



Provisional Eligibility Guidelines for Applicants to the Cambridge Foundation Year

2026/27 Entry

Overview

To make a valid application to the University of Cambridge Foundation Year, you must meet and be able to demonstrate that you meet certain eligibility criteria. The purpose of this document is to help potential applicants understand whether they are eligible.

The Foundation Year intends to address educational disadvantage and disruption. We recognise that this may manifest in various forms. To be considered for the programme, you should meet **one or more criteria from at least two of the categories detailed below** (unless you are **care-experienced or a refugee or asylum seeker**). You will also ordinarily be resident in the UK. The criteria are a gateway to consideration, and you will be asked to tell us what criteria you meet during the application process (see page 4).

This document provides a full explanation of all the eligibility criteria we consider and how you will be asked to evidence your eligibility. Further information about the course is available at cam.ac.uk/foundationyear.

We appreciate that this may seem complicated. We provide this much detail to ensure that applicants only use one of their UCAS choices on the course if they are eligible. If you are eligible, interested in the course and can meet our academic entry requirement of 120 UCAS Points, please do not be deterred from applying.

We advise using the contents list on the next page to skip directly to sections that are relevant to you. If you have any further questions, you can email foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk for advice.

If you are a mature student and are unclear on how some of these guidelines apply, please visit our website for further information.

Am I eligible?

Only you will know exactly what does and does not apply to your personal situation. However, you should bear in mind that most need to meet one or more criteria from two or more categories. For example:

- Zara meets two criteria in Category 3 (Individual Characteristics) because she was bereaved while in education and is estranged from her family. Nothing in Category 2 or Category 3 applies. Zara is ineligible for the Cambridge Foundation Year because she only meets criteria in one of the three categories.
- Jacob meets one criterion in Category 1 (Household Characteristics) because his parents receive Universal Credit. He also meets one criteria in Category 2 (School/College Characteristics) as few people from his school remain in education. Jacob is eligible as he meets the criteria in two of the three categories.

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Verification process

Verifying eligibility is an important part of ensuring that the programme can support the students it has been designed for. Where we can, we use datasets and publically available information. However, in many cases, we need more information from you that we would otherwise be unable to access.

There is nothing additional that you need to do as part of your UCAS application. After applying via UCAS, you will receive an email with a link to the Foundation Year Supplementary Application Questionnaire (FYSAQ) that we will ask you to complete. This allows us to gather additional information in support of your application. You must complete the FYSAQ by the deadline specified in your email. When completing this, you will be asked to indicate which criteria you meet and to upload evidence if required. A guide to help you with the FYSAQ is available at www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/fysaq.

While to be eligible, you only need to meet one criterion from two of the three categories, we recommend you check all criteria that you meet and provide the requested evidence for all.

To prove your eligibility, you may need to find documentation or request it from your parent(s)/carer(s), school/college or other services such as your GP or social worker. It is advised that you speak with them as soon as possible to ensure they can provide you with what you need on time. In some cases, for example, where the required evidence could be conveyed in a letter from your school, the same letter could cover a number of the criteria. If the document requested is a letter, we expect this to be on letter-headed paper, including a point of contact name, as we may follow up to verify. We appreciate that the documentation you provide is personal and may contain sensitive information about yourself or your family. The information is only used to verify eligibility and will never be shared or used for any other purpose. The exact nature of your circumstances has no bearing on admissions decisions, and places are ultimately awarded on academic suitability. Documentation is held securely following our Data Protection policies.¹

If an applicant or referee was found to have been misleading or made false claims in their application, the applicant would be removed from consideration. If they had already been admitted and started or completed their studies, the applicant could be liable for the total delivery cost of the course.

Where can I find out more about the FYSAQ?

The FYSAQ is an important part of verifying your eligibility. Find out more at www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/fysaq

For more support, you can also hear about our series of applicant support webinars by signing up to our email newsletter www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/prospective-students/applicant-newsletter

¹ <https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/applicant-data>

Eligibility Guidelines

You should take care to read the guidance carefully to ensure it applies to your circumstances. If you choose to apply, but we find you do not meet our criteria or do not provide the evidence we need to verify your eligibility by the deadlines communicated, we will not consider your application further.

Throughout this document, we may mention certain periods that the circumstances must have occurred within. These may relate to periods of schooling (such as 'while in secondary education') or periods of time (such as 'in the last four years'). Where periods of time have been specified, this is as of the last possible date for applications. For 2026 entry, this is 14 January 2026.

