

Contextual Admissions Policy

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

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POLICY

1. Introduction

The University of Wolverhampton is committed to fair access to higher education. This Policy has been approved by the Academic Board. It is the University's expectation that this policy sets out the approach to contextual undergraduate admissions.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a consistent and transparent framework for recognising applicants' individual circumstances and socioeconomic backgrounds when determining contextual offers. This comprehensive revision replaces the existing Contextual Admissions Policy.

3. Principles

The policy seeks to promote fair access, consistent decision-making, transparency for applicants and appropriate academic standards.

The implementation of this policy is in accordance with the University's core values which are to be:

- **Accountable;** we take pride in what we do and how we do it, take responsibility for our actions and operate with transparency and integrity.
- **Resilient;** we have a positive outlook; we are adaptable and recover from setbacks.
- **Inclusive;** we are welcoming, respectful, collegiate and supportive.
- **Ambitious;** we are imaginative, confident, innovative and deliver excellence.

4. Scope

This policy applies to applicants and its detailed scope and exclusions are set out in section 5.3. Responsibility for applying the policy rests with Admissions, supported by relevant University teams.

5. Details of Policy

5.1 Policy Rationale

The University of Wolverhampton is committed to fair access to higher education and recognises that applicants' educational opportunities and achievements may be influenced by their individual circumstances and socioeconomic backgrounds. This policy explains how the University takes these circumstances into account when making contextual offers, while maintaining appropriate standards for admission.

5.2 What is a contextual offer?

A contextual offer is an offer with reduced academic entry requirements for an applicant who meets one or more of the eligibility criteria in this policy. Eligible applicants may receive a reduction of 16 UCAS tariff points where the University is selected as their Firm choice, or 8 UCAS tariff points where selected as their Insurance choice through UCAS. The reduction is calculated against the published course entry requirements, not the applicant's predicted grades or tariff points, and remains subject to mandatory course requirements. Contextual eligibility does not guarantee an offer or admission.

5.3 Who the policy applies to

This policy applies to applicants assessed as having Home fee status who apply through UCAS, excluding applications made through Clearing, for entry to the first stage of an eligible first-degree programme delivered directly by the University on campus. This includes bachelor's degrees, integrated master's degrees and other first degrees, regardless of programme duration. Where an applicant's fee status has not yet been established, a fee assessment may be required to confirm eligibility for contextual consideration.

Eligible applicants may receive contextual entry requirements whether they select the University as their Firm or Insurance choice through UCAS, with the applicable reductions set out in Section 5.

This policy does not apply to direct entry to Level 5 or Level 6; top-up degrees; graduate diplomas; Foundation Years; Foundation Degrees; HNCs or HNDs; programmes delivered through UK or overseas partners; online programmes; apprenticeships; postgraduate programmes; or other provision outside the University's directly delivered, on-campus first-degree programmes.

5.4 Who is eligible for a contextual offer?

Applicants qualify for contextual consideration if they meet at least one of the criteria below. There is no general upper age limit, although age limits apply to certain criteria. For the purposes of this policy, eligibility is determined using the relevant contextual indicators supplied by UCAS; no separate contextual application is required.

Contextual criterion	Who qualifies
Care experience	Applicants aged 25 or under who have spent time in care.
Estrangement	Applicants who are estranged from their parents.
Caring responsibilities	Applicants who have caring responsibilities.
Disability or long-term condition	Applicants who declare a disability or long-term health condition through UCAS.
Young parents	Applicants aged 25 or under who have parenting responsibilities.
Refugee status or humanitarian protection	Applicants who declare through UCAS that the UK government has granted them refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK.
Armed Forces family background	Applicants whose parent has served in the Armed Forces.
Armed Forces experience or connection	Applicants who declare qualifying Armed Forces service, reservist, veteran or dependant status through UCAS.
Area-based deprivation	Applicants whose permanent home postcode falls within Quintile 1 or 2 of the relevant national Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) or equivalent deprivation index for England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.
Free School Meals	Applicants whose Free School Meals eligibility is confirmed through verified information supplied by UCAS. A self-declaration alone is not sufficient.

5.5 Contextual offers and entry requirements

Applicants who meet at least one qualifying contextual criterion will normally receive an offer with reduced UCAS tariff requirements for their chosen first-degree course, where an offer for that course is appropriate. The reduction is calculated from the published course entry requirements, not from the applicant's predicted grades or UCAS tariff points. Meeting multiple criteria does not increase the reduction.

Contextual eligibility does not automatically guarantee an offer for a first-degree course. The University will consider an applicant's qualifications and predicted attainment, where available, when deciding which course to offer. Where predicted attainment falls below the threshold for an offer to the first-degree course, an alternative Foundation Year offer may be made if a suitable route is available. Foundation Year offers do not attract the contextual tariff reduction under this policy. The absence of predicted grades does not, in itself, prevent an offer from being made.

