

## **St George's University of London Contextual Admissions Policy 2023**

### 1. SCOPE

This policy applies to contextual admissions for those applying to St George's, University of London (thereafter referred to as St George's) who are:

- Resident in the United Kingdom
- Holding undergraduate status (do not hold a degree)
- Applying for an undergraduate programme of study leading to an award.

This Contextual Admissions policy is to be considered in-line with the main St George's [Admissions policy](#).

### 2. Background

All applications for our undergraduate programmes are checked using data provided by UCAS, the St George's Widening Participation team and the applicant. The Admissions team use the data to assist in their assessment of applications and to ensure the appropriate entry requirements are met by applicants.

St George's acknowledges that the context in which young people are studying can have an impact on the grades they achieve. Contextual admissions enables universities to recognise that not everyone has access to equal standards of education and that social or socio-economic factors can impact and/or disrupt schooling. By considering the context and barriers a student may face, the application process is fairer, creating a level playing field to identify potential. This contextual data can be used to provide additional support to applicants pre- and post-application to increase the likelihood of success in their application and in their studies, or to make Contextual Offers, whereby eligible applicants are made an offer with reduced requirements. Therefore, undergraduate programmes at St George's may make variable offers and give additional support to applicants dependent on this contextual data.

### 3. General Principles

St George's offers three schemes under this policy. These are, pre-application support, contextual offers and post-application support. The type and amount of support available to applicants will depend on which of the eligibility criteria they meet, as covered in 'Eligibility Criteria' below.

#### *Pre-Application Support Scheme*

Support available to applicants before they submit applications via UCAS.

#### *Contextual Offer Scheme*

Support in the form of a reduced academic requirement on an applicant's offer.

#### *Post-Application Support Scheme*

Support available to applicants after submission of their application via UCAS. This is split into pre-offer and post-offer support.

## Eligibility criteria

There are several different criteria that could qualify applicants for consideration under one of the Contextual Admissions Schemes. **Appendix 1** details these criteria, how they are defined, and for which type of support applicants who fulfil these criteria may be eligible. Further details are included in subsequent sections for each type of support.

### Criteria Groups

#### *Group 1:*

Applicants will qualify for a contextual offer and pre-/post-application support if they meet **one**, or more, of the below four criteria:

1. Care experienced students (Care leavers)
2. Students with care responsibilities (carers)
3. Refugees and Asylum seekers
4. Estranged students

#### *Group 2:*

Applicants will qualify for a contextual offer and pre-/post-application support if they meet **two**, or more, of the below five criteria:

1. Live in an area where very few people go on to Higher Education (POLAR4 – quintiles 1 and 2)
2. Live in an area with higher levels of deprivation (IMD – deciles 1 and 2)
3. Go to a school with an average A Level grade of C- or below\*
4. Go to a school with low progression to higher education\*
5. In receipt of free school meals

\*Qualifying schools will be determined based on the three most recent years of school's performance data available from the Department of Education. The list of schools will be compiled in time for the summer prior to the start of the admissions cycle (for example May 2022 for the 2023 admissions cycle).

#### *Group 3:*

The following applicants will be offered pre- and post-application support, although not a contextual offer:

1. Service children
2. Those from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
3. Mature students

## Assessment of applicants under the Contextual Admissions Schemes

### *Pre-Application Support*

Applicants will be required to express interest in receiving pre-application support by completing a [webform](#) on the St George's website. The Widening Participation team at St George's will then contact eligible applicants with information on available support.

Awareness of the policy will be raised at UCAS events, school presentations and outreach events as well as in marketing communications to ensure that prospective applicants are aware of the types of pre-application support available. The Widening Participation team is in regular contact with the eligible schools to inform them of the policy.

#### *Contextual Offers and Post-Application Support*

On submission of an application to a St George's undergraduate programme (excluding the Graduate Entry Medicine programme) via UCAS, applicants will be given access to the St George's applicant portal. Applicants will have a set timeframe (usually two weeks) from the date of application submission to complete a declaration form on their applicant portal relating to eligibility for the Contextual Admissions schemes. On receipt of the declaration form, the Admissions team will have a holistic view of an applicant's eligibility for the contextual admissions schemes, if applicable, and can adjust the assessment accordingly.

Failure to complete the declaration form within the required time frame (usually two weeks) will result in the applicant being considered as not eligible for the contextual admissions schemes and will be assessed as per the standard entry criteria published on the St George's website. Declaration form submission deadline dates will be shown on the applicant's portal.

