



**University of Oxford**

**Astrophoria Foundation Year**

**Eligibility Guide for Applicants**

**2023-Entry**

# Astrophoria Foundation Year: Eligibility Guide for Applicants 2023-Entry

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## Overview of the Astrophoria Foundation Year

The Astrophoria Foundation Year is Oxford University's one-year foundation programme for UK state school students with significant academic potential, who have experienced severe personal disadvantage and/or disrupted education which has resulted in them being unable to apply directly for an Oxford undergraduate degree programme.

It will enable motivated students to reach their academic potential through a supportive and challenging academic course aimed at developing their confidence, self-belief and personal academic achievement.

The Foundation Year is designed to bridge any gaps that might exist between school and our academically challenging undergraduate courses. The programme is carefully designed to build and develop students' study skills, subject knowledge and capacity for independent study.

The Foundation Year offers foundation year courses across a number of subjects. Applicants to the foundation year courses will have high academic potential and will be doing well academically in relation to their circumstances, but their experience of severe personal disadvantage, disrupted education or other specific circumstances will have affected their ability to achieve Oxford's standard offer.

We know that factors such as socio-economic disadvantage and school performance can make it difficult for students to access their full potential before applying to university. Therefore, we use a range of contextual data to help us to better understand students' achievements in the context of their individual background.

We appreciate that the eligibility may seem complex, but it is important to ensure that the programme considers the students it is designed for. If you are interested, and meet the academic and eligibility criteria then please do apply.

## What this guide is for and when to use it

Offers on the foundation year courses are awarded on academic suitability, but applicants must be able to demonstrate that they have met the eligibility criteria in order to be considered.

Applications that do not meet the criteria cannot be considered.

The purpose of this guide is to help potential applicants understand whether you meet these eligibility criteria. This guide explains all the eligibility criteria and how you will be asked to evidence your eligibility during the application process.

You may be required to submit evidence of your eligibility at the UCAS application stage and/or the Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ) stage.

**Please read the guidance carefully.** If your application does not meet our eligibility requirements, or you do not provide the evidence required for us to verify your eligibility, we will not be able to consider your application further.

We understand that the evidence you provide is personal and may contain sensitive information. The information is only used to verify eligibility and to contextualise your academic performance and will not be shared or used for any other purpose. Offers on the course are awarded on academic suitability, and the specifics of your individual circumstances do not influence admissions decisions.

Any evidence you provide is held securely and following our Information Compliance and Data Protection policies<sup>1</sup>.

When submitting an application, applicants will be asked to declare that you confirm that all of the information provided by you and your referee in their UCAS application and FYAAQ (or any other accompanying or required documents) is correct, accurate and complete to the best of their knowledge. If we, UCAS, or a department or college of the university, have any reason to believe that you or your referee have given false or misleading information or have left out any relevant information, then we reserve the right to cancel your application and remove you from consideration for the course. If you had already been admitted and started their course, then you could be subject to suspension or expulsion from the university, and may be liable for the full cost of the course, even if you had completed your studies.

The Foundation Year team are available to offer support with any further questions after reading this guide: [foundationyear@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:foundationyear@admin.ox.ac.uk)

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<sup>1</sup> Information Compliance and Data Protection Privacy Policy <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/privacy-policy-undergraduate-student-applicants>

## Application Process

1. Check you meet the academic entry requirements
2. Check you are eligible using this guide
3. Submit a UCAS application for your undergraduate course with a foundation year
4. Complete the Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ)
5. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview in March
6. Offers will be issued via UCAS in April

### UCAS DEADLINE

UCAS applications must be submitted by 6pm UK time on Wednesday 25 January 2023

When you submit an application through UCAS, your Oxford foundation year course application will be one of your five UCAS choices.

### FYAAQ DEADLINE

Complete the FYAAQ as soon as possible after submitting your UCAS application.  
FYAAQs must be submitted by 6:00pm UK time Wednesday 1 February 2023

As part of the application process for a foundation year course, you will also be required to complete the online Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ).

The online FYAAQ must be completed and submitted by the deadline so we can consider your application further.

Make sure to leave enough time to complete it and upload the evidence required for verification.

Only applications we have verified as eligible can be assessed further. Applications where FYAAQs are completed late will not be considered further.

### Further Information

See the website for more information on courses and application process: [www.ox.ac.uk/foundationyear](http://www.ox.ac.uk/foundationyear)

## The Eligibility Criteria

Alongside the academic entry requirements (see the website [www.ox.ac.uk/foundationyear](http://www.ox.ac.uk/foundationyear)), you must meet eligibility requirements demonstrating severe personal disadvantage, disrupted education or other specific circumstances shown to have negatively impacted on your educational attainment.

The programme is open to UK state school students who are ordinarily resident<sup>2</sup> in the UK and meet the eligibility criteria. Students who have studied at an independent/private UK school for any length of time are not eligible to apply. International students are not eligible to apply.

Evidence of eligibility is required during the application process and is gathered through the Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ).

