



UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
ASTROPHORIA FOUNDATION YEAR

Eligibility Guide for Applicants

2026 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 for 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 verify your eligibility during the application process.

You may be required to submit information or provide referees who can confirm 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 information required for us to verify your eligibility, we will not be able to consider your application further.

We understand that the information you provide is personal and may also contain sensitive details. 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 for the course are awarded on academic suitability, and the specifics of your individual circumstances do not influence admissions decisions.

Any information or evidence you provide is held securely and following our Information Compliance and Data Protection policies¹.

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 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: admissions@foundationyear.ox.ac.uk

¹ 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 14 January 2026

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 21 January 2026

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.

Support in completing your FYAAQ will be available on the Foundation Year website. This will include a written guide and an instructional video.

Please ensure you set aside time to complete your FYAAQ between the application deadline and the FYAAQ deadline.

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

Further Information

See the website for more information on courses and application process: foundationyear.ox.ac.uk

The Eligibility Criteria

Alongside the academic entry requirements (see the website foundationyear.ox.ac.uk), 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 resident² in the UK, are eligible for [Home Fee Status](#), 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.

Verification of eligibility is required during the application process and information 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 (applicants who meet this category are automatically eligible)

Applicants are encouraged to provide as much information as possible so your application and circumstances can be fully considered.

Eligibility information is gathered through your UCAS application and the FYAAQ. You may also be required to provide us with original documentation to support your application or provide a referee to verify the information you have provided.

² 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**

Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators

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

1.1 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 'Steadfast Communities'), ACORN 5 (described as 'Stretched Society') or ACORN 6 (described as 'Low Income Living').

The postcode classifications found on the ACORN website changed recently and are now divided into 6 categories instead of 5.

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 register for an account to check your own postcode's rating on the [ACORN website](#). Alternatively, you can email us at admissions@foundationyear.ox.ac.uk if you would like us to check for you.

1.2 IMD

Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

IMD is a postcode-based dataset that uses small area measures of relative deprivation across the UK.

Areas are ranked from the most deprived area (1) to the least deprived area (10). Frequently universities group the deciles together to calculate quintiles.

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 IMD quintile 1 or 2 (deciles 1, 2, 3 or 4).

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 IMD Quintile using the postcode look up on the relevant authority.

- [England](#) - Place your home postcode in the 'Enter Postcodes' box. To open in excel, download the xlsx file. Column F on the spreadsheet gives you your decile, this will be a number from 1 to 10. If your home postcode is in decile 1, 2, 3 or 4 you would meet eligibility criteria 1 for the Astrophoria Foundation Year.

- [Northern Ireland](#) – Place your home postcode in the postcode search. It will then display the Multiple Deprivation Measures for your postcode. If your home postcode appears within the 40% most deprived areas out of 890 (usually your deprivation rank would be 356 or fewer) you would meet eligibility criteria 1 for the Astrophoria Foundation Year.
- [Scotland](#) – Use the map tool to zoom in to your home location and hover over this map section. The 'Current Data Zone' section on the right of the screen gives the overall decile and quintile. If your home postcode is in decile 1, 2, 3 or 4 you would meet eligibility criteria 1 for the Astrophoria Foundation Year.
- [Wales](#) – Place your home postcode in the 'Enter a postcode' box. This will then display data about your home postcode. If your home postcode appears within the 40% most deprived areas you would meet eligibility criteria 1 for the Astrophoria Foundation Year.

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 will need to provide contact details for a referee from your school/college that can confirm that you are eligible for Free School Meals or have been at some point during the last six years. The Foundation Year Team may then reach out to this referee for confirmation. We will also use UCAS data to verify your free school meal status. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some details about your free school meal eligibility, such as the length of time you have been eligible and whether you are currently eligible.

Category 2: School/College Characteristics

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

2.1 Attending state-funded UK secondary schools/colleges

You will have attended, normally for all compulsory education (usually between the ages of 11-18), non-selective state-funded UK secondary schools/colleges.