After you have ascertained your eligibility, you should prepare to provide any evidence we require to verify it. See www.foundationyear.cam.ac.uk/fysaq for more information.

Care-experienced applicants

Definition:

Care-experienced may mean you have been placed in foster care, a residential home, formal kinship care or have been looked after at home under a supervision order.

Eligibility:

Those currently in Local Authority care or who have experienced being in care previously while in education for any length of time are automatically eligible for this programme. This means that you do not have to meet the criteria in any of the other categories (although you may do so and provide evidence if you wish). Those in 'informal' kinship care (where it is a private arrangement and not covered under a care order or section 20 agreement) do not qualify under this criterion.

Evidence and Verification:

There is a field on your UCAS application that you should fill in if you've spent time in Local Authority care. It also asks you to provide the duration of time you have spent in care.

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. This would ideally be a letter from someone in the Local Authority responsible for your care and should reflect briefly on the circumstances they have on record. Alternatively, another original formal document from the Local Authority relating to your placements or circumstances dated from the time you were in care would be sufficient.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide information about your time in care, such as the length of time spent.

Refugees, Humanitarian Protection and Asylum-Seekers (forced migrants)

Definition:

The University defines a refugee as someone whose claim for asylum has been recognised and they have been granted official 'refugee' status. We will also consider those who have been granted humanitarian protection which has resulted in permission to stay in the UK for humanitarian reasons. An asylum seeker is defined as someone who is in the process of seeking asylum, or the decision is still pending. Asylum seekers are also eligible for the course but are advised to consider their fee status for further study.

Eligibility:

Those from a forced migration background who are resident in the UK are automatically eligible for this programme. This includes refugees, those with Humanitarian Protection status and asylum seekers. This means that you do not have to meet the criteria in any of the other categories (although you may do so and provide evidence if you wish). Those who are legally in the UK through the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme are also eligible even if they do not officially have refugee status.

There is a field on your UCAS application that you should fill in to self-declare your refugee status.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. This could include official documentation reflecting your status (or that of a relevant family member). This could be evidence of limited or indefinite leave to remain, such as a copy of a Biometric Residence Permit (previously Immigration Status Document) or an Application Registration Card (ARC) for asylum seekers. We appreciate that there can be delays in obtaining formal documentation from the Home Office or other authorities. We will also accept a letter of support from a registered educational charity, such as Refugee Education UK, if they have been supporting you and know about your status.

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

Additional advice for refugees or asylum seekers is available in a short [guide available on our website](#).

Category 1: Household Characteristics

The criteria in this category relate to your family or household background and are primarily based on income measures.

You are currently eligible for Free School Meals

Definition:

Free School Meals are available for anyone attending a state school/college aged under 19 whose parent(s)/carer(s) receive certain benefits. As such, we can use it as a proxy for your household income.

Eligibility:

You will qualify under this criterion if you are currently eligible for Free School Meals, even if you are not currently claiming them. Free School Meals are available in [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Northern Ireland](#) and [Wales](#), but you should check the guidance where you live as there may be minor differences in eligibility.

If you are unsure if you qualify, you should ask your school/college for confirmation.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. The preferred form of evidence is a letter from your school/college that mentions your eligibility for Free School Meals. If that can't be provided, evidence of the benefits you or your family receive that would make you eligible for Free School Meals would suffice, but it must be dated within the past year.

You have been eligible for Free School Meals at any point in the previous six years

Definition:

See above for a description of Free School Meals.

Eligibility:

You will qualify under this criterion if you have been eligible for Free School Meals in the past six years as of the final application deadline (29 January 2025). For example, you might have been eligible for some time earlier in your school career, but as your parent(s)/carer(s) no longer receive the benefits that made you eligible, you can no longer receive them.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. The preferred form of evidence is a letter from your school/college that mentions your receipt of Free School Meals (either dated from that period or based on the school/college's understanding of your past receipt of them). If that can't be provided, for example, because you have left school/college, evidence of the benefits you or your family received that made you eligible

within the past six years would suffice.

You have a combined UK household income of £25,000 or less.

Definition:

Your household income is the total amount of money earned by members of a single household. This only applies to households in the UK and is the gross earnings (before tax) and includes [taxable benefits](#).

If you are under 25 and financially depend on at least one parent, this includes their income if you live with them. If you live in the same household as a partner of one of your parents, their income is also included.