If applicants are eligible to receive a contextual offer, they will be required to submit evidence as part of the conditions of their offer to demonstrate eligibility. Evidence will not be required for those eligibility criteria for which St George's receive information directly from UCAS or the Widening Participation team. Suitable evidence for each criterion is included in **Appendix 1**.

## 4. Pre-Application Support

### Pre-application support eligibility

Prospective applicants from Groups **1**, **2** and **3** as listed above.

### Type of support available

All eligible prospective applicants will receive additional pre-application support from the Widening Participation team. This support will include the following:

- Specific communications directing prospective applicants to St George's webpages with application advice and information on our contextual admissions schemes
- Travel bursaries to attend St George's open days as detailed in section 7
- Invitations to St George's [pre-application Information, Advice and Guidance \(IAG\) virtual events](#), for example:
  - "Exploring Medicine"
  - "Exploring Healthcare"
  - "Exploring Work Experience for Healthcare"
  - "Studying at a small and specialist Uni"
  - "Intro to..."
  - "Taster lectures"
- Invitations to Widening Participation activities, such as Insight to General Practice (where relevant).

In addition to the above, applicants who meet Group 1 criteria will also receive:

- Tailored visit days to the University
- Signposting to relevant resources and webpages e.g. financial support at St George's and information on the [Opportunity Fund Grant](#).

### Proof of eligibility for pre-application support

Applicants will not be required to provide proof of their eligibility, however, will only be considered for pre-application support by completing the [webform](#).

## 5. Contextual Offers

### Contextual offer eligibility

Applicants from Groups 1 and 2 as listed above.

### Type of support available

Under the contextual offer scheme, eligible applicants will be made an offer two grades lower than the standard entry requirements as published on the St George's website, even if their predicted grades are higher.

The two-grade reduction for contextual offers applies to A Level, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Scottish Higher grades only and is applied across two subjects, rather than the requirement for one subject being reduced by two grades. The reduction will apply to the highest-grade requirements. A two-grade reduction across two subjects does not impact on progression within Higher Education for contextual applicants.

	Example standard offer	Example contextual offer
A Level requirement	AAA	ABB
	BBC	CCC
IB Requirement	32 Overall (5,5,5 at Higher Level)	30 Overall (5,4,4 at Higher Level)
Scottish Highers	Highers: BBB Advanced Highers: BB	Highers: BBB Advanced Highers: CC

Applicants are required to meet all other course-specific standard academic and non-academic entry requirements. This may include:

- minimum GCSE requirements
- course-specific subject requirements
- minimum non-academic requirements, such as Fitness to Practise requirements
- course-specific interview or assessment requirements
- course-specific aptitude test requirements.

### Proof of eligibility for contextual offers

Most of the data regarding contextual admissions is obtained via UCAS, however there may be some instances where further clarification or evidence is required. In these cases, the relevant evidence will be required as part of the applicants offer conditions. In the event that applicants are unable to evidence their eligibility for a contextual offer, their offer will revert to the standard entry

requirements as published on the St George's website (i.e. without the contextual admissions 2-grade reduction). The required evidence for each of the criteria is included in **Appendix 1**.

## 6. Post-Application Support

### Post-application support eligibility

Post-application support is split into support available for applicants (pre-offer), and offer holders (post-offer).

All applicants from Groups **1**, **2** and **3** are eligible for some pre-offer and post-offer support. This includes applicants who have not received a contextual offer (2-grade reduction), such as those applicants with qualifications not listed in section 5.

### Type of support available

All eligible applicants will receive additional support post-application from the St George's Admissions and Widening Participation teams. This support will include the following:

- PRE-OFFER: Travel bursaries to attend St George's interview day as detailed in section 7
- PRE-OFFER: Live or pre-recorded 'Preparing for your interview at St George's' webinar
- POST-OFFER: Travel bursaries to attend St George's offer holder day as detailed in section 7
- POST-OFFER: Fitness to Practise bursary, if eligible, to assist with costs of meeting police and occupational health check requirements as detailed in section 8

### Proof of eligibility for post-application support

Applicants that receive a contextual Offer (2-grade reduction) will not be required to provide additional evidence other than that which is included in the conditions of their offer. Applicants who are eligible for post-application support, but do not receive a contextual offer (i.e. those applicants whose qualifications are not mentioned in section 5), will be contacted separately with regards to providing evidence of eligibility.

## 7. Travel Bursary

Applicants that are eligible for pre- and post-application support for an undergraduate programme (excluding the Graduate Entry Medicine programme) are eligible for travel bursaries enabling applicants to attend open days, applicant interviews (where applicable), and offer holder days.

