

### **Access to Southampton Scheme Guidelines**

This document is designed to provide guidance on applications to the Access to Southampton (A2S) scheme. It also lays out the rules and conditions of the scheme. Its aims are to assist in making consistent and swift decisions on applications and queries, as well as to ensure transparency to applicants and their supporters.

Version 2.0, approved November 2015. This document supersedes any previous versions.

Queries regarding these guidelines should be directed to the A2S Co-ordinator in the first instance.

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#### **1. Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants must meet at least two of the following criteria in order to be eligible for the A2S scheme.

- i. In the first generation of immediate family to go into higher education, excluding brothers or sisters.***

Any applicant whose parents have not previously completed a higher education course is eligible for this criterion.

Applicants with siblings who have completed or who are currently going through a higher education course are still eligible for this criterion. This criterion is also not affected by family members outside of the immediate family such as grandparents, cousins, uncles, aunts etc.

This criterion is not affected by parents of applicants that have started but not completed a higher education course or studied for Open University degrees.

For the purposes of this criterion a higher education course refers to a level 6 qualification or above.

Eligibility for this criterion must be confirmed by the member of school staff writing the applicant's A2S application reference.

- ii. In receipt of a 16-19 bursary or similar grant OR received Free School Meals (FSM) at any point during secondary school education.***

Following the abolition of the EMA, the 16-19 bursary which replaced it is being administered in different ways at different schools/colleges. If a school/college can support entitlement to a bursary in the information that they provide with the student's application, then the A2S scheme will accept this as confirmation of eligibility under this criterion. In cases where students have chosen not to claim a bursary to which they are entitled, again the information provided by the school/college would be used as evidence for eligibility for this criterion.

Following a report published by BIS in August 2013 (BIS/13/P155: Widening Participation in Higher Education), it is noted that those who receive FSM are less likely to progress to higher education than those who did not receive FSM, and that this gap starts early on in a child's education. An applicant will be eligible under this criterion if they received or were eligible to receive Free School Meals at any time during their secondary school education.

**iii. Attended secondary school which achieved below national average of 5 A\*- C passes (including English and Maths) at GCSE in 2015.**

If a school achieved a GCSE pass rate of less than the national average of 5 A\*- C passes (including English and Maths) any applicant from that school will be eligible for this criterion.

This criterion refers to when the student sat the majority of their GCSE examinations. Where students may not have taken their GCSEs in 2015 (for example, if they are repeating Year 12) then the average from the year in which they did take their GCSEs can be used.

The national average of 5 A\* - C passes (including English and Maths) for 2015 is due to be published in January 2016. The provisional result at October 2015 is 52.8%. This will be updated after the final figure is published by the DfE in January 2016.

Data from the Department of Education should be used to verify eligibility for this criterion.

**iv. Studies affected or disrupted by circumstances in your personal, social or domestic life.**

Applicants meet this criterion if their studies have been disrupted by circumstances beyond their control. Each application is considered on an individual basis and whilst we cannot provide an exhaustive list of situations that meet this criterion, circumstances that could qualify eligibility include: serious or prolonged illness, bereavement or family disruption. It will be necessary for the applicant and the referee to provide information and verification of these circumstances on the A2S application form.

**v. Living or grew up in Local Authority care.**

To qualify for this criterion an applicant must have spent at least 3 months living in Local Authority care since the age of 14. This includes foster care and supported accommodation.

Eligibility for this criterion must be confirmed by the member of school staff writing the applicant's A2S application reference.

**vi. Are a Young or Young Adult Carer**

Given the focus on Young Carer's in the 2016-17 OFFA Access Agreement Guidance '*How to produce an access agreement for 2016-17*', this criterion will be introduced for the A2S scheme for 2017 entry. For the purposes of eligibility under this criterion, the A2S scheme uses the definitions of a Young Carer and a Young Adult Carer set out by the Carer's Trust: <http://www.carers.org/what-carer>

"A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. The tasks undertaken can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care and the structure of the family as a whole".

The person providing a reference for the applicant will need to confirm that, to the best of their knowledge, that the applicant is a Young Carer.

- vii. Current home post code shows that you live in an area with low levels of progression to Higher Education. (Postcodes within the lowest 2 POLAR3 quintiles).*

To be eligible for the criterion, the applicant's home postcode must fall within either quintile 1 or quintile 2 of the POLAR3 measure of young participation in Higher Education.