**To be considered for a foundation year course, applicants should usually:**

- **meet either the criteria outlined in categories 1, 2 and 3**
- **or meet the criteria of category 4.**

### Eligibility Criteria Categories:

**Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators**

**Category 2: School/College Characteristics**

**Category 3: Individual Experience**

**Category 4: Care Experience (care-experienced applicants are automatically eligible)**

Applicants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible about all the categories and criteria you meet so your application and circumstances can be fully considered.

Eligibility evidence is gathered through your UCAS application and the FYAAQ. You may be required to provide us with original documentation to support your application.

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<sup>2</sup> The term 'ordinarily resident' means where you usually live for most of your time in the three years before your course is due to start. If you were away from the UK during all or part of the three-year period because either you, or a specified family member (for example, a parent or grandparent) were temporarily employed abroad, we may treat you as having lived in the UK for the entire period you were away. If you were away from the UK during all or part of the three-year period because you or a specified family member were serving abroad as a member of the regular armed forces (the British Army, the Royal Navy or the Royal Air Force), this may be treated as a temporary absence. This may not prevent you from being eligible for support towards your fees or your course costs. If you're living in the UK mainly to receive full-time education and, if you weren't studying you'd normally live outside of the UK, we won't usually treat you as being ordinarily resident in the UK.

More information: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

## Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators

You should meet at least one of the POLAR or ACORN or FSM indicators in Category 1 (unless you meet the Category 4 Care Experienced criteria).

### 1.1 POLAR

POLAR (participation of local areas) is a postcode-based system that measures how likely young people are to participate in higher education based on where they live.

POLAR quintiles are calculated by dividing the number of young people in local areas who enter higher education aged 18 or 19, by the overall young population in those areas.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if your home postcode ("home" should be where you live for the majority of the time) falls into 'POLAR4 Quintile 1'.

**How to indicate this:** You will add your home postcode when you complete your UCAS application.

**Verification:** The University will verify your postcode from publicly available and government data-sets.

You can check your postcode's POLAR Quintile using the [Office for Students \(OfS\) postcode search tool](#).

### 1.2 ACORN

ACORN is a postcode-based tool that categorises the UK's population by level of socio-economic advantage.

ACORN uses a range of data - such as accommodation type, household income, population density and lifestyle habits - to produce estimates of the characteristics of each individual household and postcode.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if your home postcode ("home" should be where you reside live for the majority of the time) falls into either ACORN 4 (described as 'financially stretched') or ACORN 5 (described as 'urban adversity'). Both of these groups are characterised by lower-than-average household incomes.

**How to indicate this:** You will add your home postcode when you complete your UCAS application.

**Verification:** The University will verify your postcode from publicly available and government data sets.

You can check your postcode's ACORN category online using [CACI's ACORN search tool](#).

### 1.3 Free School Meals (FSM)

Free School Meals (FSM) is a statutory benefit available to school aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits. Data on students in receipt of FSM is collected in state-maintained schools and is considered to be a good indicator of socio-economic disadvantage in the UK. Young people in the UK are usually eligible for free school meals if their parents or carers are on a low income or in receipt of certain benefits. You may also be eligible if you are paid qualifying benefits directly, instead of through your parent or carer.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you are currently eligible or have been eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM).

**How to indicate this:** There is a 'free school meals' question on the UCAS form to self-declare this. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You are likely to need to provide evidence of your eligibility typically with a letter from your school/college that mentions your eligibility for free school meals.

If you are not sure if you are or have been eligible for Free School Meals, ask your secondary school – they will be able to confirm this for you.

## Category 2: School/College Characteristics

You should meet the school/college indicator in Category 2 (unless you meet the Category 4 Care Experienced criteria).

Please note:

- You will have attended, normally for all compulsory education (usually between the ages of 11-18), non-selective state-funded UK secondary schools/colleges.
- We can only consider schools/colleges that you have attended within the UK.
- Students who have studied at an independent/private UK school for any length of time are not eligible to apply.
- International students are not eligible to apply (unless you have Refugee Status/Humanitarian Protection – see criterion 3.2)

2.1 Attended non-selective state-funded secondary schools with a high percentage (e.g. above or near to the national average) of students eligible for free school meals (FSM)

Secondary school means education usually between the ages of 11 and 16 (e.g. up to GCSEs/Scottish National 5 qualifications) but may apply to some mature students who have returned to education later.

The criteria in this category refer to the school/college that you attended in the academic year 2018/19.

**Eligibility:** *\*Please note that the final data in this section is subject to final approval and may change\**

England

- In 2018/19, the national average for schools in England of students eligible for free school meals in secondary schools was 27.74%<sup>3</sup>.
- If you attended school in England, you would be eligible under this criterion if your school had more than 24.7% of pupils eligible for free school meals in 2018/19.
- You can look up your school on the gov.uk website: [www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables](https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables)

Northern Ireland

- In 2018/19, the national average for schools in Northern Ireland of students eligible for free school meals was 29.3%<sup>4</sup>.
- If you attended school in Northern Ireland, you would be eligible under this criterion if your school had more than 26.3% of pupils eligible for free school meals in 2018/19.
- You can look up your school on the ni.gov.uk website: [www.education-ni.gov.uk/services/schools-plus](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/services/schools-plus)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> England 2018-19 <https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/find-a-school-in-england>

<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland 2018-19 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-meals-201819-statistical-bulletin-17-april-2020> > Revised - School meals statistical bulletin 2018/19.pdf page 6

<sup>5</sup> The Education NI website gives numbers rather than %. You will need to calculate your school % by dividing the FSM student numbers by the total number of students.



