Admissions Policy

University of Liverpool

Mathematics School

September 2027 enrolments

Status	STATUTORY
Delegated to	Headteacher, ULMaS
Responsible Person	Chair of Trustees, ULMaS
Ratified Date	Full Board of Trustees 20th March 2025
Next Review	2 Yearly review (dates will be updated annually) Next review due: March 2027

1. Introduction and Overview

- The *University of Liverpool Mathematics School* (ULMaS) aims to recruit students who will benefit most from a challenging preparation for the study of advanced mathematics and related courses at university. We will implement an admissions policy that identifies the most suitable students in terms of their current performance and their potential to grow in response to the teaching we will provide. We aim to select students who are developing a fascination for mathematics and have a strong desire to pursue this interest far beyond A-level, and who will find it beneficial to be challenged to think deeply and reason with clarity.

- Our intention is to recruit a significant number of students from groups who would not otherwise have access to high quality mathematics provision and also to increase the total pool of high-achieving young mathematicians in the local community. Our mission to widen participation in mathematical degrees and careers is reflected in this admissions policy and we envisage an increase in socio-economic diversity in undergraduate intake to degrees in the mathematical sciences as a result.

2. Key Principles and Values

It is our policy to:

- operate a clear, fair and transparent admissions process which is based on valid and reliable assessment;
- assess and consider the needs of each applicant individually, on an impartial and unbiased basis;
- consider not just the current academic performance of applicants, but also
  - the potential for a place at ULMaS to be of particular benefit to the applicant, and
  - the potential for the applicant to contribute positively to the ethos and curriculum of ULMaS;
- provide expert pre-entry advice and guidance in order to ensure that students know what type of school they are applying for and make an informed judgement about whether it is suitable for them;
- ensure that all students, parents and carers have sufficient opportunity to find out about the school and what it might offer them.

3. Planned Admissions, Eligibility Criteria and Assessment

- The school has capacity for 160 students aged 16-19.
- We have a planned admission of 80 Year 12 students each academic year.
- Students whose Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) names the school will be offered a place. The admissions test and interview process will still take place in order to ensure that the student will be able to succeed with our curriculum, to provide assessment information on the candidate for future purposes and to facilitate the careers advice that forms part of the process.
- Applicants will normally be in Year 11 and have their sixteenth birthday during the academic year in which they apply.
- Potential applicants who do not fit this description are advised to contact the school for advice via our website.
- In 2027 we plan to admit students primarily to Year 12; in exceptional circumstances students who have completed Year 12 elsewhere may be admitted where places are available. Normally our preference will be for such students to retake Year 12. Year 13 entry will require that the students admitted
  - have already met the minimum entry requirements set out below, and
  - have studied the content included in our Year 12 curriculum at another school or college, and
  - would particularly benefit from completing Year 13 with us in preparation for a high level mathematical sciences degree course.

  Suitability for this exceptional entry route will be determined by interview and an appropriate written test and the final decision will be made by the admissions panel.

4. Minimum Entry Requirements

- General minimum entry requirements for the ULMaS are set out below:

Criterion 1	Performance in the admissions aptitude test and interview process which suggests the student will thrive in the educational environment at ULMaS.
Criterion 2	**Grade 8 or above** in GCSE* Mathematics
Criterion 3	**Grade 7 or above** in GCSE* Physics or **grade 7-7 or above** in GCSE Combined Science
Criterion 4	**Grade 5** or above in GCSE* English Language or in GCSE English Literature (this may be waived where students do not have English as their normal home language)

Criterion 5	At least 4 further GCSEs* at **grade 5** or above

- Equivalences apply: in order for a qualification to be treated as equivalent to a GCSE it should be recorded as a Level 2 qualification which is equivalent to a full GCSE and is worth at least 5 points in performance table measures (see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-4-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores). iGCSE / Level 2 certificate qualifications which do not count in the school performance tables are treated as follows: A* = grade 8, A = grade 7, B = grade 5.
- Applicants with qualifications other than GCSE may provide evidence of equivalence through a UK NARIC Statement of Comparability. If in doubt, please contact us to discuss this.
- Applicants who, for exceptional reasons, have been unable to take examinations will be assessed through the interview and admissions aptitude test process alone and may not be required to achieve GCSE grades if this is impractical. The interview process will be extended for such candidates to ensure a full assessment of their knowledge and abilities has been possible.