Please note:

- 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 (including those on bursaries and scholarships).
- International students are not eligible to apply (unless you have Refugee Status/Humanitarian Protection – see criterion 3.2)

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 may need to provide information under each of the criteria you indicate you are eligible for in the Foundation Year Additional Application Questionnaire (FYAAQ). You may also be asked to provide referees who can confirm that you are eligible under certain criteria. 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 what is required for verification in each case.

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

We recognise your circumstances might not be listed here. The FYAAQ will include an 'Other' category where you can record the individual circumstances that apply to you. If you're not sure if your individual circumstances would qualify in Category 3, please get in touch with the team:

admissions@foundationyear.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 will need to provide contact details for a referee from your school/college that can confirm that you are eligible for Free School Meals or have been at some point during the last six years. The Foundation Year Team may then reach out to this referee for confirmation. We will also use UCAS data to verify your free school meal status. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some details about your free school meal eligibility, such as the length of time you have been eligible and whether you are currently eligible.

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'³ 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 indicate that you have refugee status or humanitarian protection in the FYAAQ and will be asked to provide further details. Following your submission of the FYAAQ the Foundation Year Team will be in contact with you as you will need to provide documentation as evidence.

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 on a child in need and/or having a child protection plan

Individuals who have been supported by children's social care on a Child in Need or Child Protection plan due to safeguarding and/or welfare needs.

All of these children have needs identified through a children's social care assessment, 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 need to provide contact details for a referee who is aware of your placements or circumstances such as a social worker or a member of the Local Authority responsible for any services you receive. The Foundation Year Team may then reach out to this referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some details about your time being supported by social services, such as the length of time you have been supported for.

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 need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm that you are, or

have been, a young carer. This could be a member of your Local Authority, a contact you have within a young carers' charity, or a contact within your school who is aware of your responsibilities. The Foundation Year Team may then reach out to this referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some information, such as the length of time you have been a carer and the stage within your education when your responsibilities began.

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 about your parental experiences such as the stage within your education in which you became a parent/guardian/carer. The FYAAQ will ask you to provide some information about your educational experience and you may choose to disclose details about how your parental experiences have impacted your educational experience.

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 need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm the long absences during your education. This could be a staff member from your school/college, a GP or a medical specialist who is aware of the situation. The Foundation Year Team may then reach out to this referee for confirmation. You will also be asked in the FYAAQ to provide information about the circumstances of your long-term absences and the stages within your education when they

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 a referee or 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 a referee or 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

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: There is no requirement for you to provide a referee or 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 in the UK Armed Forces has impacted your educational experience.

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 asked to submit figures relating to your household earnings from the tax year 2024-25 for you and the relevant members of your household in the FYAAQ. Following the completion of your FYAAQ we may reach out to you requesting you submit evidence which supports the figures you have submitted.

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: You will need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm you have experienced bereavement of a close family member whilst in secondary education. This could be a staff member at your school/college who is aware of your situation. The Foundation Year Team will then reach out to your referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some information about the nature of your relationship with the person who died and the stage of education you were in when this happened. 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: You will need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm that you are an estranged student. This could be a staff member at your school/college, social worker, housing support officer, member of a related organisation (e.g., Stand Alone), or member of the local authority who is aware of the situation. This person cannot be related to you or be a close friend of the family. The Foundation Year Team will then reach out to your referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some information about the stage of your education when you became estranged.

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: You will need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm you have been homeless whilst in secondary education. This could be a staff member at your school/college who is aware of your situation, a charity who supported you during this time or an individual who assisted you with any emergency housing arrangements. The Foundation Year Team will then reach out to your referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also 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.

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 accepted under this criterion.

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: You will need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm that you have spent over one year out of secondary school or college education. This could be a member of staff from your school/college. The Foundation Year Team will then reach out to your referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some information about your educational experience, including when you received your qualifications and the length of gap between them.

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 2023) 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 2023 and January 2026).

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

Verification: You will need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm that you have received a SEN diagnosis within the past two years. This could be your school's SEN Coordinator, GP or another medical professional that is aware of the diagnosis. The Foundation Year Team will then reach out to your referee for confirmation. The FYAAQ will also ask you to provide some information about the diagnosis.