## Scotland

- In September 2019, the national average of schools in Scotland of students in secondary schools registered for free school meals was 15.6%<sup>6</sup>.
- If you attended school in Scotland, you would be eligible under this criterion if your school had more than 12.6% of pupils eligible for free school meals in September 2019.
- You can look up your school on the gov.scot website for a summary:  
<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/sg.eas.learninganalysis/viz/SchoolInformationDashboard-Secondary/Introduction>
- Or you can look up more detail about your school in the spreadsheet found here:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-level-summary-statistics/>

## Wales

- In January 2019, the national average of schools in Wales of students in secondary schools eligible for free school meals was 16.6%<sup>7</sup>.
- If you attended school in Wales, you would be eligible under this criterion if your school had more than 13.6% of pupils eligible for free school meals in 2019.
- You can look up your school on the gov.wales website: [www.gov.wales/my-local-school-guide](http://www.gov.wales/my-local-school-guide)

**How to indicate this:** You will add your secondary school information when you complete your UCAS application.

**Verification:** The University will verify your school information from data provided by the Department of Education in England or equivalent data from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

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<sup>6</sup> **Scotland** September 2019 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/school-level-summary-statistics/> . Please note that these statistics are at a school level and the average has been calculated from these records. In addition these statistics only indicate those registered for free school meals rather than those that are eligible.

<sup>7</sup> **Wales** January 2019 <https://gov.wales/schools-census-results-january-2019>

### Category 3: Individual Experience

You should meet at least one of the individual experience indicators in Category 3 (unless you meet the Category 4 Care Experienced criteria).

The criteria in this category are indicators of socio-economic disadvantage and disrupted education which you may have experienced on an individual level.

Applicants will need to provide evidence under each of the criteria you indicate you are eligible for in the Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ). We encourage applicants to indicate as many of these criteria as are relevant to you so your application and circumstances can be fully considered.

Please carefully read the full explanations of each of the criteria and evidence/documents required for eligibility.

Individual experiences may include, for example:

- 3.1 being eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM)
- 3.2 having refugee status or humanitarian protection
- 3.3 being a child in need
- 3.4 having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time
- 3.5 being pregnant or having parental responsibilities whilst in education
- 3.6 having a medical or health issue that has resulted in long absences from school or college (more than six months)
- 3.7 being from a Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman or Boater (GTRSB) background
- 3.8 being a child of a military family
- 3.9 being a service leaver or veteran
- 3.10 being from a household with an income of less than £25,000
- 3.11 experiencing bereavement of a close family member during secondary education
- 3.12 being an estranged student
- 3.13 becoming homeless whilst in education
- 3.14 having experience time out of secondary school or college education (over one year)
- 3.15 having a late diagnosis of Special Educational Needs (within the past two years)

#### Coronavirus Pandemic

Given the global nature of the Coronavirus outbreak, we are aware that all students have experienced significant disruption in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years to both their studies and home life. We want to assure you that our admissions decisions will take into account the closure of schools alongside the widespread disruption. Therefore, although we very much appreciate how unsettling and challenging this time will have been for you, disruption caused by pandemic COVID-19 (including school/college closures) is not considered as a separate individual experience measure of eligibility for the foundation year courses.

#### My circumstances are not listed

If you think you have experience of an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage or disrupted education which is not listed above, please get in touch with the team: [foundationyear@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:foundationyear@admin.ox.ac.uk)

### 3.1 being eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM)

Free School Meals (FSM) is a statutory benefit available to school aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits. Data on students in receipt of FSM is collected in state-maintained schools and is considered to be a good indicator of socio-economic disadvantage in the UK. Young people in the UK are usually eligible for free school meals if their parents or carers are on a low income or in receipt of certain benefits. You may also be eligible if you are paid qualifying benefits directly, instead of through your parent or carer.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you are currently eligible or have been eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM).

**How to indicate this:** There is a 'free school meals' question on the UCAS form to self-declare this.

**Verification:** You are likely to need to provide evidence of your eligibility typically with a letter from your school/college that mentions your eligibility for free school meals. If you are not sure if you are or have been eligible for Free School Meals, ask your secondary school – they will be able to confirm this for you.

### 3.2 having refugee status or humanitarian protection

A refugee is defined as someone whose claim for asylum has been recognised and they have been granted official 'refugee' status. Applicants are also eligible for this criterion if they have been granted humanitarian protection with permission to stay in the UK for humanitarian reasons.

Applicants with refugee status or humanitarian protection are usually eligible for 'Home'<sup>8</sup> fees student finance support for your undergraduate course (the foundation year courses are fully funded and do not require a student finance application).