Travel bursaries are available to cover reasonable costs on public transport or reimbursement of petrol costs for UK travel only. Travel bursaries can be claimed for travel by any form of public transport, standard class travel only. If travelling by rail, applicants are expected to purchase train tickets in advance of the event. Rail tickets purchased on the day of the event will not be reimbursed. Only the applicant's travel will be reimbursed, unless the applicant requires care or assistance to get to or at the event/interview. In this instance, or in other exceptional circumstances, St George's may be able to cover the travel costs of an additional attendee after agreement from the Widening Participation team.

## Claiming a travel bursary

Travel bursaries can be claimed via reimbursement. No payments ahead of booking are available. The process for which to claim a travel bursary is as follows:

1. Book onto [the St George's event](#)/interview.
2. [Submit a travel bursary application via this application form](#).
3. Wait to hear the outcome the travel bursary application. Reimbursement is not guaranteed until the application has been approved.
4. Book required travel tickets/plan the journey in advance of event/interview.
5. Complete the travel bursary claim form which will be emailed with the travel bursary applicational approval, and submit it to [wp@sgul.ac.uk](mailto:wp@sgul.ac.uk).

Travel bursaries will be processed **after** the event/interview in question; reimbursements may take up to **3 weeks** to be received by the bank. In the event that an applicant is unable to purchase tickets upfront, applicants can contact the [Widening Participation Team](#) who may be able to purchase these on the applicant's behalf.

In the event that numbers of eligible applicants exceed expectation, the travel bursary is offered on a first come, first served basis. However, it is anticipated that the bursary will be available to all eligible applicants.

## 8. Fitness to Practise Bursary

Applicants that are eligible for post-application support and hold a Conditional Firm offer for a clinical undergraduate programme (excluding the graduate entry Medicine programme) are eligible for the Fitness to Practise (FTP) bursary. Fitness to Practise checks are not a requirement for non-clinical programmes, or whilst an applicant to a clinical programme is holding a conditional offer with no response, or with the response of insurance or decline.

The FTP bursary amounts to £85 for applicants to use towards the cost of the non-academic conditions of their offer, including:

- UK DBS Check and/or Update Service
- Occupational Health Check
- Overseas Criminal Record Check
- Vaccination Costs

The FTP bursary may not cover the full costs of these checks, however it should provide significant subsidy.

## Claiming an FTP bursary

FTP bursaries can be claimed at the point of eligibility before any Fitness to Practise checks have been conducted, if necessary. Applicants who qualify will be informed of how to claim the bursary by email at the point of eligibility.

Payments may take up to **3 weeks** to be received by the bank in which case applicants may be required to start their Fitness to Practise checks before receiving the FTP bursary in order to meet the required deadline as stated in the condition of the offer. The deadline by which the Fitness to Practise checks are required will not be extended due to a delay in claiming and/or receiving the FTP bursary.

In the event that numbers of eligible applicants exceed expectation, the FTP bursary is offered on a first come, first served basis. However, it is anticipated that the bursary will be available to all eligible applicants.

## 9. Complaints and Appeals

If the University fails to uphold the Contextual Admissions policy, applicants may submit a grievance to be considered. For further information on complaints and appeals, please see section 15 of the St George's Admissions policy on our [website](#).

## 10. Applicant Responsibilities

Applicants considered under the contextual admissions schemes are expected to fulfil the responsibilities listed in the St George's [Admissions policy](#).

There are additional responsibilities for applicants considered under the Contextual Admissions Schemes. Applicants agree:

- to provide St George's with accurate information regarding their eligibility for Contextual Admissions.

At the point of submission, applicants acknowledge:

- St George's retains the right to cancel an offer of a place if incorrect or misleading information is provided with regards to declarations for Contextual Admissions
- Failure to provide requested evidence of eligibility for contextual criteria will result in the offer conditions reverting to the standard offer for the programme, as listed on the St George's website.

## 11. Appendices

[Appendix 1 - Eligibility Criteria:](#)

Definitions have been informed by the definitions provided by UCAS and the Office for Students.

