



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Reach for Excellence

**Applying to Reach for Excellence
2023**

THE | CONTEXTUAL | OUTREACH | TEAM



Applying to Reach for Excellence – What's it all about?

What is Reach for Excellence?

The Reach for Excellence programme supports young people who demonstrate the potential to access a top university but who may not have considered entry to research intensive Higher Education. Students on the scheme receive a wide range of support throughout the completion of their year twelve and thirteen studies.

Support is provided in the form of subject specific taster sessions, study skills workshops, impartial pre-entry guidance, finance and budgeting sessions and a residential summer school. Throughout the two year programme, students will be given a taste of university life and gain the necessary skills and experience for a smooth and successful transition into Higher Education.

A key benefit of the Reach for Excellence programme is that it allows high-achieving students to meet and share ideas with other like-minded students from a range of different schools and colleges situated within the Yorkshire region.

There are 200 places on the scheme this year. The programme is free of charge to students and travel expenses are reimbursed for each event attended. The majority of events and workshops will be held at the University of Leeds.

Aims

The aim of the programme is to raise aspiration, achievement, confidence, and self-esteem. We aim to provide appropriate and impartial guidance in an environment that will stretch bright and capable students who may not have considered entry to research intensive Higher Education.

Most importantly, we aim for students to have fun and enjoy their participation on the Reach for Excellence programme - it is not designed to be any additional pressure on top of the demands of A Level studies.

Programme content

We invite students to a wide variety of events and activities throughout year twelve and year thirteen. The programme is designed to enhance their current studies through subject taster sessions and study skills sessions.

In addition, they have the opportunity to attend workshops and information sessions in careers, finance and UCAS amongst others.

These workshops give students invaluable impartial guidance and advice when making the difficult decisions regarding what to study, where to study, how to finance their studies and how to make a good UCAS application.

Can anyone apply?

The programme has a set of key eligibility criteria that applicants must meet in order for them to be able to apply to our programme.

To be eligible for Reach for Excellence, students must:

- **Be a current Year 12 student.**

The Reach for Excellence programme begins in Year 12 and runs all the way through to the end of Year 13. We have one intake per year – there is no opportunity for Year 13 students to join the programme half way through.

- **Have gained 5 or more GCSEs at grades 9-4, including Mathematics and English Language.**

Students must have 5 or more GCSEs at the required level including English Language and Mathematics. We understand that some students may have attained a grade 3 and are potentially resitting these as part of Year 12 study. We would still accept students onto the programme providing a referee can confirm that a resit/remark is taking place. Students who attained lower than a grade 3 are unfortunately not eligible to apply.

- **Have the potential to achieve at least 3 A Levels at grade B or above (or equivalent qualifications), and to progress to further study at a research-intensive university.**

We appreciate that predicting A Level grades early in Year 12 is complex, particularly if a student is new to the school/college. We ask that referees consider a student's potential, taking into account GCSE grades and any mitigating circumstances. For example, we have previously accepted students for whom "on paper" a prediction of BBB may have appeared to be borderline, but where their teacher supported their application because participation in Reach for Excellence would make a difference in supporting them to achieve their aspirational grades.

- **Live within a reasonable distance to the University of Leeds and be able to attend regular events on campus during the school holidays.**

Students are invited to a range of events on campus here at the University of Leeds, these primarily take place during school holidays and require a commitment from students to be able to engage with the programme. We therefore cannot accept applications from students who live further than a 2hr public transport journey to the University.

Students must also meet at least two of the following six criteria. If you meet more than two criteria, please make sure you confirm all that apply, so that we can best assess your application.

- **Be in the first generation of their immediate family to apply to Higher Education.**

Any applicant whose parents have not previously **completed** an undergraduate degree or higher (obtained at any university or polytechnic in the UK or elsewhere) is eligible under this criterion.

Additionally, applicants are eligible if:

- their parents/guardians have started but not completed an undergraduate degree
- their parents/guardians hold a higher education certificate (HNC) or higher education diploma (HND) from a university, but not a degree

- parents/guardians have undertaken a degree level university course during the applicant's secondary education
- their parents/guardians studied for an Open University or similar distance learning degree
- their parent/guardian got a work-based degree on a part-time basis.
- their parent/guardian got an undergraduate degree, but the applicant is estranged from them, with little or no contact

The term 'immediate family' applies to parents only. It does not include siblings or family members outside of the immediate family such as grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts.

Please note that we assess such applications on an individual basis and encourage the applicant to provide as much information as possible.