5. Application Process

The selection process for students will have four stages.

Stage 1: A written application via the ULMaS website

- This will gather all necessary information about the applicant including:
  - any individual needs they may have which will need to be accommodated during the selection process, and
  - the details of a teacher who can provide a reference about the applicant's suitability for the A-Level courses they have chosen, their capacity to work hard and their record of punctuality and attendance.
  - The reference will be not be part of the scoring process for the selection process but will be used 1) to help provide advice and guidance for the student where it is unclear whether the school's curriculum is appropriate for them and 2) to provide guidance for the school about any adjustments or provision the school may need to make to ensure a successful transition.
- In order to be acceptable, an application must be factually correct, contain all the required information, be from an applicant who is eligible for sixth-form funding and be received by the relevant deadline.

Stage 2: Mathematics Aptitude Test

- All applicants who make acceptable applications will be invited to take the aptitude test.
- The aptitude test will be based on mathematics which will largely be drawn from the Key Stage 3 curriculum and will not require knowledge of material which is normally first taught in Year 11.
- The assessment will enable applicants to demonstrate problem solving ability, fluent algebraic skills and the capacity to see the mathematics in superficially unfamiliar situations.
- Sample questions will be published on the ULMaS website, and applicants who apply by the early deadline (below) will be given a briefing to help them to prepare for the test.
- The aptitude test will take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete.
- Where assessment Access Arrangements are approved for an applicant, and the necessary supporting information about these arrangements and the applicant's eligibility are available to us, we will facilitate these.
- The available marks for each question will be stated on the paper and the applicant's test mark will be the sum of the marks earned on all questions according to a well-defined mark scheme used by all markers involved.
- Students will not routinely be informed of their test score but may request it as part of post-interview feedback.

- Where students believe an error may have been made in the marking of their paper they may ask for a review of marking, in which case the application of the mark scheme will be reviewed by a different marker and, where appropriate, a correction made and the offer decision reviewed.

Stage 3: Interview

- Applicants scoring above the initial threshold in the admissions aptitude test will be invited to interview. The initial threshold will be determined by the admissions panel after the admissions aptitude tests have been marked. In determining the threshold the panel will seek to ensure that every student who could ultimately be offered a place has the opportunity to attend an interview, whilst the interview process remains manageable and cost effective.

- Applicants will be interviewed by one or more teachers to assess their suitability for the educational approach and curriculum at the school.

- This will involve a series of mathematical problems and questions and will be designed to assess how the student responds to academically challenging ideas with the support of an expert teacher.

- The material used will be designed to be accessible for students who have not had the opportunity to be taught by a subject expert recently, and will be based on material which students are very unlikely to have been taught in school. It will not require knowledge of mathematics beyond that which is normally covered in schools by the end of Year 9.

- Students may be required to complete a small amount of reading and/or written work immediately before and/ or after the interview as part of the assessment process.

- Students' interview performance will be scored on a scale of 1 to 6 by each interviewer:

1	Found most of the tasks in the interview confusing or uninteresting and was largely unable to provide suitable responses. Unlikely to be able to engage with the curriculum at ULMaS.
2	Found most of the tasks in the interview difficult or uninteresting and needed considerable help in order to make progress. Unlikely to enjoy the curriculum at ULMaS
3	Was able to succeed with the easier parts of the interview but needed significant support with more challenging questions. Interested in mathematics. Might cope with the ULMaS curriculum given hard work and additional support, but may not enjoy the sustained challenge.
4	Was able to succeed with much of the interview with appropriate support, probably made some mistakes but understood what went wrong and was easily able to correct. Clearly interested in problem solving and mathematical thinking. Likely to respond well to the ULMaS curriculum.
5	Responded successfully to all the questions asked, with occasional prompts. Clearly enjoyed the challenge. Likely to thrive at ULMaS.
6	Found the interview question easy and is ready for a very high level of challenge. Likely to succeed with an Olympiad/ STEP level of challenge.