If you are under 25 and do not financially depend on your parent(s) and live independently we would consider your income and the income of any partner or spouse.

If you are over 25 we would consider your income. If you have a partner or spouse, their income is included in your household income.

Eligibility:

Your household income is less than £25,000 per year.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. We ask that you provide a copy of documentation that shows the income of relevant members of your household. A P60 from the last tax year would be ideal, but other documentation could suffice, such as self-assessment income tax returns or an SA302 form. In all cases, the most recent form of evidence you can provide is expected. You will need to describe your relationship to the people in the evidence (for example, parent(s)/carer(s)).

You or your parent(s)/carer(s) receive Universal Credit

Definition:

Universal Credit is a payment for people over 18 and under the State Pension age who are on a low income or out of work. It is available in all parts of the UK. This will be your status if you live independently or are over 25 and will relate to your parent(s)/carer(s) if you are under 25 and live with them and depend on them financially.

You will also be eligible under this criterion if you or your parents(s)/carer(s) receive another means-tested benefit that will make you eligible for Universal Credit, but you haven't yet been moved onto Universal Credit itself. This includes the so-called '[legacy benefits](#)': Housing Benefit, income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Child Tax Credits (CTC), Working Tax Credits (WTC) and Income Support.

Eligibility:

You are eligible under this criterion if you live independently or are over 25 and receive Universal Credit or another means-tested benefit. You are also eligible if you are under 25 and live with and depend financially on parent(s)/carer(s) who receive Universal Credit or another means-tested benefit.

You will not be eligible under this criterion if the only benefits you or your parent(s)/carer(s) receive

are not means-tested. Non-means-tested benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment, do not reflect income or savings and do not provide us with satisfactory evidence of financial circumstances.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. You will need to attach a copy of documentation for yourself and any other relevant people (see above). A screenshot of your online benefits statement (showing the name of the recipient), a proof of benefits letter, or similar documentation would be ideal. This can be obtained through your online account or by contacting your benefits office.

Category 2: School/College Characteristics

The criteria in this category refer to the school/college that you currently attend or any you attended in the past. The criteria listed apply only to:

- Secondary education;
 - This means pre-university education, usually between the ages of 11-19, but may apply to some mature students who have returned to education later.
- State/maintained sector schools;
 - This means we do not consider Independent schools for this category only as the data is often not available or comparable.
- Schools/colleges that you have attended within the UK.

A state school or college you attended has performed poorly in an inspection in the past four years

Definition:

All state schools/colleges in the UK are inspected regularly and rated on a scale based on their overall performance. You will be eligible under this criterion if you have attended a school or college that has performed poorly in an inspection in the past four years as of the last possible application date (14 January 2026). This applies to all the secondary schools/colleges you have attended in the past four years.

Eligibility:

You are eligible under this criterion for ratings received while you were at the school/college (in the past four years), even if you have since left. You are also eligible even if your school/college has subsequently improved its rating in the past four years.

For example, you might have completed your GCSEs at one school and moved elsewhere for sixth form. You should check the inspection rating for both.

You are not eligible under this criterion if you attend a school that had a lower rating within the last four years, but you joined the school/college after it improved its rating.

Different government bodies are responsible for inspections in different parts of the UK, and they use slightly different scales.

- For schools/colleges in England, you can check inspection reports at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>. To qualify, your school/college would be rated 'Requires improvement' or 'Inadequate' in the section 'Overall judgement'. Ofsted stopped issuing overall judgements in September 2024, and we are currently reviewing the new approach to decide on how this criteria will apply for newer inspection reports. Please check back if there is a more recent inspection report.
- For schools/colleges in Wales, you can check your inspection report at <https://www.estyn.gov.wales>. To qualify, your school/college would be rated 'Adequate and needs improvement' or 'Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement'. This only applies to reports with summative ratings. Due to changes at Estyn, we are aware these are not being issued for new inspections from Autumn 2023 so this criteria may not apply to the most recent inspections.

- For schools/colleges in Scotland, you can check your inspection report at <https://education.gov.scot/inspection-and-review/find-an-inspection-report>. To qualify, your school/college would be rated 'Weak' or 'Unsatisfactory' across any of the quality indicators.
- For schools/colleges in Northern Ireland, you can check your inspection report at <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/type/inspectionreports>. To qualify, your school/college would be rated 'Inadequate' or 'Unsatisfactory'.

