

Understanding contextual admissions processes

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Ice Breaker

What is a contextual offer?

Why might a student be eligible for a contextual offer?

Contextual admissions

Contextual admissions is the practice of using additional information, such as where a potential student lives or which school they go to, to assess their attainment and potential.

Offers can be made on the basis of contextual data or participation in an outreach event. This might include:

- an offer based on advertised grades
- an offer at a grade or more lower than advertised
- an unconditional offer
- an offer linked to a foundation year.

Possible eligibility criteria

- Living in a certain postcode area: typically based on POLAR, ACORN or TUNDRA
- Eligible for FSM
- First generation
- In care or a carer
- Participation in outreach activities

Not an exhaustive list
as it will differ by
universities

Disadvantaged and under-represented learners in higher education

- students from areas of low higher education participation
- students with a low household income
- students with a low socioeconomic status
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students
- mature students
- disabled students
- care leavers
- carers
- people estranged from their families
- people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- refugees
- children from military families.



[Source: Office for Students](#)

Why do universities want to support under-represented students?

Part of widening participation activity

Account for social and educational disadvantages

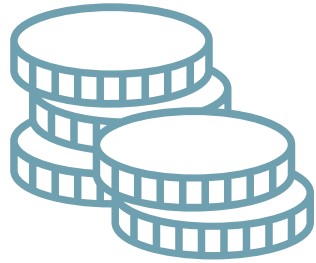
Generate a diverse study body that represents society

Ensures students are not limited in their ambitions

Regulatory directives stipulated by the OfS

Help to contribute to greater diversity in all levels of society

Example criteria



University of Birmingham:

Spent time in care, or in receipt of free school meals



Queen Marys:

School/college performance, postcode - IMD/POLAR Q1 or 2, care experienced, refugee or asylum seeker

Durham University:

Meet two of the following:

Home postcode classified as Q1 or 2 of POLAR 4 or Acorn 4 or 5, attend a state school, in receipt of FSM, care experienced or an estranged student.





Widening Access Programmes

What's the difference?

Contextual offers

Usually applied automatically to eligible applicants

Often only require one or two criteria to be met

Typically a one grade reduction on the standard offer

Generally no additional work or participation required

Is often just a reduced offer, with no additional benefits

Widening access programmes

Usually have to be **applied for separately**

Often require **more eligibility criteria** to be met

Typically a **bigger grade reduction** of two or more grades on the standard offer

Often students need to **commit more time** to completing the programme

Often provides students with **more support around transition** to HE or financial support

Examples of pre-entry support for students on widening access programmes

Enhanced information, advice and guidance



Subject specific taster sessions



Widening participation and access programmes



Interview support

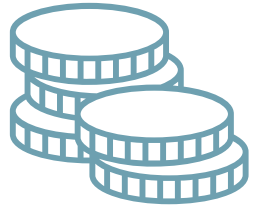


Additional admissions consideration

Alternate and contextual offers

A*AA → ABB

Examples of on-course support for students entering via widening access programmes



Additional funding
Money towards living costs
May also contribute to travel, accommodation, fees etc

Enhanced inductions
Give students a 'head start'
Opportunity to network and get to know the campus



Academic support
Drop-in sessions on different topics
Study skills sessions



Peer mentoring
Meet other students from similar backgrounds
Create networks and friendships

Enhanced careers support
Flagged internships
Networking with employers
Support with CVs and assessment centres



Other opportunities
Support with study or work abroad
Guidance on placement years





