

What Durham University Looks for in Applicants

A guide to the factors considered when granting admission (undergraduate focus, 2026/27 cycle)

The short version: Durham reviews your **whole application**, not just your grades. Selectors look for **merit, potential and motivation**: strong academics, genuine subject passion shown in your personal statement, a supportive reference, and (for international students) proof of English proficiency.

1. A Holistic Review of Your Whole Application

Each application is read by trained admissions selectors, guided by Durham's Admissions Policy, which rests on fairness and transparency. Durham says it selects applicants with merit, potential and motivation to make the most of opportunities at the university. Selectors consider the full application: qualifications, predicted or achieved grades, personal statement and reference.

2. Academic Achievement and Course-Specific Requirements

Grades are the foundation of any application, but requirements differ by course.

- **Achieved and predicted grades** must align with the entry requirements for your chosen course.
- **Subject prerequisites** apply on some courses. For example, Durham Mathematics asks A-level applicants for Further Maths, and some courses require specific prior subjects. Check the Requirements section of your course page.
- **Competitive demand:** Many courses receive more strong applicants than places, so meeting the minimum grades does not guarantee an offer.
- **Additional assessments** may apply to certain courses. Durham states it only interviews for Primary Education.

3. The Personal Statement

All personal statements are read at Durham. They carry particular weight for the most selective courses, where many applicants have similar academic profiles. From 2026 entry, the UCAS statement follows three structured questions, and Durham looks for the answers across the statement as a whole.

Question	What selectors want to see
1. Why this course or subject?	Real interest backed by evidence: books or articles that stood out, further research you did, and what you learned.
2. How have your studies prepared you?	Link qualifications, competitions, reading, research and transferable skills directly to the course.
3. What else have you done?	The person behind the application: life experiences, responsibilities, activities and achievements.

- Durham wants a **personal, genuine** statement, not a generic or templated one.
- UCAS checks every statement with similarity-detection software. Flagged applicants are contacted by Durham to explain.

- If your Durham course differs a lot from your other choices, you can submit a **substitute personal statement**, which selectors then read instead of the UCAS version.

4. The Reference

Durham uses the reference to understand your academic potential, and to view your achievements within your **personal and school context**. Strong, specific references that describe your abilities and circumstances help selectors judge your application fairly.

5. Personal and Educational Context

Selectors consider the circumstances in which you studied. Durham's selection approach is built on fairness, and information about your school or personal situation can inform how your results and potential are read. Applicants affected by sensitive circumstances can supply supporting evidence to the admissions team.

6. Extra Requirements for International Students

- **English language proficiency:** required if English is not your first language. Requirements vary by course, and Class XII English is generally not accepted as proof for Indian applicants. Many undergraduate courses ask for around IELTS 6.5 overall, with higher scores for courses such as Law. Confirm the exact score on your course page.
- **Country-specific qualifications:** Durham publishes academic equivalency guidance for India and other regions. Check it against your Class XII board results.
- **Pathway option:** If you do not meet direct-entry requirements, the Durham University International Study Centre offers an International Foundation Year and Pre-Masters programmes leading into Durham degrees.
- **Scholarships:** Durham has offered international scholarships for students from countries including India. Check current eligibility and amounts.

7. Postgraduate Applicants

For taught Masters, Durham looks at your undergraduate degree grades from a recognised university (for Indian applicants, a first-class equivalent is typically the benchmark), your subject background, English proficiency and supporting documents such as transcripts, references and a personal statement or essay. Requirements vary by programme.

8. Quick Application Checklist

Done	Application checklist
☐	Check grade and subject requirements for your exact course
☐	Write a personal statement answering the three UCAS questions with evidence
☐	Brief your referee on your goals and any context they should mention
☐	Book an English test if needed, and confirm the score for your course
☐	Gather transcripts and ID documents; consider a pathway if you fall short
☐	Apply on time through UCAS (UG) or the Durham portal (PG)

Sources and Notes

Compiled from Durham University's website (Selection Process, Writing a Personal Statement, International Qualifications, Central & South Asia pages) and Durham admissions presentations for teachers and advisers (2025-26). English-language score examples come from third-party summaries and are indicative only. Entry requirements, deadlines and fees change each cycle, so verify everything at **durham.ac.uk** and speak to your Shiksha Study Abroad counsellor for personalised guidance.