- **Be from a household with a gross annual income of £25,000 or below.**

Applicants can demonstrate this criterion in one of three ways:

- If they are in receipt of 16-19 Bursary Fund with an income threshold of £25,000 or below. This does not include bursaries or scholarships for school fees at independent schools, and a referee from the applicant's school or college must confirm their eligibility.
- If they were/are in receipt of Free School Meals during their GCSE or A Level studies. A referee from the applicant's school or college must confirm this.
- Applicants not in receipt of Free School Meals or the 16-19 Bursary Fund can submit a Declaration of Household Income form, completed by a parent or guardian. A Declaration of Household Income and guidelines for completing the form can be downloaded from our website (applicants must contact the Reach for Excellence team if they are living independently without a parent or guardian).

When assessing household income, we follow the Student Finance England guidance to assess [taxable](#) income, for the financial year 2022-23. If a student's household income for the current year will be significantly lower than the previous tax year, we may be able to take this into account. Applicants should contact the Reach for Excellence team to discuss.

- **Attend, or have attended, a school that achieved below the national average Attainment 8 score at GCSE.**

If a school achieved an Attainment 8 score that was below the national average, any applicant from that school will be eligible under this criterion. This is checked using available results for the school as detailed on the gov.uk website **at the time recruitment opens**. Data has not yet been released for the current cycle, so the final Attainment 8 data for 2021/22 will be used for this year's entry to RfE. To ensure fairness between applicants at all stages of the Reach for Excellence recruitment cycle, this is the only data that will be used for this year's recruitment; data released between Monday 18th September and Thursday 16th November 2023 will not be taken into consideration.

The national average Attainment 8 score in 2022 was **48.8%**. Please note that this measure is NOT the same as Progress 8; a school considered to be below average using Progress 8 will not necessarily be below the national average for Attainment 8.

If an applicant has changed schools since completing their GCSEs, either the current or previous school's results may be used.

School performance tables can be found on the Department for Education website at www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance.

- **Live in a geographical area with low levels of progression onto higher education**

We determine which geographical areas have a low level of progression onto higher education using the applicant's permanent home postcode and measuring this against data provided by the government. The data we use to judge eligibility is provided by the Office for National Statistics and the Office for Students (OfS).

To see if an applicant meets this criterion please visit www.leeds.ac.uk/accesstoleedspostcode and input their postcode into our checker.

- **Currently live in or grew up in public or kinship care**

To be eligible under this criterion, an applicant must have spent time in public or kinship care at any point growing up, or be currently living in care.

- **Have had their studies disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in their personal, social or domestic life.**

Applicants meet this criterion if their studies have been disrupted by circumstances beyond their control. Each application is considered on an individual basis and we cannot provide an exhaustive list of situations that meet this criterion. We are, however, willing to consider any circumstances that a teacher or tutor can verify as having a detrimental impact on a student's studies. Your referee will need to provide a brief description of the nature, timescale and impact of the disruption on your studies.

We would generally consider circumstances that have occurred from GCSE studies onwards and / or during sixth form, unless there has been a significant, ongoing impact from an earlier point.

If you select the 'disruption to studies' criterion, a free-text box will appear asking for further details. Please complete this as fully as possible. Any information provided will be treated with the strictest confidence. If there is insufficient detail included, we will be unable to process the application until further information has been obtained.

We are unable to consider the general disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, unless an applicant's circumstances are extreme. Applicants must be able to demonstrate how the pandemic has impacted studies in a way that is above and beyond the extent of the disruption experienced by the rest of their cohort.

The Application Process Explained

Applications to our scheme must be submitted online. The online application form can be accessed on our website, but students **must** ask a teacher/tutor/careers advisor **in their current school or college** to act as their referee before applying.

Parent or carer?

You do not need to be present whilst the applicant is completing the online form.

If the applicant meets the household income criterion, you may need to fill in a Declaration of Household Income form, which is downloadable from our website and needs to be returned to us via post or email.

Teacher/tutor/careers advisor?

The student must request a reference and confirm you agree to support their application. Please see the Referee Guidelines before completing this stage of our online application process. You are not required to be present whilst a student completes the online application, as your reference is separate to the application.

As part of the application form you will be required to enter your personal details, such as your GCSE results and the contact details of your teacher referee, so it's a good idea to be prepared and have all the information that you might need ready.

You do not have to complete the application in one sitting. There is a 'Finish later' button at the bottom of each page of the application form, located below the 'Next' button. If you wish to save your responses and return to your application at a later date, then click the 'Finish later' button and either bookmark the URL web address or enter your email address, to receive an email containing the URL, so you can return to your application at a later date. We recommend that you do both.

The application form does not save automatically and we cannot unite applicants with their unfinished application form if they have lost their 'finish later' link. You would have to complete the whole application form again.