Postcodes can be checked for eligibility on the HEFCE Postcode Checker:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/postcode/> The A2S scheme will use data from this site to verify eligibility for this criterion.

If an applicant resides at two different addresses, for example, in the case of parents' separation, then eligibility should be measured against the postcode of the address at which the applicant resides the majority of the time.

## **2. Selection of applicants**

All applications are considered together after the application deadline, by the A2S Co-ordinator. All applicants must meet a minimum of two of the eligibility criteria, and all applications are then treated equally.

When shortlisting applications we will take into account the following:

- That the applicant is studying the necessary AS, A-Level or equivalent qualifications for their chosen subject
- That the applicant meets any GCSE requirements for their chosen subject
- The applicants' predicted and past grades
- Motivation to study their chosen subject at degree level
- Motivation to study at the University of Southampton
- The reference provided by the school/college.

The A2S Co-ordinator may refer an application to the relevant academic or admissions team if there is uncertainty about their suitability for the course, or if the number of applications vastly outweighs the number of places available on the programme.

## **3. Rules and procedures governing the scheme**

Students must apply to the scheme when they are in Year 12, or in their first year of A Level studies, within the stated deadlines. Year 13 or second year students are not eligible to apply to the programme. Students repeating Year 12 may still apply, as long as they do so by the application deadline in that year.

Students must attend the A2S summer school in its entirety, and obey by the associated code of conduct.

Applicants must complete and pass the relevant academic assignment for their chosen discipline, following the instructions laid out by academic staff, by the deadline given. Late assignments will not be accepted. Plagiarism is taken seriously and applicants found to have

plagiarised work will not be permitted to continue with the scheme. Assignments will be marked by the designated academic member of staff and their decision on the mark awarded is final.

Students who pass their academic assignment must submit a Final Stage Application Form directly to the A2S Co-ordinator, before their school or college submit their UCAS application. This will allow the A2S Co-ordinator to flag applicants as being part of the scheme on the Application Review Centre and/or Banner.

Students who pass their academic assignment are eligible for an alternative offer, which is up to two grades below the standard admissions offer for their course. Participation in the scheme does not guarantee an offer from the University. Admissions decisions are based on a combination of predicted and achieved grades, content of the UCAS personal statement, UCAS reference, interview (for some courses), and the additional information provided by applicants and teachers/tutors on the A2S application forms.

Those in receipt of an A2S alternative offer will have the following conditions attached to that offer:

- Attendance at a Transition and Skills Event, which takes place in the Easter holiday of their Year 13 studies. Only in situations where non-attendance is beyond the applicant's control will an exception to this condition be made. We reserve the right to request evidence to support an applicant's reason for non-attendance.
- The University of Southampton must be selected as the applicant's firm choice when replying to UCAS. The A2S offer cannot be used as an insurance choice. If a student selects the University of Southampton as their insurance choice, their admissions offer will be reverted to the standard offer for which they would be eligible for entry to their chosen course.

All parts of the programme must be completed in full in order to qualify to the A2S £1000 bursary. If additional opportunities or support are offered to the participants on the scheme, we reserve the right to put in place additional conditions or requirements related to the receipt of these.

If a student decides they wish to study a different subject to that which they attended the summer school or completed the academic assignment for, the case will need to be referred to the relevant academic or academic unit to seek approval for transfer. We reserve the right to ask students to complete and pass the relevant assignment, if the academic staff feel that this is required in order to assess the student's ability or potential for studying the subject they wish to transfer to.

If a student completes the summer school and passes the academic assignment but then chooses to repeat Year 12 (for example, following receipt of their AS results) they can carry their application over to the following year, with approval from the academic discipline.

If an A2S applicant also completes an EPQ, their offer will remain the standard A2S offer. No further reduction in their offer will be made.

If a student holding an A2S admissions offer wishes to defer entry and take a gap year, this will be subject to approval by the relevant Admissions Tutor/Team.

If a student who received an A2S offer does not meet the conditions of that offer at confirmation then asks if the A2S offer could stand if they reapply to the University for the

following year's entry, the case would be referred to the relevant Admissions Tutor/Team for a decision.

Any queries regarding these matters that cannot be resolved by the A2S Co-ordinator should be referred to the academic co-ordinator for the relevant discipline, or the Admissions Tutor/Team as appropriate.

#### **4. Complaints procedure**

If an applicant wishes to make a complaint about the scheme, they should be referred to the University Calendar, Section IV: General Regulations, Regulations Governing Complaints from Applicants.

<http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/complaints-applicants.html>