

Unconditional Offer Policy Statement

Title: The University of Southampton policy statement on unconditional offer making

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1.0 In response to the current context of increased competition between higher education providers to attract, recruit and retain well-qualified students, we are aware that some higher education institutions (HEIs) are making 'conditional unconditional'¹ offers and using other incentivisation tactics to learners with pending Level 3 qualifications. We share the concerns that have recently been voiced² about the significant increases in these strategies and we do not believe in using unconditional offers as a marketing tool.

Taking this in to account, we believe in the following principles:

- We believe that an applicant's firm choice should be the University and the course which is the best fit for them and not chosen solely based on receiving an unconditional offer or other form of incentivised offer. The existing UCAS process through the insurance choice provides reassurance to applicants who do not meet the conditions of their firm choice institution.
- We acknowledge the emerging evidence³ that has shown that applicants who accept unconditional offers as their first (firm) university choice are more likely to miss their predicted grades, than those who accepted conditional offers as their firm choice.
- We note that many top employers who attract Southampton graduates look at Level 3 qualifications in addition to degree results. This could have serious consequences post-graduation for applicants who accepted a 'conditional unconditional' offer and who failed to achieve the results that reflect their actual capability.
- We are committed to widening participation and ensuring that all students with the potential to succeed, regardless of their background, are encouraged to apply to study with us.

2.0 The work of the University in recruiting and admitting new students supports the goals and ambitions set out in its [Mission Statement and Strategy](#). As outlined in the [University's Admissions](#)

¹ An offer made by a provider which is originally stated as being conditional, then is converted to an unconditional offer once the applicant selects that offer as their firm (first) choice.

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-44954154>

³ <https://www.ucas.com/file/196151/>

[Policy](#), we are committed to providing an admissions process that ensures fairness, transparency and equal opportunities within the legal framework of the United Kingdom. Based on these above principles, the following will apply when making unconditional offers:

- 2.1 Unconditional offers will only be made to learners who have already met the academic conditions for their programme of study. Unconditional offers will not be made to learners with pending Level 3 (or Level 2 if relevant) qualifications where they are a requirement for the programme of study.
 - 2.2 In very exceptional cases a learner may be given an unconditional offer where relevant work or voluntary experience has been demonstrated in lieu of Level 3 qualifications (e.g. mature applicants who have been in employment). In these cases, the learner would additionally be required to demonstrate recent study, typically within the preceding two years.
 - 2.3 Learners from [underrepresented groups in higher education](#) will be supported through the University's [Contextual Admissions Policy](#). The additional information gained through contextual data supports admissions teams to recognise an applicant's achievements and identify their potential to succeed in the context of their background and experience.
 - 2.4 Learners with extenuating circumstances that have affected their Level 3 (or other level) qualifications, which are a requirement for entry to their programme of study will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis at application stage and/or at confirmation of results. Applicants will be expected to provide evidence to the admissions teams to allow the appropriate decision and support to be determined.
- 3.0 Further information regarding the University's admissions policies, entry requirements and selection criteria can be found in the [University of Southampton Admissions Policy](#).
