



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



**Progression to Russell Group Universities
Teachers' Conference
May 2020**

Contextual Admissions

Richard Kemp – University of Leeds

Lesley Stokes – The University of Edinburgh

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Our workshop plan:

- **Definitions**
- **Why and how?**
- **Examples from our universities**
- **Finding out more**
- **Questions**

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

What do we mean by “Contextual Admissions”?

- Recognising potential in under-represented learners
- Acknowledging barriers faced by some learners
- Social / Economic / Educational disadvantage
- *Not* necessarily “extenuating circumstances” or protected characteristics (eg gender, disability...)

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



What we consider in Contextual Admissions...

IMPORTANT! Universities vary in what they take into account.
Check directly.

Usually:

- Home postcode (to identify areas of deprivation)
- Care experience
- Level of attainment of school / college attended

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



What we consider in Contextual Admissions...

IMPORTANT! Universities vary in what they take into account.
Check directly.

Sometimes:

- School postcode (to identify areas of deprivation)
- Caring responsibilities
- Refugee status
- Participation in local widening access projects

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

What we DON'T consider in Contextual Admissions...

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- State / Independent school
- Parental occupation

Some unis may have policies on encouraging applications from groups based on factors such as those above

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

A bit about postcode datasets...

- ACORN (A classification of residential neighbourhoods)
- POLAR (Participation of Local Areas)
- SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation)

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



What about “special / extenuating circumstances”?

These could include:

- Illness
- Family / home disruption
- School disruption (eg teaching shortages)
- Bereavement

It is **unlikely** that these factors would be included in a university’s “contextual admissions” policy, though they may be taken into account on a case by case basis

Important to note any extenuating circumstances in UCAS reference – follow up with email too?

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



Example: University of Leeds

Access to Leeds

- National scheme, open to any candidate meeting the eligibility criteria
- Two grade reduced offer on all undergraduate programmes, including medicine: so AAA becomes ABB
- Pre –entry preparation for participants
- Large scale – now 15% of the University’s UK undergraduate cohort, with nearly 1,000 registering
- Followed by on course support for students once they have started their programme of study
- Strong achievement data, with over 80% achieving first and 2:1s

**RUSSELL
GROUP** 



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



Example: University of Leeds

Access to Leeds

Eligibility criteria includes:

- Household income
- School achievement
- Postcode, using IMD and POLAR
- No parental HE experience
- Public care
- Disrupted studies.

Candidates have to meet two criteria to be Access to Leeds eligible

**RUSSELL
GROUP** 



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



Example: University of Leeds

Access to Leeds

Pre-entry module

- University skills development, including research and referencing, academic writing
- Subject skills development, with support from a University of Leeds tutor
- Accessed via the student portal, so available to all national participants.

For more information on Access to Leeds, please go to: www.leeds.ac.uk/a2l

**RUSSELL
GROUP** 



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



Example: the University of Edinburgh

We look at three main things when making widening access offers:

Your home postcode: we look at whether or not you live in a geographical area of the UK that is defined by government data as being an area of deprivation (we only use Acorn)

Your school or college: we look at the academic attainment and, in some cases, the percentage of students from your school or college who progress to higher education

Whether you are care experienced

We **don't** look at factors such as gender, ethnicity, parental occupation or whether you've attended a state or independent school/college when making widening access offers

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



Example: the University of Edinburgh

LLB Law

Standard entrance requirements

- A Levels: A*AA
- Must include English Literature / English Language / combined English

Minimum entrance requirement (for Widening Access applicants):

- A Levels: ABB
- Must include English Literature / English Language / combined English

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



How to find out more

www.advancingaccess.ac.uk/2/content/3/resources/44

The screenshot shows a website interface with a green header. On the left, there is a 'Back' button with a left arrow icon. To the right of the header is a dropdown menu labeled 'Choose another strand of CPD'. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a dark background and contains the following text:

- A guide to leading universities' use of contextual information**
- Content type**
Contextual admissions policies
- Audience**
Teacher training resource
- Description**
This page provides a summary of the contextual admissions policy at each of the 24 Russell Group universities.

Please note that universities change their policies from time to time, so we recommend that you use this page alongside the websites of the universities themselves. If you require clarification about a particular university's policy, please contact the university directly.

The right column has a light background and contains a list of resources:

- Guidebook** (with a question mark icon)
- How do admissions processes work? (with a lock icon and a right arrow icon)
- Information sheets** (with a question mark icon)
- Admissions glossary (with a right arrow icon)
- Admissions processes - myth-busting (with a right arrow icon)
- Top tips for supporting students who do not have a confirmed place (with a lock icon and a right arrow icon)

**RUSSELL
GROUP**



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Any questions?

**RUSSELL
GROUP**