An asylum seeker is considered to be someone who is in the process of seeking asylum, or the decision is still pending. Usually their fee status is classed as 'overseas'\* and they are ineligible to apply for student finance. As Asylum seekers would likely not be eligible for 'home'\* fees student finance support for an undergraduate degree at Oxford or other university they are not eligible to apply for a foundation year course.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you:

- have refugee status recognised by the UK Government (or being a relevant family member of a refugee with recognised status)
- have humanitarian protection status recognised by the UK Government (or being a relevant family member of a person with recognised humanitarian protection)

**How to indicate this:** There is a 'refugee status' question on the UCAS form to self-declare your circumstances. Select the option which most closely represents your circumstances. This information is not used to set your fee status, so it doesn't matter if it doesn't exactly match your residency status. Your information will be treated in confidence, to help the university provide support for you. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You will need to provide evidence via the FYAAQ so we can verify your eligibility. This may include Home Office documentation to confirm your (or your relevant family member's) limited or indefinite leave to remain status, such as a copy of a Biometric Residence Permit (previously Immigration Status Document).

Documentation we would require:

- If you have refugee status or other form of Leave to Remain, a copy of your [Biometric Residence Permit](#).
- Most recent correspondence from The Home Office confirming your current status.

We appreciate that there can be delays in obtaining formal documentation from the Home Office or other authorities. We would also accept a letter of support from a registered educational charity such as the Refugee Education UK if they have been supporting you.

As part of the application process, you will be asked to submit evidence of any qualifications held. If, due to your circumstances, you are unable to provide this evidence, we pledge to take a flexible approach to work with you to try and agree on a suitable alternative.

We do not require any additional information about the circumstances of your forced migration.

\* Fee status is defined by UK government regulations. More information can be found on the [UK Council for International Students' \(UKCISA\) website](#).

### 3.3 [having been a child in need](#)

The government's Department for Education defines Children in Need as a group supported by children's social care, who have safeguarding and welfare needs, including:

- children on Child In Need Plans
- children on Child Protection Plans
- looked after children
- disabled children

All of these children have needs identified through a children's social care assessment or because of their disability, meaning they are expected to require services and support in order to have the same health and development opportunities as other children. They usually remain living with birth parents or relatives, supported by a multi-agency plans.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have ever had a children's social care assessment, which has led to a Child In Need Plan or a Child Protection Plan.

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You will be expected to provide documentary evidence such as a letter from someone in the Local Authority responsible for your care such as a social worker or another original formal document from the Local Authority relating to your placements or circumstances. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide information about your time being supported by social care services, such as the length of time you have been in care and the type of the care.

### 3.4 [having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time](#)

Young carers (under 18) and young adult carers (aged 18-25) have a commitment to providing unpaid care to a family member who could not cope without their support. This may be due to illness, disability, a mental health issue, or substance misuse. A caring responsibility may be short term — such as supporting someone with their recovery following an accident, or long term — such as helping someone with a long term illness.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you help to look after a family member who is ill, disabled, has a mental health issue, or misuses drugs or alcohol, and who could not cope without your support

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You will be asked in the FYAAQ to provide some information about your situation, such as the length of time you have been/are a carer and how this has impacted your educational experience. If you have had a 'carer's assessment' with your local authority you can submit documentation to demonstrate this. We understand that local authorities may not formally recognise young carers or young adult carers, but you could provide correspondence with your local authority if you wish. You could also ask your school to write a letter of support if they are aware of your responsibilities. If you have had support from a registered young carers charity we would also accept a letter of support from them.

### 3.5 being pregnant or having parental responsibilities whilst in education

While in full-time education, you have become a parent (mother or father) and have formally recognised parenting responsibilities for the care and wellbeing of a child aged 17 or under.

This might mean that you are:

- a biological parent
- a step parent
- an adoptive or legal parent
- a legally-appointed guardian
- a foster care

If you care for someone who is not a child (they are aged 18 or above), you would be considered a 'carer' – please see criteria 3.4.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if, while in full-time education, you have become a parent (mother or father) or have parenting responsibilities formally recognised for the care and wellbeing of a child aged 17 or under.

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information and provide documentary evidence of your parental status. This could include a birth certificate with you names as a parent, an adoption certificate or documentation from your local council such as a parental order or legal guardianship. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some information about the stage of education you were in when you became a parent/guardian/carers.

### 3.6 having a medical or health issue that has resulted in long absences from school or college (more than six months)

Medical or health conditions include both physical and mental health issues. The issues could be serious, acute or chronic illness. The criteria applies to applicants who have been absent from school/college for more than 6 months due to a single condition, either in one absence or as a series of recurring but shorter absences. It is expected that the severity of the issue means that applicants should have sought medical treatment.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have experienced a physical or mental medical or health issue which has resulted in long absences of more than six months (on one occasion or multiple recurrences) from secondary school or college.

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You will be asked in the FYAAQ to provide information about the circumstances of your long term absences and when they occurred in your education. You will also need to provide evidence. This could include a letter from your GP or medical specialist with information about the long term sickness certificate they provided to your school/college. This could also include documentation from your local council about any arrangements for home or hospital teaching set up due to your long term absence. You could also ask your school to provide a letter confirming your individual healthcare plan and detail on the length of your absences.

