



# Admissions Reference Policy

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# Admissions Reference Policy

## Scope

This policy applies to all programmes leading to the award of a Queen Mary qualification. This policy may also apply to credit-bearing study that does not lead to an award. The requirement to provide a reference and/or details of an academic or professional referee will be made explicit to applicants during the process of application.

## Core Principles

Applicants to Queen Mary programmes will be required to provide details of at least one academic referee at the point of application. Details of a professional referee will be accepted where this is not possible because the applicant has not been in full or part-time education in the last three years.

References must be provided in an appropriate format and meet certain requirements in terms of content and validity as outlined below. Queen Mary reserves the right to request additional references where further details are needed to assess an applicant's suitability.

The following are the core principles of the reference policy:

- References must be provided in an acceptable format
- References must be authored by an appropriate referee
- References must meet validity requirements
- The reference policy complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Queen Mary academic staff and members of the central Admissions team will use their professional judgement and guidelines below to determine if a reference can be deemed satisfactory, employing a degree of flexibility where possible and necessary.

## Format

Referees must provide their reference on an official letter-headed paper, and the reference must be signed/stamped.

References which are not written in English must be accompanied by an official translation.

The reference should comment on an applicant's suitability for study, to include details of their academic or professional performance to date and potential to succeed on their chosen programme.

The referee's contact email address should be:

- a business/company email address (such as gov.uk) OR
- a recognised higher education institution email address (such as .ac.uk or .edu)

## Relationship of the referee to the applicant

Referees should know applicants in an academic or, where appropriate, a professional setting, and be able to comment on their suitability for university study. For postgraduate study we would generally expect to receive an academic reference for an applicant who has graduated within the last three years. For undergraduate study we would expect an academic reference from an applicant's most recent place of study. Applicants who have graduated more than three years ago may opt to provide a professional reference. Personal references cannot be accepted.

## Validity

All references should be dated within two years of the proposed programme start date at Queen Mary University of London. References outside of this validity period can be considered at the discretion of the Head of Admissions or delegated authority.

## Reference collection

Referee details will be collected at the point of application.

Foundation, UCAS and postgraduate taught programmes normally require the details of one referee.

Postgraduate research programmes will usually ask for details of two referees.

## UCAS Application

References for applications made via UCAS should be provided by the nominated referee at the applicant's most recent place of study using the UCAS application form or forwarded to the Admissions team for review.

## Direct Application

References for applications made direct to the university should normally be provided by the nominated referee(s), using the Queen Mary reference collection form. References should either be uploaded via the secure portal or forwarded to the Admissions team for review.

Applicants will be prompted to supply referee contact details as part of the application form. A reference request will be sent automatically to the nominated referee at point of application submission. Referees will receive a link to a secure webpage where they can upload their reference. A reminder email will be sent after five calendar days if the reference is still outstanding at that point.

## Admissions process

We reserve the right to request a reference at any point in the assessment process. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure/check that a reference has been submitted or referee contact details provided.

Offers may be made conditional upon receipt of a satisfactory reference. Once a reference has been received, it will be assessed by the Admissions team to ensure it is suitable. Queen Mary reserves the right to request either a second reference or an updated reference if the format or content is found to be unsuitable.

The final decision on whether to accept a reference or not sits with Queen Mary.

## Definition of a ‘satisfactory’ reference

Referees should comment on an applicant’s academic potential and suitability to study on their chosen programme. This should be evidence-based and objective. Queen Mary reserves the right to make the final decision regarding the definition of ‘satisfactory’.

## Verification of references

Queen Mary may verify references with the respective referee. Should any reference be found to be fraudulent, Queen Mary will withdraw the application in accordance with the Admissions Policy.

## Evaluation

Evaluation will be guided by the core principles laid out in this document. Flexibility may be applied in cases where an applicant is unable to provide a reference in the usual format, but where there is a strong academic profile. All Admissions Officers will receive training on the assessment of references.

## Data Protection

References are stored in accordance with the Queen Mary Records Retention policy and Data Protection policy. Confidential references are exempt from subject access requests (SARs), but they could be made available to applicants in a discretionary context.

If a SAR is received and we feel it is reasonable to share a reference, we will always seek to obtain the referee’s approval in the first instance. Wherever possible we will seek to anonymise information and redact any comments which relate to a third party. We would advise referees to supply references based on factual matters.

## Review

The Education Quality and Standards Board review and approves the reference policy.

The reference policy will be reviewed at least every two years in advance of the start of the admissions cycle.

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