University of Birmingham access programmes

PATHWAYS TO BIRMINGHAM

YEAR 12

YEAR 13

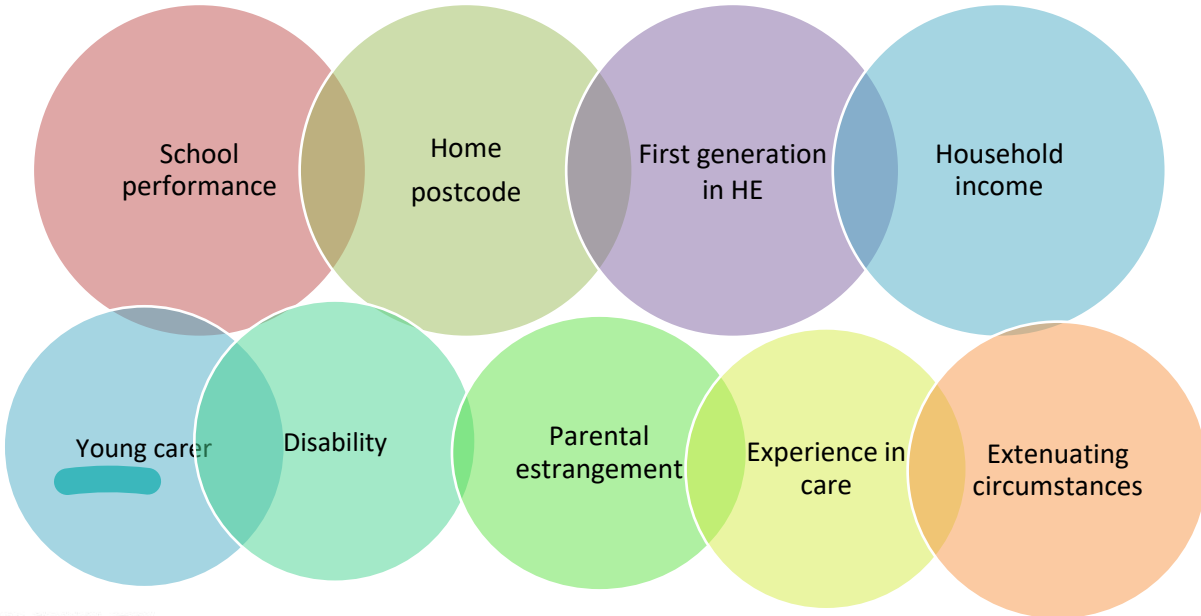
ROUTES TO THE PROFESSIONS

INSPIRED@ BIRMINGHAM

ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

NATIONAL ACCESS SUMMER SCHOOL

ACCESS TO BIRMINGHAM



Access Support

- Alternate offer (typically two grades below standard)
- Extra consideration from Admissions
- Interview support

Transition Support

- Study skill development
- Increase university awareness and readiness

Financial Support

- Chamberlain Award £2000/year
- P2B Scholarship £1500/year

Examples from Durham

Durham University Access Programmes

Supported
Progression

Sutton Trust
Summer
School

STEP
Programme



Examples from Durham

Durham University Access Programmes

Supported
Progression

Applicants
must



Examples from Durham

Durham University Access Programmes

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Summer
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Examples from Durham

Durham University Access Programmes

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Other programmes and information sources

The screenshot shows the UniTasterDays website interface. At the top left is the UniTasterDays logo. To the right are navigation links: "For teachers & careers advisers", "For students", "For parents & guardians", and "For university partners". The main content area features two event cards. The first card is for "Year 12 Computer Science, Electronics and Biomedical Engineering Residential Courses" at the University of Southampton, dated Monday, July 31, 2023, with a "View event" button. The second card is for "University of Brighton summer school: Business and law" at the University of Brighton, dated Tuesday, July 4, 2023, also with a "View event" button. A "Cookie Policy" link is visible in the bottom left corner of the screenshot.

UniTasterDays

For teachers & careers advisers ▾ For students ▾ For parents & guardians ▾ For university partners ▾

Year 12 Computer Science, Electronics and Biomedical Engineering Residential Courses 


University of Southampton

Residential course in Electronics, Computer Science and Biomedical Engineering for Year 12 students at University of Southampton

📅 Monday, July 31, 2023

(There are 4 other dates available) ⓘ

View event

University of Brighton summer school: Business and law 

University of Brighton

Our on-campus non-residential summer schools give you the opportunity to take part in an intensive, project-based university experience in a specific subject. You'll get a taste of what to expect if you choose to study at higher education and develop your skills and evidence to support UCAS applications.

📅 Tuesday, July 4, 2023

View event

Cookie Policy X



Over to you

How do you support disadvantaged and under represented learners?