### 3.7 being from a Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman or Boater (GTRSB) background

The Office for Students acknowledges that 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.

This includes:

- English or Welsh Romany Gypsies
- European Roma
- Irish Travellers
- Scottish Gypsy Travellers
- showpeople such as people linked with fairground or circus professions
- people living on barges or other boats
- people living in settled (bricks and mortar) accommodation
- New Age Travellers.

The foundation year recognises the unique individual experiences of GTRSB students and how these may inhibit access and participation in Higher Education.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you identify as being from a Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman or Boater (GTRSB) community.

**How to indicate this:** On the UCAS application there are questions about your ethnic origin and national identity. You will be able to self-identify as 'Gypsy, Traveller and Roma' on UCAS form. The FYAAQ will allow you to self-identify as Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman and Boater.

**Verification:** There is no requirement for you to provide documentary verification. The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about your educational experience and you may choose to disclose details about if/how being from a GTRSB background has impacted your educational experience.

### 3.8 being a child of a military family

If your parent(s) or carer(s) is serving as a Regular or Reservist in the UK Armed Forces, or has done so in the past, your experience of applying to higher education may be different to students from a non-service background. For example, you may have moved schools more often than most students, or you may have felt unable to participate in extra-curricular activities.

We understand that service children may experience disruption to their education, or may have been restricted in their course choices. We are also aware that young people can face additional challenges when a parent or carer is deployed.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if your parent or carer is serving in the UK Armed Forces or reserves, or has done so in the past, during your childhood (up to age 18).

**How to indicate this:** You may wish to identify the armed forces as your parent/carer's occupation on your UCAS form. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** There is no requirement for you to provide documentary verification. The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about your educational experience and you may choose to disclose details about if/how being a child of a military family has impacted your educational experience.

### 3.9 being a service leaver or veteran

The programme considers a veteran to be defined as someone who has served for at least one day in the UK Armed Forces (as a Regular). The term 'Service Leaver' offers a broader description of someone in transition from the Armed Forces, or whose service has already ended. These terms are used interchangeably, but individuals may have a personal preference, so we refer to both.

If you have ever served as a Regular in the UK Armed Forces, you may find there are unique challenges involved in applying to university or college and your experience of applying to higher education may be different to students from a non-service background.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have ever served as a Regular in the UK Armed Forces.

**How to indicate this:** There is a 'served in the UK Armed Forces' question on the UCAS form to self-declare your circumstances. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about your educational experience and you may choose to disclose details about if/how being in the UK Armed Forces has impacted your educational experience. You will also be asked to submit documentation that demonstrates your time in the UK Armed Forces.

### 3.10 being from a household with an income of less than £25,000

Your household income is made up of your income plus that of the people who live with you. It includes anyone who financially contributes to the household you live in.

Household income depends on your individual circumstances:

*If you're under 25 and financially depend on at least one parent/carer*

Your household income includes:

- your parents' income, if you live with them or depend on them financially
- the combined income of one of your parents and their partner, if you live with them or depend on them financially

*If you're under 25 and do not financially depend on your parent(s)/carer(s)*

Your household income does not include your parents' income if:

- you have supported yourself financially for at least 3 years
- you have been married or in a civil partnership at any time before the start of your course

- you spent at least 13 weeks in the care of your local authority before you turned 16 - in this case, you might be able to apply as a care leaver
- you've had no contact with your parents for over a year - in this case, you might be able to apply as an 'estranged student'

*If you're over 25*

- Your household income will not include your parents income if you are over 25, as you will be classed as an 'independent student'.
- Your household income will include your partner's income, if you live with them (even if they spend most of their time abroad).

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have a combined household income of £25,000 or less.

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You will be expected to provide the most recent evidence of earnings from the tax year 2021-22 for you and the relevant members of your household via the FYAAQ so we can verify your eligibility, for example P60s.

Examples of evidence you can provide to confirm your household income include:

- P60, P60U, P60P, P45, P11D, P9D
- self-assessed tax return (all pages)
- an SA302 tax calculation
- month 12 payslip or week 52/53 payslip with total paid to date
- a letter from an accountant or employer which must be on headed paper, signed and dated, and confirm the gross salary for the relevant tax year and tax code
- a letter from the Job Centre Plus confirming the total taxable benefits received

### 3.11 [experiencing bereavement of a close family member during secondary education](#)

In these circumstances, close family members mean your immediate family such as a sibling, parent or carer/guardian. It also includes anyone who shared the same household as you at the time of their death (for example a step-sibling).

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have experienced bereavement of a close family member whilst in secondary education (for example your parent/carer/sibling).

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about the nature of your relationship with the person who died and when this happened, for example the year of school you were in. You could also ask your school to write a letter if they are aware of your situation. If a letter from your school is not possible, we would also accept other documentation such as a copy of the death certificate or a letter from a hospital Family Bereavement Centre, accompanied by some information about the nature of your relationship. The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about your educational experience and you may choose to disclose details about if/how your experience impacted your education.



