FITZHERBERT UNIVERSITY

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SIGILLUM UNIVERSITATIS FITZHERBERT

Admissions Technical Requirements

Undergraduate & Postgraduate Entry

Office of Admissions — Technical Competency Division
Fitzherbert University · 2025

ABSTRACT

Specifies the technical and cognitive competency requirements for admission to Fitzherbert University programmes. The AI Literacy Baseline assessment was introduced after the University admitted, in 2023, a student who during their interview described ChatGPT as 'typing very fast.' The assessment has been revised upward three times and now includes a practical component in which applicants must identify a hallucination in a sample AI output. The sample changes each year. In 2024, twelve applicants correctly identified the intended hallucination; nine identified a different hallucination that the assessment designers had not noticed; three applicants identified no hallucination but submitted detailed arguments for why the passage was true, which the Admissions Committee found alarming. Entry criteria are reviewed at each Epoch Transition to reflect the prevailing state of the technology and the diminishing patience of the admissions staff.

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I. Admissions Philosophy and Institutional Threshold

Admission to Fitzherbert University is awarded on the basis of demonstrated preparedness for an institution that expects intellectual independence, procedural literacy, and a workable relationship with technological reality. The University does not seek applicants who merely perform confidence. It seeks applicants who can reason under uncertainty, distinguish evidence from assertion, and remain psychologically stable when a system produces a polished answer that is nevertheless wrong.

The admissions process therefore combines conventional indicators of academic promise with a more explicit assessment of how applicants think, not just what they have previously been taught to repeat. This is not because the University believes itself uniquely enlightened. It is because experience has shown that traditional academic metrics, while useful, are increasingly inadequate as sole predictors of success in an environment saturated with persuasive automated output.

The threshold for admission is consequently framed as a threshold of readiness rather than prestige. Fitzherbert would prefer a smaller cohort capable of honest reasoning to a larger cohort capable only of excellent formatting. The Admissions Office recognises that nearly every university says some version of this. It further notes that relatively few build the claim into their technical entry criteria.

II. Assessment Dimensions and Evidential Standards

Applicants are assessed across four dimensions: analytical reasoning, epistemic rigour, systemic thinking, and AI literacy. No single dimension is treated as dispensable. The University has repeatedly encountered candidates who are technically agile but epistemically careless, and candidates who are thoughtful but unable to operate within contemporary digital conditions. Neither profile is considered fully ready without further development.

Analytical reasoning concerns logical structure, quantitative discipline, and the ability to move from premise to conclusion without losing the thread in a cloud of attractive vocabulary. Epistemic rigour concerns how an applicant handles evidence, uncertainty, revision, and the limits of available knowledge. Systemic thinking concerns whether the applicant can perceive second-order effects rather than describing every problem as if it existed in isolation.

Evidence for these dimensions is drawn from written work, examination performance, interview response, school record, contextual data where appropriate, and the University's own baseline exercises. Admissions decisions are not made by numerical composite alone. The University has found that a single score can conceal exactly the kind of unevenness that later becomes educationally expensive.

III. The AI Literacy Baseline

The AI Literacy Baseline was introduced after several admissions cycles made clear that applicants could discuss artificial intelligence with impressive fluency while remaining unclear on its underlying mechanics, limits, and failure modes. The University's concern was not that such applicants lacked specialist knowledge. It was that some of them lacked the minimum conceptual footing required to avoid outsourcing judgment to systems they did not understand.

The baseline therefore tests architectural understanding, applied discernment, hallucination detection, authorship awareness, and the ability to explain in clear language what present-day systems cannot reliably do. This final task has proved especially diagnostic. Applicants are often more enthusiastic in describing capabilities than disciplined in articulating boundaries, a pattern the Admissions Committee regards as educationally significant and professionally dangerous.

Performance on the baseline is interpreted together with the rest of the file rather than as a mechanised exclusion gate. A strong candidate who narrowly misses one component may be invited to supplementary assessment. A candidate who speaks about AI with total confidence while demonstrating no detectable understanding of error, uncertainty, or misuse may not. The University considers this distinction humane as well as prudent.

IV. Interview, Contextual Review, and Decision Practice

Structured interview remains central because the University wants to hear how applicants reason in real time when deprived of the slow perfectionism available to prepared statements. Interviewers are instructed to distinguish polish from thought, certainty from understanding, and strategic vagueness from genuine nuance. They are also instructed not to mistake social ease for intellectual readiness, a mistake to which institutions of selection have shown a long historical susceptibility.

Contextual review is used where it improves fairness without diluting standards. Applicants do not arrive from identical educational, technological, or economic conditions, and the University no longer finds it intellectually respectable to pretend otherwise. Context, however, is not treated as a sentimental override. It is used to interpret evidence more intelligently, not to abolish the need for evidence.

Final decisions are recorded with reasons sufficient to explain the University's judgment if later questioned internally or externally. Fitzherbert has made this a firm requirement because admissions memory degrades quickly and retrospective certainty grows suspiciously fast. A written reason captured at the time is often less flattering than the mythology produced years later, and for that reason it is usually more useful.

V. Conditions, Offers, and Pre-Arrival Obligations

Offers may be unconditional, conditional, deferred, or accompanied by pre-arrival requirements. These requirements may include completion of a preparatory literacy module, wallet registration for credential and stipend purposes, remedial quantitative work, or a short orientation on authorship and provenance. The University would prefer applicants to arrive already competent in all these areas. It has accepted that preference as insufficient planning.

Where an offer carries conditions, the conditions are stated plainly, monitored through the admissions system, and reviewed before matriculation. Students who fail to complete them are not assumed to have done so maliciously, but neither are the conditions quietly forgotten. A condition omitted from follow-up is not mercy. It is administrative drift wearing a humane expression.

Pre-arrival obligations are designed to reduce failure in the first term rather than to intensify selection theatre. Fitzherbert's view is that a demanding admissions system should not end at the offer letter. It should continue, in a more constructive key, into the practical preparation that makes admission worth having.

VI. Review Cycle and Continuous Raising of the Standard

Admissions criteria are reviewed annually and additionally at points of technological discontinuity, curriculum revision, or repeated evidence that incoming students are arriving with a common weakness not previously reflected in the framework. The University has learned that fixed admissions models decay in relevance faster than admissions offices admit. This is especially true where AI-mediated learning environments change what applicants can do, claim, or outsource before they ever apply.

Review does not mean automatic inflation of selectivity for its own sake. It means keeping the threshold meaningful. Fitzherbert is aware that institutions can become addicted to announcing ever-higher standards as a proxy for seriousness. The University prefers the more difficult task of ensuring that each requirement still measures something real and educationally consequential.

This document is therefore presented as a living technical admissions standard: explicit in its criteria, candid about the environment in which those criteria operate, and unapologetic in asking applicants to demonstrate that they are ready not just to enter the University, but to think inside it.

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