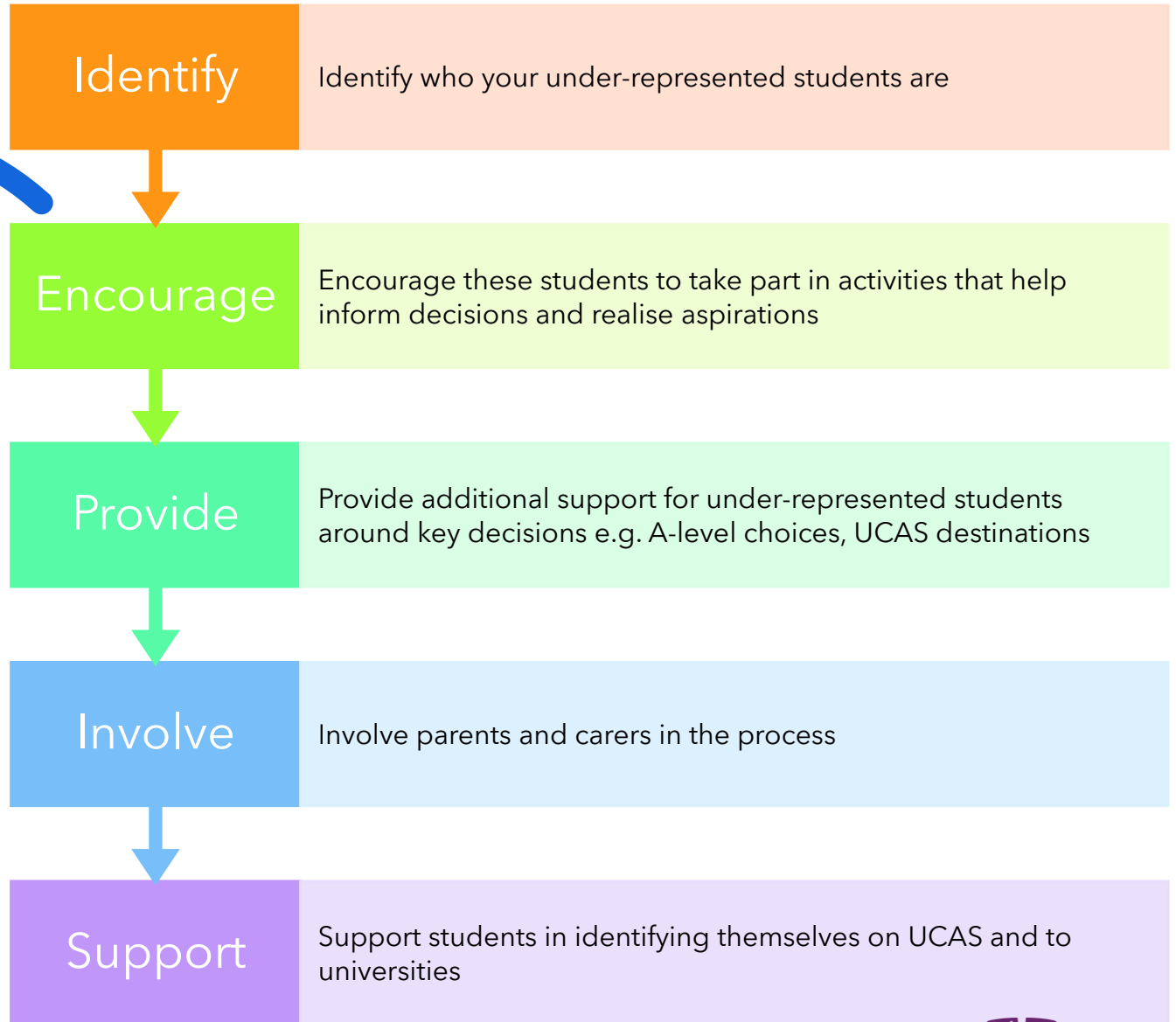
How do you identify them?

Do you engage parents in the process?

Are there any gaps in universities outreach provision?



Hints for teachers and advisors



Further information

UCAS

[Widening access and participation](#)

[Contextual admissions: what it means for your students](#)

[Adviser toolkit: Supporting students with individual needs](#)

[2023 entry: new questions on UCAS application form to support widening access](#)

Other links

[Durham University - Access programmes](#)

[University of Birmingham - Pathways to Birmingham](#)

[Office for Students Access and Participation Glossary](#)





Thank you

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UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