Criteria Name	Definition	Evidence Required
Care experienced students (Care leavers)	Applicants will be considered care experienced if they are currently, or have previously been: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• living with foster carers</li> <li>• living in a residential children's home</li> <li>• being looked after at home under a supervision order</li> <li>• living with friends or relatives in kinship care – either through a formal arrangement (e.g. a Special Guardianship order) or an informal arrangement without local authority support</li> </ul>	This information will be provided on the applicant's UCAS application.
Students with care responsibilities (carers)	Applicants will be considered having care responsibilities if they are young people aged 14-25 who care, unpaid, for a friend or family member who could not cope without their support. This may be due to illness, disability, a mental health issue, or substance misuse.	This information will be provided on the applicant's UCAS application and applicants will also be required to provide the evidence as per <b>Appendix 2</b> .
Refugees and Asylum seekers	A <b>refugee</b> is someone whose claim for asylum has been recognised and they have been granted official 'refugee' status. They are usually eligible for 'home' tuition fees and student finance. An <b>asylum seeker</b> is someone who has applied for refugee status and is waiting to find out if it has been granted.	Applicants will be required to provide evidence of either their UKVI letter confirming refugee status or confirmation of their current pending application for refugee status.
Estranged students	Estranged students are young people aged 14-25 studying without the support and approval of their parents due to a breakdown in their relationship – this might be their biological, step or adoptive parents, and sometimes their wider family members.	Applicants will be required to mention this in the personal statement as well as ensuring their reference includes acknowledgement of this status.
Live in an area where very few people go on to Higher Education (POLAR4)	To meet our POLAR4 criteria, applicants must live in a quintile 1 or 2 area. In other words, they must be in an area that is in the bottom 40% of the country in terms of young people going into higher education. POLAR4 quintiles can be checked <a href="#">here</a> on the Office for Students website.	This information will be provided on the applicant's UCAS application.
Live in an area with higher levels of deprivation (IMD)	St George's measure this using the Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Applicants must live in a decile 1 or 2 area (quintile 1). In other words, they must be in an area that is classified in the bottom 20% of the country in terms of perceived deprivation. IMD deciles can be checked online <a href="#">here</a> .	This information is automatically checked by St George's on submission of the application.
Go to a school with an average A level grade of C- or below	Applicants applying from a school in England with an average A Level grade of C- or below will meet this criterion. List of schools available on our <a href="#">website</a> .	This information is automatically checked by St George's on submission of the application.
Go to a school with low progression to HE	Applicants applying from a school in England that is in the bottom 40% in England for progression to Higher Education will meet this criterion. List of schools available on our <a href="#">website</a> .	This information is automatically checked by St George's on submission of the application.
Students in receipt of free school meals	Applicants in receipt of free school meals (FSM) will have met the government's eligibility criteria, which varies slightly depending on where they live. This is available on the relevant government websites: <a href="#">England</a> , <a href="#">Northern Ireland</a> , <a href="#">Scotland</a> and <a href="#">Wales</a> .	This information will be provided to Admissions by UCAS.
Service children (children from military families)	Applicants whose parent or carer currently serves in the British Armed Forces (British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force or Royal Marines) as a Regular or as a Reservist or has done at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life, will be considered as meeting this criterion.	Applicants will be required to provide proof of employment for the relevant family member(s).



Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities	<p>The term 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller' encompasses a wide range of individuals who may be defined in relation to their ethnicity, heritage, way of life and how they self-identify.</p> <p>This includes applicants from the following backgrounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English or Welsh Romany Gypsies</li> <li>• European Roma</li> <li>• Irish Travellers</li> <li>• Scottish Gypsy Travellers</li> <li>• showpeople such as people linked with fairground or circus professions</li> <li>• people living on barges or other boats</li> <li>• people living in settled (bricks and mortar) accommodation</li> <li>• New Age Travellers.</li> </ul>	Applicants will be required to mention this in the personal statement as well as ensuring their reference includes acknowledgement of this status.
Mature Students	Applicants will be considered mature students if they are non-graduate applicants, aged 21 and over when they enter higher education.	This can be evidenced by the applicant's age and obtained qualifications.

## Appendix 2 - Evidence required for eligibility as a Student with Care Responsibilities (Carer):

Applicants will be required to provide evidence of a Carer Support Plan when requested by the Admissions Team. Applicants with no Carer Support Plan in place will be required to provide alternative evidence. In line with recommendations from [Carers Trust](#), the evidence may take the form of any of the following:

- A doctor's or consultant's letter confirming the responsibility of caring for a close friend, or relative and any perceived impact on the applicant
- A local authority carers' assessment
- Carer Allowance documentation from Department of Work and Pensions
- A letter from a counsellor or support worker, or an organisation such as the Carers Trust or local Carers Centre, confirming the responsibility of caring for a close friend, or relative and any perceived impact on the applicant.