

# Unveiling Potential: Information on Contextual offers

Presented by Queen Mary University of London and University of Bristol



# Queen Mary University of London

- Our history dates back to 1785, with the founding of The London Hospital Medical College, England's first official medical school.
- We are a Russell Group university, operating across five campuses in London and at sites across Europe and Asia.
- In the 2023 Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, we were ranked 16 in the UK, and 124 globally.
- We have over 33,000 students on degree programmes and over 5,700 members of staff drawn from over 170 nationalities



# The University of Bristol

- A university for a progressive city
- World-leading research and innovation
- An inspiring education
- Transformative student experience

55

We're ranked  
55th in the world

[QS World University  
Rankings 2024](#)

9

We're ranked  
9th in the UK

[QS World University  
Rankings 2024 \(UK\)](#)

4

One of the 4 most  
targeted by top  
UK recruiters

[High Fliers  
Research 2023](#)

5

We're a top 5 UK university  
for research quality

[Times Higher Education  
REF 2021 quality ratings](#)

# What are contextual offers and why do they exist?

# Widening participation strategies

- Contextual offers exist as part of Widening participation strategies (WP). These strategies help underrepresented groups to access further or higher education to continue their education.
- Sometimes the term ‘access and participation’ is also used. This has a broader definition encompassing access to university to begin with as well as ensuring that disadvantaged students succeed whilst at university and progress to positive destinations afterwards.
- By looking at your achievements in context, universities may adjust their usual offer to give you a fair chance to access your chosen course – these are called ‘contextual offers’.



# How can your students get a contextual offer?



# Contextual offers eligibility

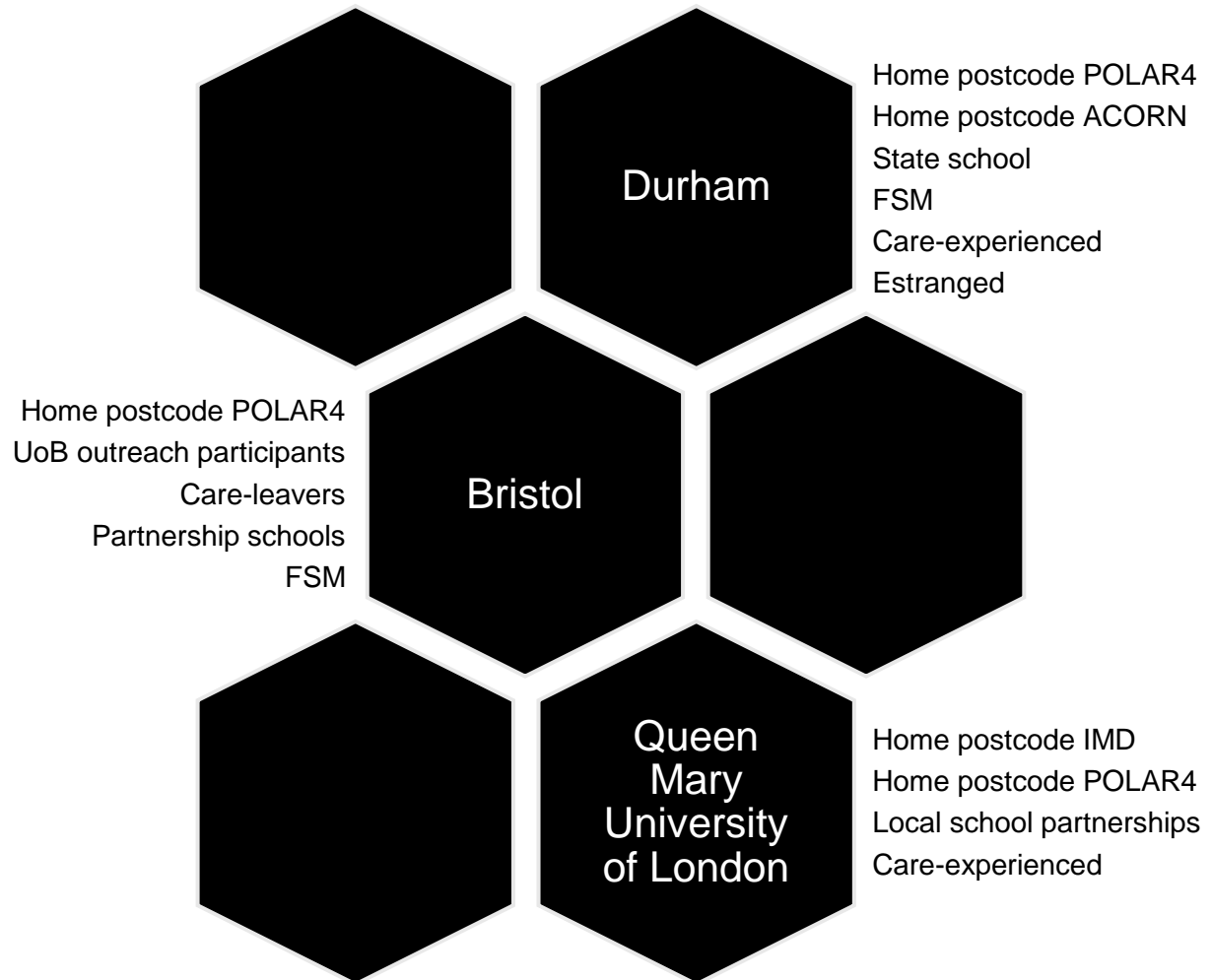
The eligibility criteria will vary from one university to another – it's important to check before applying.

