, the interview is *informational* – it gives students information, and answers questions about Mattersey Hall and enables students to decide whether or not Mattersey Hall is the place for them. The interview will also usually include a tour of the College campus. Second, the interview is *evaluative*. Students who are called for interview will already have had their qualifications and references accepted; the purpose of the interview is to confirm the applicants' suitability, and whether he or she is serious about study and is committed to completing the programme. We will also check certificates, passport details, eligibility for student finance, etc. An interview may also give a borderline applicant the opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the programme.

Students are usually given an indication of the outcome of the interview before leaving and this will be followed by a letter, usually within two weeks, confirming that outcome, and including any conditions that the candidate is required to satisfy.

Where an applicant has not been successful, the reasons for arriving at that decision will be explained courteously. Information will also be given about the grounds, and procedure, for making an appeal against the decision (see below).

Successful applicants will receive an Offer Letter, and will be given further information about the College. This will include, in a durable medium, details that have already been given, including information about applicable fees, and about the programme of study. It will also include information about assessment, timetables, key dates for the year – and particularly details of events at the start of the year – including when the student needs to arrive at the College, and the timetable for the induction process (which takes place during the first week of Semester One). Much of this information is publicly available on the College website. This information, together with the letter confirming acceptance, will constitute our contractual commitment to the candidate. Once a place has been offered, Mattersey Hall is obliged to keep that place open, subject to the candidate meeting any conditions set out in the Offer Letter. And we are committed, too, insofar as it is reasonably possible, and excluding circumstances outside our control and our knowledge at the time, to deliver the programme as advertised in the Offer Letter and accompanying information.

Where relevant, our Disability Officer will also be in touch, with details of DSA.⁴

Successful candidates will also be sent an Acceptance Letter, which they will be asked to sign and return if they wish to accept the offer on the basis of the information supplied. This should be returned with the appropriate acceptance fee. From the date of signing and returning the Acceptance Letter, candidates have a fourteen day ‘cooling off’ period, during which they may cancel the agreement, and receive a full refund of the acceptance fee. After that fourteen-day period, the acceptance fee is non-refundable.

Once a candidate has been accepted, and has returned the Acceptance Letter and acceptance fee, the Admissions Team will maintain regular contact. This is particularly important for those who may be accepted a long time before beginning the programme of study. Where there are unavoidable changes to the information that was given to a candidate at the time of acceptance, those changes will be made clear to the candidate, and his or her express consent to continue the process obtained.

The obligation to pay tuition fees for the first year begins from the time of his or her enrolment on the programme. Mattersey Hall is committed to offering the programmes and modules as advertised. Where changes occur prior to enrolment, we will seek to minimise their impact on prospective students’ learning opportunities and experience, and where those changes are significant we will inform prospective students and set out a range of options.

⁴ For further details of the role of the Disability Officer, and of provision for students with disabilities, see our Disability Policy on the Mattersey Hall website.

Students will be made fully aware of any additional information and changes to information already given before enrolment.

Fees charged will be those for the relevant academic year, as posted on the College website. Our current policy is that tuition fees will not increase during the student's period of (continuous) study, though accommodation and other non-academic fees will be subject to small increases in line with inflation.

Appeals following an unsuccessful admissions outcome

Where an application has not been successful, we aim to handle any appeal based on the grounds for the decision, or on the way the application was processed, as efficiently as possible. All appeals will be treated seriously and in an understanding way; and there will be no repercussions or discrimination as a result of making an appeal.

A letter explaining the reasons for rejecting an application will be sent, normally within two weeks of the application being received, or in cases where the applicant has been invited for interview, within two weeks of the interview. The unsuccessful applicant may request further explanation, and this, again, will normally be provided within two weeks of the request being received by Mattersey Hall. Any appeal must be made in writing, by the applicant him- or herself, within three weeks of receiving the original decision. After that, an appeal may not be considered.

Applicants may appeal a decision where new information, not included in the original application, is available. Additional letters of support and further references may also be provided. An appeal might also be made in cases where evidence can be given that the application was not processed correctly. Appeals against decisions based on professional judgement of an applicant's ability to complete the academic programme or the College Diploma will be considered, only in the light of additional information.

We will normally respond to an appeal, in writing, within three weeks. If elements of the appeal require further investigation, that will be explained, and a date given by which a full response to the appeal might be expected.

English Language Requirements

It is a requirement that all students admitted on to programmes for which we seek designation for student finance, have sufficient competence in the English language to engage with, and benefit from, their chosen programme of study.

The guidelines have set the minimum language requirements at CEFR level B2 (which has been assessed to be equivalent to IELTS 5.5–6.5).

Students for whom English is not their first language

Our current admissions policy (in line with that of the University of Chester) requires that students for whom English is not their first language demonstrate proficiency equivalent to IELTS 6.0 (UG) and IELTS 6.5 (PG).

Students for whom English is their first language

In our view, and pending further guidance, we do not consider it reasonable or practical to require all applicants for whom English is their first language to undergo an English language test designed to assess the proficiency of those for whom English is not their first language (e.g. IELTS, CEFR). We do recognise, though, that some of those who do speak English as a first language may not have the required proficiency.

According to one guide, those proficient at CEFR level B2 (Vantage) ‘can use English effectively, with some fluency, in a range of contexts’.⁵ This is further elaborated; they

- Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation.
- Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party.
- Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.⁶

This policy amendment formalises procedures that allow us to assess whether applicants demonstrate appropriate proficiency. Where, in our view, they are not appropriately proficient, we will require applicants to undergo further English language study.

Currently, at UG level, we admit two groups of students: those with appropriate Level 3 qualifications (A-levels, etc.), and mature students (over 21) who do not require formal academic qualifications. In all cases students are formally interviewed by admissions staff.

It seems reasonable to assume that those who have Level 3 qualifications, which have been taught and assessed in English, satisfy the English language requirements. For others, the level of English language proficiency can be assessed through:

- The application form, which requires a written personal statement, outlining aspects of the applicant’s life journey up to the point of application.
- A formal interview, which includes discussion of the course and aspects of its content.
- An assignment on a subject related to the programme of study, which is submitted to and marked by College faculty.

In our view, those three things allow us to make a formal assessment of whether or not an applicant satisfies the key criteria for CEFR level B2, and so has the required English language proficiency to be admitted to the programme.

⁵ *Introductory Guide to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English Language Teachers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 2.

⁶ *Introductory Guide*, p. 5.

There are, currently, two entry routes to our PG programmes: i) with a recognised bachelor's degree; ii) with no formal academic background, but with at least two years of leadership experience in a Church or Christian institution.

As with UG applicants, it seems reasonable to assume that those who have Level 3 and above qualifications, and in particular a bachelor's degree, which have been taught and assessed in English, satisfy the English language requirements. For those with no formal academic background, as with UG applicants, we ask for a personal statement and also an essay related to the chosen programme of study. We also carry out formal interviews of all PG applicants.

RR March 2018