### 3.12 being an estranged student

You are considered 'estranged' if you no longer have the support of your parents as a result of a permanent breakdown in your relationship which has led to ceased contact. This might mean your biological, step or adoptive parents or wider family members who have been responsible for supporting you in the past.

By 'estranged' we mean that:

- You have had no contact at all with your parents/carers for at least 12 months and this is unlikely to change.
- You live away from parents/carers and receiving no emotional, physical or financial support.
- You would likely be assessed as an independent student by Student Finance England (SFE) because you are estranged from both parents/carers.

Please note, you will not be considered estranged on the basis that you live separately from your parents but continue to communicate with them, you have recently fallen out with your parents, your parents do not support your decision to study at university, or your parents are unwilling to complete income assessment forms or contribute towards your student finance. These are challenging circumstances but are not classed as estrangement.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have had no contact at all with your parents/carers for at least 12 months, receiving no emotional, physical or financial support, and this is unlikely to change.

**How to indicate this:** There is an 'estrangement' question on the UCAS form to self-declare your circumstances. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about the stage of your education when you became estranged and provide evidence of your situation. Supporting statements could include:

- A letter from your school or college which explains that they knew about the difficult relationship whilst you were at school and your subsequent estrangement.
- A letter from your case worker, social worker, housing support officer or local authority that shows they were aware of your situation.
- A letter from a recognised organisation such as Stand Alone that can vouch for the fact you have been seeking support for your estrangement.
- A supporting statement from a trusted independent person. This person should normally have known about your situation for a substantial amount of time, and can verify that you don't have contact with your biological, adoptive or only living parents. This person must not be related to you or be a close friend of the family.

### 3.13 becoming homeless whilst in education

If you became homeless whilst in education you might have had nowhere to stay and are living on the streets, but you can be homeless even if you have a roof over your head. You could also be considered homeless if, for example, you ended up staying with friends or family or stayed in a hostel, night shelter or B&B.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you became homeless whilst in secondary education.

**How to indicate this:** You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about the stage of your education when you became homeless and how the length of time you were homeless for. You may choose to disclose details about how being homeless has impacted your educational experience. You could also ask your

school to write a letter if they are aware of your situation, or provide correspondence from your local council or housing advisor of emergency housing arrangements. We would also accept a letter of support from a registered charity such as the Shelter or Centre Point if they have been supporting you.

### 3.14 having experienced time out of secondary school or college education (over one year)

You have experienced time out of education, and then returned to education. This gap must be more than one year, but there is no upper limit on the length of time between your qualifications.

For example, you may have left school/college education (education usually between 11 to 18 years of age) for work purposes but then returned after several years to complete education qualifications.

We understand that education is an ongoing journey, and that a lot may have changed from when you left school. We know that mature applicants are likely to have a wide range of experiences beyond formal education, including work experience and volunteering. While these skills can add to your application, work experience will not replace direct evidence of your ability to succeed in a formal learning environment. All applicants are required to meet the academic entry criteria (though they may meet this in a wide variety of ways), and we will therefore still need to see academic qualifications completed in the past 3 years. This might be GCSEs, A-levels, or it could be an Access to Higher Education qualification or similar.

Deferred or 'Gap years' between school/college and university are not considered under this criteria.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have experienced time out of secondary education for more than 1 year and then returned to education to complete education qualifications.

**How to indicate this:** You will be required to include information about your education qualifications on the UCAS form, including dates qualifications were received. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about your educational experience, including when you received your qualifications and the length of gap between them. You will also need to provide evidence such as a transcript of your qualifications to demonstrate which years they were taken in. A transcript is the record of your academic qualifications and you can request a certified statement of results from the exam board responsible for the qualification/s you took if you do not have one. You will also be asked to submit an academic reference as part of your UCAS application, which should be from a teacher or someone who knows you from an educational setting, work context or volunteering, and who can give specific details of your academic potential

### 3.15 having a late diagnosis of Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the past two years

Special Educational Needs (SEN) include sensory and mobility impairments or disabilities, mental health difficulties, autism, and other Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD.

If you have been diagnosed with a Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the past two academic years of the final application deadline (i.e. you have received a diagnosis since September 2020) then you may be eligible under this category.

If you were diagnosed with Special Educational Needs more than two academic years ago, you will not be eligible under this category as we are looking for those who were unable to access the support they needed earlier in their education.

**Eligibility:** You will be eligible if you have been diagnosed with a Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the past two years (between September 2020 and January 2023).

**How to indicate this:** You will be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information and evidence of your situation so we can verify your eligibility. This could be documentary evidence such as a letter from your school's SEN Coordinator or equivalent, or a copy of your Educational, Health and Social Care Plan (EHP). If those are not available then we would accept a letter from your GP or another specialist medical professional that references the diagnosis and is dated within the past two years.

We understand that some applicants may be in the process of receiving a diagnosis. In these instances we would accept dated documentation which demonstrates that you are currently undergoing an SEN and/or SpLD assessment.

## Category 4: Care Experience

### 4.1 Spending any length of time in local authority care and have been educated at UK state schools

The definition of 'care experience' varies around the UK, and between higher education providers.