This information may not be available for new schools or schools that have closed or merged. If in doubt, you can contact us at foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk for support.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be asked in the FYSAQ (see page 4) to provide the names and postcodes of the schools/colleges that you attended and the dates that you attended them. We will check the records to verify your eligibility.

You have attended a state school or college with below-average attainment

Definition:

Attending a school or college with below-average attainment means that average examination results at your school or college are lower than the national average.

Eligibility:

You will qualify under this measure for any school/college that you currently attend, or we will consider the current score available for any school/college that you have attended in the past 10 years (as of the application deadline of 14 January 2026). This is because this measure is not always available for post-16 only institutions.

This information may not be available for new schools, schools that have closed or merged, or sixth form colleges. If the information is not available, regrettably, you cannot be considered under this criterion.

- For schools/colleges in England, we will use the Attainment 8 measure. This is a score based on how well pupils perform in up to 9 qualifications.

You can check if your school/college has a below-average Attainment 8 score at the [Compare School Performance Data Service](#) from the UK Government. Input your school name or postcode to find the record. On the page for your school/college, navigate to 'Secondary' details then scroll down to find the Attainment 8 score listing. You should compare the school score (pink bar) to the England average (pale grey bar). To qualify, your school Attainment 8 score must be below the England average. This only applies to the most recent score and not historical records from prior years.

- For schools/colleges in Wales, we will use two measures: Capped 9 points score and Average points score.

You can check if your school/college has a below-average points score at KS4 or Sixth Form using the [My Local School Service](#) from the Welsh Government. You should find your school using the school postcode. On the school profile, click on 'Attainment' to check the 'Capped 9 points score' at KS4 and the 'Average Points score' at sixth form. You can compare the

‘School – Total’ to the ‘Wales – Total’.

To qualify, your school Capped 9 points score (KS4) or Average Points score (sixth form) must be below the Wales average. This only applies to the most recent score and not historical records from prior years.

- For schools/colleges in Scotland, you can check if your school/college has a below-average school leavers’ average total tariff score.

You can find this on the [Secondary School Information Dashboard](#) from the Scottish Government. You should use the options on the left to select your local authority and your school/college from the drop-down menus. The data you need is under ‘Attainment Profile’ on this page. You should select ‘School leavers summary’ and then look at the ‘Average total tariff score’ chart. You should compare your school figures in the dark blue column to the national average (not to the virtual comparator column in the light blue). The national average is currently 156 for the lowest 20%, 887 for the middle 20% and 1968 for the highest 20%.

To qualify, your school will score below the national average on any of these measures. This only applies to the most recent score and not historical records from prior years.

- For schools/colleges in Northern Ireland, you can check if your school has below average attainment at GCSE.

You can find this on the [NI Department of Education](#) website. Search for your school/college by name and on the institution page, select ‘Statistical Information’ and then ‘Examination Achievements’. You should compare the ‘Proportion achieving 5+ GCSE grades A*-C (inc. GCSE English and GCSE Maths)’ with 55%.

To qualify, your school will attain below 55% in the measure ‘Proportion achieving 5+ GCSE grades A*-C (inc. GCSE English and GCSE Maths)’. This only applies to the most recent published score and not historical records from prior years.

Evidence and Verification:

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide the names and postcodes of the schools/colleges that you attended and the dates that you attended them. This will then be verified using the datasets described above.

You currently attend or have attended a state school or college with below-average numbers of students staying in education

Definition:

This means that your school or college has fewer than average school leavers staying in education.

Eligibility:

We consider any school/college that you attended within the last four years as of the application deadline (14 January 2026), even if you have moved or left.

If you have already left school/college, you will only qualify under this criterion for those schools or colleges which you left within the last four years as of the application deadline. This is because we are simply unable to reliably verify data from longer ago and because current data might not

reflect the situation when you attended.

This information may not be available for new schools, schools that have closed or merged. It isn't available for schools without a sixth form. Unfortunately, this data is not published for schools/colleges in Wales and Northern Ireland so we are unable to use this criterion for those educated there.

- For schools/colleges in England, you can check if your school/college has a below-average number of students staying in education at the [Compare School Performance Data Service](#) from the UK Government. Input your school name or postcode to find the record. On the page for your school/college, navigate to the '16 - 18' tab, then to 'Student destinations after 16-18'. On this next page, you should look at:
 - The bar chart of 'Students progressing to education or employment'
 - The figure for 'Students staying in education' under 'Breakdown of all students'
 - The figure for 'Students staying in education' under 'Students taking advanced level qualifications (level 3) during 16 to 18 study'.