## Examples of circumstances considered:

- Where students live – if students live in an area where there is a high level of deprivation, or a low number of people going to university. This is usually decided by postcode (check your postcode on the Office for Students' website).
- School or college – if your school's academic performance is lower than the national average, or a small number of pupils go on to higher education.
- Outreach Programmes - If students have participated in certain outreach programmes.
- Parental education – if your parents did not attend university.
- If you have spent time in local authority care, such as a foster home, residential children's home or kinship care.
- If you are estranged from your parents – if your relationship has broken down leading to no contact.
- If you have caring responsibilities – those who are unpaid carers for a family member or friend.
- If you have a disability or mental health condition – including learning differences and long-term health conditions.



# Different universities, different criteria...



**Queen Mary Contextual Admissions Eligibility Checker**





# Most universities consider POLAR4

The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education.

It looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and shows how this varies by area.

Possible changes ahead...



# Most universities consider POLAR4

Most universities will be focused on POLAR4.

Eligible postcodes for most universities will be defined as being within Quintiles 1 or 2 using the POLAR4 metric.

Search by postcode - Office for Students

https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/search-by-postcode/

inequalities in higher education.

### Area-based measure postcode look-up

You searched: **E14NS** [Want to search another postcode? Click here](#)

This postcode is in an area called: Mile End West (MSOA E02000873)

This postcode is found in areas that have been assigned the following quintiles (hover over for more info):

<b>POLAR4</b>	<b>Quintile 3</b>
TUNDRA MSOA	Quintile 5
TUNDRA LSOA	Quintile 5
Adult HE 2011	Quintile 4

**See the area on a map**

Below you can select a measure to see the area used to calculate the quintile for your postcode. Measures that use the same geographic areas are grouped.

**Select measure:**

- POLAR4/TUNDRA MSOA/Adult HE 2011
- TUNDRA LSOA

Type of area used: **MSOAs/IZs/SOAs** (hover over for more info)

The map shows the postcode with a pin (not available in Northern Ireland) and the area in which it lies. The area outlined is the one used to calculate the measure selected above.

**opportunities**  
How we promote access, success and progress for disadvantaged groups of students.

**Related links**  
[Access and participation data dashboard](#)  
[Associations between characteristics of students](#)

What does the search show? +

## Postcode checker



# How much is the contextual offer reduction?

It varies – this will be dependent on higher education providers/universities

Examples:

- **Bristol** - up to two grades below the standard entry requirements
- **Queen Mary** - up to three grades below the standard entry requirements



# How do students with contextual offers perform?

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Groups qualifying for contextual offers are less likely to:

- Be made an offer
- Continue their studies
- Attain a top result

# How do students with contextual offers perform?

- 90.9% contextual offers students received a 2:1 or 1st
- 91.1% of standard offer recipients
  
- 94.7% of contextual offer students continue their studies
- 95.4% of standard offer holders

# What support is available?



# What additional support is available?

- Pre-application programmes
  - Summer Schools
  - Mentoring programmes
  - Advice on applying / making the transition
- Lower contextualized offer
- Guaranteed offers/interviews
- Financial support such as bursaries





# What additional support is available?

- Enhanced support with accommodation
- Additional support for commuters
- Enhanced and appropriate advice, counselling and wellbeing support
- Enhanced and specific study support – peer mentors, coaches etc.
- Welcome and community building events

# How best can teachers and advisors help?

- Contextual offer status is private
- Most contextual offers are assessed using information given to UCAS
  - **Do** self-declare FSM or disability on the UCAS form
  - Personal Statements and Teachers' References (including new boxes) **won't** automatically be read by every university
- Advise that research is everything
- Encourage them to email university enquiries' teams

# Thank you

Post questions in the Q+A chat