- Students will also have a pastoral interview which is intended to:

- Ensure that we are in possession of all relevant information about the disadvantage that the student has faced in their educational journey in order that we can determine whether they should be given priority consideration for a place
- Ensure that we have the information we need to plan for their successful transition to the school
- Give them an opportunity to ask questions and make an informed decision about whether this school is a good fit for them

- The pastoral interview is not used as part of the scoring process for selection.

Stage 4: Determination of Disadvantage: Disadvantaged Weighting

- In order to ensure that the school fulfils its role in addressing the disadvantage gap in education and supports social mobility in the region we will identify students who have experienced significant disadvantage in order to give a corrective weighting in the selection process.
- Students will be given disadvantage weighting in their admissions score if:
  - They are or have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last 6 years in line with the terms of Pupil Premium Funding
  - They are service children in line with criteria for Service Pupil Premium
  - They are care experienced (have ever been under the care of the Local Authority)
  - They are currently under the care of the local authority
  - They are currently in receipt of free school meals
  - 2 or more years of their secondary education has been spent in a school which achieved low academic results at Key Stage 4 based on Achievement 8 data in the last nationally published data. Where the student has attended a school achieving below the lower quartile Achievement 8 score for mainstream non-selective schools in Liverpool they will be considered to be disadvantaged.

The weighting given may be cumulative where disadvantage multiple factors are present. The arithmetic mechanism used will be consistent within each cohort of applications and will be recorded in the spreadsheet used for the processing of admissions. A maximum weighting of x1.2 will be used, and a minimum of x1.05. Protected characteristics such as sex or disability will not be used as a weighting factor.

Stage 5: Decision

- Decisions will be made by an Admissions Panel chaired by the Headteacher. The membership of the Admissions Panel will be determined by the Trustees. Other staff or volunteers co-opted by the trustees may also be appointed to the admissions panel.
- Any students with an Education Health and Care Plan naming ULMaS will be offered a place.
- The Admissions Panel will then make conditional offers to remaining applicants using the process described below.
  - The Admissions Panel will be presented with the aptitude test and interview scores for each applicant.
  - Applicants' scores from the aptitude test and the total interview score will be aggregated into a single score, S, using the formula $S=D(T + aI)$ where D is a number between 1 and 1.2 representing the disadvantage factor where 1 represents no disadvantage recorded and 1.2 represents maximum disadvantage factors recorded in stage 4), T represents their Test score and I represents their mathematics Interview score and a is a coefficients to be adjusted to calibrate the results depending on the relative difficulty and number of marks available in the test compared to the interview.
  - The S score will then be used to rank the applications from high to low.
  - A threshold will be determined below which candidates are judged to be unsuitable for the education offered at the school. Applicants whose aggregated scores fall below the threshold will not be offered places.

- The list of candidates whose scores are above the threshold but who have not been offered conditional places will constitute a waiting list to be used if places become available at a later stage.
- The remaining places will then be allocated to the highest ranked applicants including late applicants and those in the ordered list who have not yet been offered a place.

  - Failure to accept a place within 2 weeks of being made an offer could result in applicants losing their place to someone on the waiting list.

- Oversubscription Criteria

Places will be allocated based on the scoring from the aptitude test and interview process, as described above.

6. Timeline

- The timeline for applications and offers will be published annually as an appendix to this policy.

7. Waiting List

- The process described in 5 Stage 4 above will yield an ordered list of applicants who meet the admissions criteria. If there are more than 80 applicants who meet the admissions criteria, the ordered list of applicants who are eligible for a place but have not been offered one will constitute the waiting list.
- If late applicants are not offered one of the remaining places they can be added to the end of the waiting list if they meet the criteria for entry that has been applied in that year's recruitment round.
- We will make offers to the applicants on the waiting list if:

  - Any offer holder rejects the offer or initially accepts it and then later informs us that he/she no longer wishes to take up their place.
  - Any offer holder does not meet the conditions of their offer when GCSE results are announced in August 2027.