To qualify your school/college average for any of these must be lower than the average for England. This only applies to the most recent full figures published and not historical records from prior years.

- For schools/colleges in Scotland, you can check if your school/college has a below-average percentage of leavers in a positive destination.

You can find this on the [Secondary School Information Dashboard](#) from the Scottish Government. You should use the options on the left to select your local authority and your school/college from the drop-down menus. The data you need is under 'Attainment Profile' on this page. You should select 'School leavers summary' and then look at the 'Percentage of leavers in a positive destination' chart. You should compare your school figures in the dark blue column to the national average (not to the virtual comparator column in the light blue). The national average is currently 96%

To qualify, your school will score below the national average. This only applies to the most recent full figures published and not historical records from prior years.

Evidence and Verification:

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ (see page 4) to provide the names and postcodes of the schools/colleges that you attended and the dates that you attended them. This will then be verified using the dataset described above.

Your state school/college does not offer the subject in A Level or equivalent qualification that you require for entry to Cambridge

Definition:

This means that your school/college did not offer the subject in A Level or equivalent that you would require for entry to a Cambridge degree course in scope for the Cambridge Foundation Year. This

includes being unable to take appropriate qualifications in English Literature, Modern Languages, or Music. It does not include other qualifications which may be relevant to your degree interests but which are not required for entry (for example Latin, Japanese or Classical Greek).

Eligibility:

You will qualify under this criterion if your school/college was unable to offer a qualification you would require for entry to Cambridge for the degree courses in scope for progression from the Foundation Year.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be asked in the FYSAQ to provide a summary of the qualification you wished to take and the school/college that did not offer it.

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. We ask that you upload a letter from your school/college that mentions the subject you weren't able to study, or a letter or other document that includes the full list of qualifications on offer.

Category 3: Individual Characteristics

Many of these criteria refer to 'secondary education'. This means pre-university education, usually between ages 11-19, but may apply to some mature students who have returned to education later. We also refer to 'school/college', meaning any educational institution you attended, such as a Further Education college, sixth form college or secondary school.

You have experienced medical/health issues that have resulted in long or extended periods of absence (over six weeks) from school/college within the past three years

Definition:

This could include physical or mental health issues and either chronic or acute conditions. In short, anything that has caused extended periods of absence (6 weeks or more, full day absences) in the last three years would count. We would expect that the extent of the disruption will mean this is something that has resulted in you seeking medical treatment.

Eligibility:

You will be eligible if you have experienced a medical issue which has resulted in absences from school or college within the past 3 years. There are no limitations on the kind of medical/health issues that you have experienced that caused your absences. The six weeks (or longer) could have been in one block or could have been a series of shorter but recurring absences due to a single condition. However, the absences must have been while you were in secondary education/within the last three years..

For students who have returned to education, we will consider absence during your secondary education (aged 16-19) or in the past three years if you have returned to secondary level education more recently.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. You could ask your GP or another medical professional who knows about your history to provide a letter that details the long-term sickness certification they have provided to your school/college.

Alternatively, you could ask your school/college to provide a letter based on their knowledge of your attendance and reasons for absence, which includes details about the length of your absences. A copy of your attendance record from your school for the period specified would also be sufficient, but it must display your name on the record, and we must be able to ascertain your attendance from it.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide some information about the nature of your absences.

You have experienced bereavement due to the death of a close family member whilst in secondary education (for example, your parent/carer)

Definition:

In this context, close family members mean your immediate family, such as siblings, parent(s) or carer(s). 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 under this criterion if you experienced the death of a sibling, parent/carer or anyone else who was a family member sharing the same household. The bereavement must have occurred while you were in secondary education.

Please note, the death of a family member who was not a close family member (i.e. sibling/parent/carer) and who was not sharing your household at the time of their death does not make you eligible. For example, a grandparent who lived in another household.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. If your school/college is aware, they will write a letter which includes their awareness of your family situation. Alternatively, if this is not possible or you would prefer, we would also accept other documentation, such as a copy of the death certificate accompanied by your explanation of the nature of your relationship (for example, they were your father, or they were your grandmother but your primary carer). If you are unable to provide this, please contact us for further guidance.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide some information about the nature of your relationship with the person who died and at what stage of your secondary education this happened.

You have been a young carer while in education.

Definition:

A young carer is a person under 18 who regularly provides emotional and/or practical and unpaid support and assistance for a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally unwell or who misuses substances.