We understand that some applicants may be in the process of receiving a diagnosis. In these instances, we would accept confirmation from a suitable referee 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 (usually between the ages of 11-18).

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 need to provide contact details for a referee who can confirm that you have spent time in local authority care. This could be someone in the Local Authority responsible for your care or your social worker. 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. The Foundation Year Team may then reach out to this referee for confirmation

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. It may also be necessary to contact referees who can provide further confirmation.

For Categories 3 and 4, applicants may need to provide further information relating to the eligibility criteria they meet, as well as providing contact details for referees who can confirm their claims.

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 publicly available and government issued data.
Category 2: School/College Characteristics	University access to publicly available and government issued data.
Category 3: Individual Experience	Applicants will need to provide further information and referees who can confirm claims relating to their individual experience.
Category 4: Care Experience	Applicants will need to provide referees who can confirm their care experience.

Table of Eligibility Criteria Verification 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	Is verification assistance required?	If yes, what is required for verification?
Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators			
1.1	ACORN	No	
1.2	IMD	No	
1.3	Free School Meals (FSM)	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
Category 2: School/College Characteristics			
2.1	you have attended non-selective state-funded UK secondary schools/colleges	No	
Category 3: Individual Experience			
3.1	being eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM)	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.2	having refugee status or humanitarian protection	Yes	The FYAAQ will ask you for information on your circumstances. You may need to provide a copy of your Biometric Residence Permit or the most recent correspondence from The Home Office confirming your current status.
3.3	having been a child in need	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.4	having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.5	being pregnant or having parental responsibilities whilst in education	No	The FYAAQ will ask you for information on your circumstances.

3.6	having a medical or health issue that has resulted in long absences from school or college (more than six months)	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.7	being from a Gypsy/ Traveller/ Roma background	No	The FYAAQ will ask you for information.
3.8	being a child of a military family	No	The FYAAQ will ask you for information on your circumstances.
3.9	being a service leaver or veteran	No	The FYAAQ will ask you for information on your circumstances.
3.10	being from a household with an income of less than £25,000	Yes	You will be asked to submit figures relating to your household earnings from the tax year 2022-23 for you and the relevant members of your household in the FYAAQ. One or more of the following pieces of documentation may also be needed to confirm your household income: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.12	being an estranged student	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.13	becoming homeless whilst in education	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.14	gap of more than 1 year in education	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
3.15	having a late diagnosis of Special Educational Needs (SEN) within the past two years	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.

Category 4: Care Experience

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.

4.1	you have spent any length of time in local authority care and have been at UK state schools	Yes	Contact details for a referee who can verify claim.
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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: admissions@foundationyear.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.

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 guide above for the specific requirements and information 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 <input type="checkbox"/> below if you meet the Criteria	Ref	Criteria
Category 1: Socio-Economic Indicators			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 1			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.2	ACORN
	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.3	IMD
	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.4	Free School Meals (FSM)
Category 2: School/College Characteristics			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 2			
You should meet the criteria in Category 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.1	you have attended non-selective state-funded UK secondary schools/colleges
Category 3: Individual Experience			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 1			
You should meet at least one of the criteria in Category 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.1	being eligible for FSM any point in the last six years (also known as Ever 6 FSM)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.2	having refugee status or humanitarian protection
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.3	having been a child in need
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.4	having care responsibilities for a sustained period of time
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.5	being pregnant or having parental responsibilities whilst in education
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.6	having a medical or health issue that has resulted in long absences from school or college (more than six months)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.7	being from a Gypsy/ Traveller/ Roma background
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.8	being a child of a military family
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.9	being a service leaver or veteran
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.10	being from a household with an income of less than £25,000
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.11	experiencing bereavement of a close family member during secondary education
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.12	being an estranged student
	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.13	becoming homeless whilst in education



All information in this guide is correct at the time of publication (September 2025) but should be checked against the Undergraduate Admissions website for the most up-to-date information.

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