The contextual reduction, whether applied to Firm or Insurance offers, must not result in an entry requirement more than two approved tariff bands below the published course requirement. Mandatory subject-specific grade requirements may remain unchanged. Where mandatory course requirements or the approved tariff-band limit prevent the full contextual reduction, a smaller reduction may be applied.

The contextual tariff reduction applies only to qualifications carrying UCAS tariff points that are accepted for the relevant course. Published entry criteria, including accepted qualifications and any subject requirements, are available on the University's course pages, which also link to the UCAS Tariff Calculator.

Eligible applicants will normally receive a reduction of 16 UCAS tariff points below the published course entry requirements where the University is selected as their Firm choice, or 8 UCAS tariff points where selected as their Insurance choice through UCAS. Both requirements will be explained when the offer is made, subject to the mandatory entry requirements and safeguards set out in this policy.

All applicants must meet the mandatory academic, subject-specific, professional, regulatory, compliance and governance requirements for admission to their course. Contextual eligibility does not waive these requirements or guarantee admission.

5.6 How eligibility is assessed and how to contact us

The University assesses contextual eligibility using information provided through UCAS and relevant verified information available to the University. Applicants who believe their circumstances have not been correctly considered, or who have questions about a contextual offer, can contact the Admissions team. The University will review relevant information and confirm the outcome of its assessment.

Email: admissions@wlv.ac.uk | Telephone: 01902 323505

5.7 Governance, monitoring and review

Admissions is responsible for the consistent application of this policy. The University will monitor its operation annually, including eligibility, offers, applicant conversion, enrolment outcomes, equality impacts and applicant enquiries.

This policy will remain in effect until formally amended or superseded. A formal review will take place where required by changes to legislation, regulation or institutional strategy, or where monitoring identifies a need for substantive revision. Material amendments will follow the University's established approval processes.

5.8 Commencement and existing offers

This policy applies to new offers issued on or after the approved implementation date for eligible remaining 2026/27 intakes and subsequent intakes. Offers issued before that date will remain subject to their original terms and will not be changed retrospectively.

6. Our University Responsibilities in Relation to This Policy

Admissions is responsible for applying the approved eligibility and offer requirements consistently, maintaining appropriate records and responding to applicant enquiries. Relevant University teams will support the accuracy and operation of the SITS contextual eligibility rules and associated controls. The University will monitor outcomes as described in section 5.7.

7. Your Responsibilities as a Student in Relation to This Policy

Applicants should ensure that the information provided through UCAS is accurate and should contact Admissions if they believe relevant circumstances have not been correctly considered. Applicants must meet the applicable mandatory course requirements. Contextual eligibility does not guarantee an offer or admission.

8. What To Do If You Need Support With This Policy

Applicants who have questions about contextual eligibility or an offer or believe that relevant information has not been correctly considered, should contact Admissions at admissions@wlv.ac.uk or 01902 323505. Published course entry requirements and this policy provide further guidance.

9. Data Protection Requirements

Personal information used under this policy must be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, the University's Data Protection Policy, relevant privacy notices and data protection principles. Contextual eligibility will be flagged using predefined rules within the existing SITS system, with Admissions Officers responsible for assessing applications and generating offers. The Data Protection Impact Assessment is being reviewed through the University's governance process. Data Protection Team: dataprotection@wlv.ac.uk. Aggregated reporting must be managed to avoid inadvertently identifying individuals in small groups. The University's Data Protection Policy and related policies are available at: WLV Policies - University of Wolverhampton.

10. Training

Relevant Admissions and systems colleagues will receive guidance or briefing on the approved contextual eligibility rules, interpretation of system flags, offer conditions, escalation of discrepancies and the appropriate handling of applicant information.

11. Exceptions

The academic, regulatory and tariff-band safeguards described in section 5.5 apply. Any departure from standard operation must be considered through established University admissions governance arrangements; this section does not authorise an exception to mandatory entry requirements.

12. Amendments

This Policy was approved by the Academic Board on 11 November 2026. The University may change this Policy at any time, and where appropriate. Where a policy is not due for review, but is found to require updating, it will remain published, unless the reasons for review render it obsolete.

This policy replaces the previous Contextual Admissions Policy from the approved implementation date and applies prospectively to new offers, as set out in section 5.8.

13. Information and Resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:

Admissions Policy & Procedure

14. Contact

For any queries, guidance and support relating to this policy please contact Admissions:
Email: admissions@wlv.ac.uk
Phone: 01902 323505

For general queries, please contact the Corporate Compliance Team via email: compliance@wlv.ac.uk.

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