Eligibility:

To be eligible under this criterion, you will have been a young carer while in education.

Please note you are not eligible under this criterion if you are regularly caring for a family member who is not disabled, physically or mentally unwell or who misuses substances. For example, picking up siblings from school.

Evidence and Verification:

There is no requirement for you to provide documentary verification for this criterion via the FYSAQ (see page 4). We appreciate many young carers are not recognised by authorities as such. However, if you have been assessed by your Local Authority (carer's assessment), you could provide correspondence or evidence of that if you wish. If your school are aware of your responsibilities, they could also write a letter which you could attach in support. We will also accept a letter of support from a registered young carers charity if they have been supporting you.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide some information about the situation.

You have become a parent while in education.

Definition:

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

This might mean that you are a biological parent, step-parent, adoptive or legal parent, a foster carer or a legally appointed guardian.

Eligibility:

To be eligible under this criterion, you will have become a parent while in education.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. This should be evidence of your relationship with your child. This could include a birth certificate with your name as a parent, an adoption certificate or documentation from your local council, such as a parental order or legal guardianship.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide some information about the stage of your education you were in when you became a parent.

You became homeless while in education.

Definition:

If you became homeless while in education, you might have had nowhere to stay and been living on the streets. You would also qualify under this criterion if you, for example, ended up staying with friends; stayed in a hostel, night shelter or B&B.

Eligibility:

To be eligible under this criterion, you will have become homeless while in education.

Evidence and Verification:

There is no requirement for you to provide documentary verification for this criterion via the FYSAQ (see page 4). However, if you have evidence of being 'legally' homeless such as correspondence with your local council relating to short-term emergency housing or with homelessness charities, you may wish to provide this.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide some information about the length of time you were homeless and the stage of your education you were in when you became homeless.

You became estranged from close family members (e.g. parents/carers) whilst in secondary education.

Definition:

Estrangement means having had no contact with your parent(s)/carer(s) for at least 12 months, which is unlikely to change. This is due to a permanent breakdown in your relationship with your biological, step or adoptive parents. In this context, it means that you were completing all or part of your secondary education without the support of a family network. You would likely be assessed as an 'independent student' by student finance bodies because of this.

Eligibility:

You will be eligible under this criterion if you have had no contact at all with your parents for at least 12 months; that is unlikely to change, and this occurred while you were in secondary education.

You would not qualify under this criterion if you live separately from your parents but communicate with them. You also would not be eligible if you have recently fallen out with them or your parents do not support your decision to study at university. You also would not qualify if you are estranged from one parent but remain in contact or live with another parent. These are challenging circumstances but are not classed as estrangement.

Evidence and Verification:

There is no requirement for you to provide documentary verification for this criterion via the FYSAQ (see page 4). We appreciate that social service intervention due to estrangement is not common, and your school/college may also be unaware of your circumstances. However, if your school/college or a social worker is aware of your situation, we would appreciate a letter from them reflecting this.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to describe the situation.

*You moved state schools two or more times whilst in secondary education.***Definition:**

Moving state schools two or more times while in secondary education means that you have attended three or more schools. Your reasons for moving from each school/college do not matter, but this could be because you have moved home regularly because you were the dependent of someone serving in the armed forces, were in care, or because you are from a traveller background. You may also have experienced issues during your time in previous schools, which meant you had to move.

Eligibility:

You would be eligible under this criterion if you moved schools two or more times whilst in secondary education.

Evidence and Verification:

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ (see page 4) to provide the names and postcodes of the schools you attended and the dates you attended them. Most applicants will be expected to also provide evidence so we can verify their eligibility under this criterion. This could be a letter from your current school/college detailing when you started and their understanding of your educational history. Alternatively, you could provide copies of school reports or other documents from different

schools which are dated and mention you by name.

If you have left education some time ago and/or are applying as a mature student, there is no requirement for you to provide documentary verification for this criterion. However, we would welcome it if you can supply it.

You have been delayed in completing qualifications because you were working while studying part-time.

Definition:

This criterion specifically looks at those who have been delayed completing their qualifications because they have been working simultaneously. This could mean studying part-time while working part-time or full-time.

Eligibility:

You would be eligible if you have been delayed in completing qualifications because you were studying part-time while working.