8. Appeals

- Applicants are encouraged to request feedback from the Admissions Panel before making an appeal
- Any applicant refused a place at ULMaS will be offered a right of appeal to a committee of the academy trust operating the school.
- Informal enquiries, requests for feedback or challenges to academic judgement fall outside the scope of this procedure and will be handled through the school's standard admissions and feedback processes.
- The panel will consider the applicant's case and decide whether to uphold the appeal. Please see the ULMaS Pupil Admissions Appeals policy for further details.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years and any amended policy for the following September will be published on the school website. The policy will remain on the website throughout the college year. The dates in Appendix 1 will be updated annually.

10. Complaints

If you are unhappy with any aspect of the admission policy or appeal process you may submit a complaint, outlining your concerns to the ESFA at Academy.QUESTIONS@education.gov.uk, though you should first raise any concerns with the school via reception@liverpoolmathsschool.org .

11. Equality & Diversity

- ULMaS will do everything it can to facilitate a process which is fair and free from discrimination. Individual adjustments can be made to ensure that no student experiences a substantial disadvantage in the process. We will create an atmosphere in which each applicant is able to perform to the best of their ability and give a fair and honest representation of their talent and interest in mathematics.
- We are keen to encourage applications from all students who feel that ULMaS is suitable for them. We will do everything within our power to ensure that the application process, the school ethos and the school environment is as welcoming and inclusive as possible.
- Any reasonable adjustments that are needed, both prior to the entrance exam and/or interview and after admission, will be made. The school building is old, but reasonably well adapted for users with access needs.
- Offers will be made free from bias in terms of disability, race, sex, gender orientation/ assignment, religion or belief.

12. Appendix 1

- The process is divided into two rounds. If all 80 places are likely to be filled from the first round of applicants, the second round may not proceed. Applicants are therefore encouraged to apply in the first round.

September	Applications open 1st September with the publication of the new application form at https://liverpoolmathsschool.applicaa.com/ (linked on the school website).
December	Early deadline for first round applications (exact date published on the school website)
January	**Aptitude test** preparation session/s for those who meet the early deadline will take place in early January. All early applicants will be invited to attend.
February	Test and Interviews The aptitude test will take place on Saturday **6/2/2027**
February	A letter will be sent out to those applicants who are given a conditional offer by the end of February. Applicants will be asked to respond within 2 weeks. Failure to accept a place within 2 weeks of being made an offer could result in applicants losing their place to someone on the waiting list.
March to August	Tests and interviews scheduled as necessary for applicants who missed the first round deadline, **if** places remain. Students meeting the required standard (as applied in the first round) will be given offers within 10 working days of coming for an interview and taking the admissions test. For reasons of test security the number of additional sittings will be kept to a minimum and the admissions test may contain different questions to previous sittings.
August	Applicants holding offers will have places on GCSE results day where they have successfully met their offer in terms of GCSE (and equivalent) results[1]. They will have until noon on Friday following GCSE results publication to contact us with their notification of results[2]. If they fail to do so they may forfeit their place to another student on the waiting list. Special consideration will be given to those falling just short, and these decisions will be influenced by our widening participation agenda. Applicants on the waiting list may be given the opportunity to firmly accept an offer following results day in August if spare places arise. Places will be offered to applicants in the order in which they appear on the waiting list. They will then have 24 hours in which to firmly accept the offer and will be required to present themselves in person[2] at ULMaS with confirmation of their GCSE results. Applications received after the published closing date will be accepted should places still be available after all applicants from the waiting list have been offered a place.

[1] Students who are not taking GCSEs (e.g. Scottish students in the process of moving to Liverpool) will be able to provide confirmation of their results by arrangement, at an appropriate time, according to the date of publication.

[2] Students will need to send us a photograph of their results slip/s including their UCI number, or provide us with a paper copy.