For the foundation year courses, we consider an applicant to be 'care experienced' if they have been in the care of their local authority for any length of time at any point in their lives.

Types of care experience may include:

- living with foster carers under local authority care
- living in a residential children's home
- being 'looked after at home' under a supervision order
- living with friends or relatives in kinship care through a formal arrangement e.g. fostering or a Special Guardianship order)

Care experience does not refer to time spent in boarding schools, working in a care or healthcare setting, or if you're a carer yourself. (If you are a young carer, please refer to criterion 3.4 'having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time').

**Eligibility:** You are automatically eligible if you have spent any length of time in local authority care and have been at UK state schools.

Care experienced (UK state school educated) applicants are automatically eligible for foundation year courses, and you do not need to meet the criteria in categories 1, 2 or 3. However, we would recommend you provide us with information in the other categories where relevant so that we have a comprehensive understanding of your educational experiences.

**How to indicate this:** There is an 'in care' question on the UCAS form to self-declare your circumstances. You will also be asked about the length of time you have spent in care. You will also be able to self-declare this on the FYAAQ.

**Verification:** You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYAAQ so we can verify your eligibility, providing documentary evidence such as a letter from someone in the Local Authority responsible for your care, your social worker or another original formal document from the Local Authority relating to your placements or circumstances. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide information about your time in care such as the length of time you have been in care and the type of the care.

## Eligibility Criteria & Verification

### How will criteria be verified?

In order to help us support the verification of eligible applicants we use the Office for Students (OfS) definition of under-represented groups: “Groups of students who share particular characteristics where data shows gaps in equality of opportunity in relation to access, success or progression.”

Eligibility verification is important to make sure that the foundation year courses support the students they have been designed for.

The Astrophoria Foundation Year considers a range of criteria across four categories: socio-economic indicators, school/college characteristics, individual experience and care experience.

For Categories 1 and 2, the University will be able to verify your indicators from publicly available data-sets, the Department of Education (DfE) and/or other agencies.

For Categories 3 and 4, applicants will need to provide evidence of their eligibility under the criteria they indicate. This may be original documentation or further information in the Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ).

To be considered for a foundation year course, applicants must:

- meet either the criteria outlined in categories 1, 2 and 3
- or meet the criteria of category 4.

Eligibility Category	Verified by
Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators	University access to publically available and government issued data.
Category 2: School/College Characteristics	University access to publically available and government issued data.
Category 3: Individual Experience	Applicants will need to provide evidence of individual indicators.
Category 4: Care Experience	Applicants will need to provide evidence of their care experience.

## Table of Eligibility Criteria Evidence Requirements

To be considered for a foundation year course, applicants must:

- meet either the criteria outlined in categories 1, 2 and 3
- OR meet the criteria of category 4

Ref	Criteria	Do you need to provide evidence?	If yes, what documents / evidence is required?
<b>Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators</b>			
1.1	POLAR	No	
1.2	ACORN	No	
1.3	Free School Meals (FSM)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter from your school or college</li> </ul>
<b>Category 2: School/College Characteristics</b>			
2.1	Non-selective state-funded secondary schools with a high percentage (e.g. above or near to the national average) of students eligible for free school meals (FSM)	No	
<b>Category 3: Individual Experience</b>			
3.1	being eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter from your school or college</li> </ul>
3.2	having refugee status or humanitarian protection	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have refugee status or other form of Leave to Remain, a copy of your Biometric Residence Permit.</li> <li>• Most recent correspondence from The Home Office confirming your current status.</li> </ul>
3.3	having been a child in need	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• documentary evidence such as a letter from someone in the Local Authority responsible for your care or another original formal document from the Local Authority relating to your placements or circumstances.</li> </ul>
3.4	having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local authority 'carer's assessment'</li> <li>• local authority correspondence</li> <li>• letter of support from your school/college</li> <li>• letter of support from a registered young carers charity</li> </ul>

3.5	being pregnant or having parental responsibilities whilst in education	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• birth certificate with you named as a parent</li> <li>• an adoption certificate with you named as a parent</li> <li>• documentation from your local council such as a parental order or legal guardianship</li> </ul>
3.6	having a medical or health issue that has resulted in long absences from school or college (more than six months)	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a letter from your GP or medical specialist with information about the long term sickness certificate they provided to your school/college</li> <li>• documentation from your local council about any arrangements for home or hospital teaching set up due to your long term absence</li> <li>• letter of support from your school/college confirming your individual healthcare plan and length of your absences</li> </ul>
3.7	being from a Gypsy/ Traveller/ Roma background	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FYAAQ will ask you for information.</li> </ul>
3.8	being a child of a military family	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FYAAQ will ask you for information on your circumstances.</li> </ul>
3.9	being a service leaver or veteran	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentary evidence such as a letter demonstrating your time in the UK Armed Forces.</li> </ul>
3.10	being from a household with an income of less than £25,000	Yes	One or more of the following to confirm your household income: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• P60, P60U, P60P, P45, P11D, P9D</li> <li>• self-assessed tax return (all pages)</li> <li>• an SA302 tax calculation</li> <li>• month 12 payslip or week 52/53 payslip with total paid to date</li> <li>• a letter from an accountant or employer which must be on headed paper, signed and dated, and confirm the gross salary for the relevant tax year and tax code</li> <li>• a letter from the Job Centre Plus confirming the total taxable benefits received</li> </ul>
3.11	experiencing bereavement of a close family member during secondary education	Yes	One or more of the following accompanied by some information about the nature of your relationship: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a letter from your school/college</li> <li>• a copy of the death certificate</li> <li>• a letter from a hospital Family Bereavement Centre</li> </ul>
3.12	being an estranged student	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter from your school/college</li> <li>• A letter from your case worker, social worker, housing support officer or local authority</li> <li>• A letter from a recognised organisation such as Stand Alone</li> <li>• A supporting statement from a trusted independent person. This person must not be related to you or be a close friend of the family.</li> </ul>