You would not be eligible if you have been studying full-time but had a part-time job because your work has not delayed your qualification completion.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. You should provide evidence of your job or income dated in the period when you were also studying. For example, you could provide us with a P60. Alternatively, a self-assessment income tax return or SA302 form covering the years you were studying would be suitable. If you are still studying, your most recent P60 or similar form will suffice, or copies of payslips for the months you have been studying full-time.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide a summary of the qualification(s) you have been studying part-time and the job(s) you held while doing this.

You experienced a gap of more than one year in your secondary education.

Definition:

This criterion looks at those who have experienced time out of education and then returned. 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 education after GCSEs or equivalent and then returned for A Levels or equivalent at a later time. Or, you may have sat your A Levels or equivalent but returned to education and re-done A Levels or an equivalent qualification such as an Access to HE Diploma after more than one year.

Eligibility:

You will be eligible if you have experienced a gap of more than one year in your secondary education. Please note that deferred or 'gap' years between school and university are not considered under this criterion.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page four) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. We ask that you upload the transcript from your qualifications to show the year in which they were attained. A transcript is the record of your academic achievement. If you do not have one, you can request a certified statement of results from the exam board responsible for the qualification(s) you took.

You will also be asked in the FYSAQ to provide a summary of the years in which you received your qualifications and the length of time between them.

Your parent or carer has been imprisoned during your education.

Definition:

This means that one or more than one of your parents or carers has been in prison while you were in education. This could mean they are currently imprisoned if you are still in education or that they were previously imprisoned while you were in education.

Eligibility:

You will be eligible under this criterion if your parent or carer has been in prison during your education.

Evidence and Verification:

You will be expected to provide evidence via the FYSAQ (see page 4) so we can verify your eligibility under this criterion. We ask that you attach evidence such as documentary evidence of sentencing, imprisonment or release. This should include names and dates, and you will need to explain your relation to the prisoner.

If this cannot be provided, we would also accept a letter from your school/college, a social worker, or a charity.

Summary

Category	Criterion	Evidence?	Type of evidence suggested
None	Care-experienced	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from Local Authority; Other original formal documentation that reflects care arrangements.
None	You have Refugee status or Humanitarian Protection in the UK or are in the UK and seeking asylum	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biometric Residence Permit; ARC card; Letter of support from a registered education charity; Letter from school/college.
1	<p>You are currently eligible for Free School Meals</p> <p>Or</p> <p>You have been eligible for Free School Meals at any point in the previous 6 years</p>	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from school/college; Evidence of benefits received that made you eligible.
1	You have a combined UK household income of £25,000 or less	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P60 or income tax returns from relevant household members.
1	You or your parent(s)/carer(s) receive Universal Credit	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proof of benefits letter or statement; Other original evidence of means- tested benefit receipt.
2	You have attended a school/college that has performed poorly in an inspection in the past four years	✗	
2	You have attended a school/college with below average attainment	✗	
2	You have attended a school or college school/college with a below average number of students staying in education	✗	
2	Your school/college does not offer the subject in A Level or equivalent qualification that you require for entry to Cambridge	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from school/college.
3	You have experienced medical/health issues that have resulted in long or extended periods of absence (over 6 weeks) from school/college within the past three years	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from GP or medical professional; Letter from school/college; Copy of school attendance record.
3	You have experienced bereavement due to the death of a close family member whilst in secondary education	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Letter from school/college; Death certificate,

			funeral programme/order of service or newspaper death notice.
3	You have been a young carer while in education	✗	
3	You have become a parent while in education	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate.
3	You became homeless while in education	✗	
3	You became estranged from close family members whilst in secondary education	✗	
3	You moved state schools two or more times whilst in secondary education	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from school/college; • Transcripts of marks from different schools/colleges or other documentary proof of attendance.
3	You have been delayed in completing qualifications because you were working while studying part-time	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P60; • Payslips/other similar evidence of work.
3	You experienced a gap of more than one year (for example leaving school at 16 but returning to complete Level 3 qualifications after several years of work)	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from school/college; • Qualification transcripts.
3	Your parent or carer has been imprisoned while you were in education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from school/college • Letter from social worker • Letter from a charity • Documentary evidence from court or official documents

Further Help

If you have any further enquiries or you have a specific question about how these criteria relate to your circumstances, please consult the Foundation Year team (email: foundation.year@admin.cam.ac.uk)

Details are correct at the time of publication (May 2025) but should be checked against the Undergraduate Study website for the most up-to-date information. This version was made available in May 2025. © University of Cambridge, 2025