3.13	becoming homeless whilst in education	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a letter from your school/college</li> <li>• correspondence from your local council or housing advisor of emergency housing arrangements</li> <li>• a letter of support from a registered charity such as the Shelter or Centre Point</li> </ul>
3.14	gap of more than 1 year in education	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a transcript of your qualifications to demonstrate which years they were taken in</li> </ul>
3.15	having a late diagnosis of Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the past two years	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter from your school's SEN Coordinator or equivalent</li> <li>• A copy of your Educational, Health and Social Care Plan (EHP).</li> </ul> If those are not available then we would accept: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A letter from your GP or another specialist medical professional that references the diagnosis and is dated within the past two years.</li> </ul>
<b>Category 4: Care Experience (care-experienced applicants are automatically eligible)</b>			
4.1	you have spent any length of time in local authority care and have been at UK state schools	Yes	One or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter from Local Authority</li> <li>• Other original formal documentation reflecting your care arrangements</li> </ul>



## Do I meet the Eligibility Criteria? – Self-Checker Tool

Use the table below to see if you meet the requirements – Add a tick ✓ next to the criteria you think you are eligible under.

Use the detailed information in the guide above for the specific requirements and evidence required.

**Remember, to be considered for a foundation year course, you should:**

- **meet either the criteria outlined in categories 1, 2 and 3**
- **or meet the criteria of category 4.**

	Add a ✓ below if you meet the criteria	Ref	Criteria
<b>Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators</b> You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 1			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 1		1.1	POLAR
		1.2	ACORN
		1.3	Free School Meals (FSM)
<b>Category 2: School/College Characteristics</b> You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 2			
You should meet the criteria in Category 2		2.1	Non-selective state-funded secondary schools with a high percentage (e.g. above or near to the national average) of students eligible for free school meals (FSM)
<b>Category 3: Individual Experience</b> You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 1			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 3		3.1	being eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM)
		3.2	having refugee status or humanitarian protection
		3.3	having been a child in need
		3.4	having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time
		3.5	being pregnant or having parental responsibilities whilst in education
		3.6	having a medical or health issue that has resulted in long absences from school or college (more than six months)
		3.7	being from a Gypsy/ Traveller/ Roma background
		3.8	being a child of a military family
		3.9	being a service leaver or veteran
		3.10	being from a household with an income of less than £25,000
		3.11	experiencing bereavement of a close family member during secondary education
		3.12	being an estranged student
		3.13	becoming homeless whilst in education
		3.14	gap of more than 1 year in education

		3.15	having a late diagnosis of Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the past two years
<b>Category 4: Care Experience</b> Care-experienced applicants who have studied at UK state school for all of their education are automatically eligible. You do not need to meet the criteria in Categories 1, 2 or 3, but you may wish to provide us with information in those other categories so that we have a comprehensive understanding of your educational experiences.			
If you meet this category 4 you are automatically eligible.		4.1	you have spent any length of time in local authority care and have been educated at UK state schools

## Questions

If you think you have experience of an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage or disrupted education which is not listed above, or you have other questions please get in touch with the team who will be happy to help: [foundationyear@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:foundationyear@admin.ox.ac.uk)

## Privacy Policy & Data Protection

The University of Oxford is committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal information ('personal data').

We understand that the evidence you provide is personal and may contain sensitive information. The information is only used to verify eligibility and will not be shared or used for any other purpose. Offers on the course are awarded on academic suitability, and your individual circumstances do not influence admissions decisions.

Any evidence you provide is held securely and following our Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

The privacy policy describes how we collect and use your personal data during the admissions process in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and related UK data protection legislation. It should be read in conjunction with the privacy policy of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

The University's Undergraduate Applicant Privacy Policy is available at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/privacy-policy-undergraduate-student-applicants>

If you enrol as a student, your data will be processed in accordance with the University's Student Privacy Policy which is available at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/student-privacy-policy>

The University's Data protection policy is available at [www.ox.ac.uk/privacy-policy](http://www.ox.ac.uk/privacy-policy).



All information in this guide is correct at the time of publication (June 2022) but should be checked against the Undergraduate Admissions website for the most up-to-date information.

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