The deadline for applications is 23:59 on Thursday 16th November.

Application Form Walkthrough

Section 1 – Personal Details

Please fill in each section, including phone number and a valid email address. You may also wish to specify a 'Preferred Name' that we will use in our correspondence with you. For example if your name is "Samantha" but you prefer to be called "Sam" when we write to you, put that in the preferred name box.

Address

House Name/Number **Required**

Street Name **Required**

Town or City **Required**

Postcode **Required**

Top Tips!

Pay close attention when entering your postal address to ensure that you enter the correct information in the corresponding box. It's important we have an accurate record of your address. Do not attempt to type out your full address into any one of the boxes.

The red '**Required**' symbol next to a question means that you **must** answer that question as part of your application. You will not be allowed to navigate to the next part of the application form until you have completed all the required questions on the current page.

It is **very important** to inform the Contextual Outreach Team if you change your email or postal address so that we can keep you updated on the progress of your application.

Please include details of any disability or medical condition you have. This section is not compulsory, but if you require extra support when attending events on the University campus, please let us know so we can make the relevant arrangements for you.

Section 2 – How did you hear about the scheme?

Please select the appropriate option to let us know how you first heard about the Reach for Excellence scheme. For example this might have been through a talk at your school or college, via the website, or perhaps through a friend. You are allowed to tick as many options as you like, as we realise more than one option may apply. If you heard about the scheme through an option that is not listed, select the 'Other' option and write in the box that is provided below.

If you have selected "Other", how did you find out about Reach for Excellence? **Required**

Just because it isn't listed above doesn't mean we don't want to know!

Likewise, if you have previously participated in any events at the University of Leeds then let us know. You **must** fill in the 'other' box if you have selected other to be able to move to the next part of the application form.

Section 3 – GCSE Qualifications Summary

Use this section to record which GCSE subjects you studied, and the grades you achieved.

There are dropdown boxes for you to select qualification type, subject studied and grade achieved.

	Qualification Type	Subject	If you selected an 'Other' option, please specify here:	Grade Achieved
Qual. 1	Please select ▾	Please select ▾	<input type="text"/>	Please select ▾

We have used information obtained from the previous cohorts of Reach for Excellence students to ensure that we have listed most of the possible GCSE options.

	Qualification Type	Subject
Qual. 1	Please select ▾	Please select ▾
Qual. 2	Please select ▾	Accounting
Qual. 3	Please select ▾	Additional Mathematics
Qual. 4	Please select ▾	Additional Science
Qual. 5	Please select ▾	Ancient History
Qual. 6	Please select ▾	Applications of Applied Science
Qual. 7	Please select ▾	Applications of Mathematics
Qual. 8	Please select ▾	Applied Business
Qual. 9	Please select ▾	Applied Science
Qual. 10	Please select ▾	Arabic
Qual. 11	Please select ▾	Art and Design
Qual. 12	Please select ▾	Astronomy
		Bengali
		Biblical Hebrew
		Biology
		Business and Communication Systems
		Business Studies
		Chemistry
		Child Development
		Childcare
		Please select ▾

When you click on the arrow, the dropdown list will appear and you will be able to select from a range of different subjects, listed in alphabetical order.

Likewise, you can select from a range of different qualification types (GCSE, BTEC) and achieved grades.

However, if your subject or qualification type isn't listed, simply select 'Other' from the dropdown list and use the free-text box in the third column to tell us which subject or qualification type you have studied.

There are twelve boxes provided, but don't worry, we don't expect all students to have studied twelve different qualifications so leave any extra boxes blank if you don't need them.

If you are resitting any of your GCSEs this year, you can tell us at the end of this section. There are free-text options for you to fill out the qualification type and subject you are studying, plus a dropdown list for your predicted grade, if you know it. If you're not sure what this is, just select 'Unknown' from the list.

If you are resitting any of your GCSE qualifications, please let us know below:

	Qualification Type	Subject	Predicted Grade
1	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Please select ▾
2	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Please select ▾
3	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Please select ▾
4	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Please select ▾
5	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Please select ▾

Section 4 – Applicant’s Supporting Statements

This is your opportunity to tell us more about you – we’d like to know why you decided to apply to Reach for Excellence, how you think the scheme will benefit you, and any extra-curricular activities you might have taken part in.

Your supporting statements should be unique to you and should be good preparation for writing other applications, including thinking about the things you might like to include on your UCAS form.

Top Tip!

We want to get to know you a bit better in this section, so try and think about your personal motivations for applying to Reach for Excellence, and some specific things you’re hoping to gain from taking part in the scheme. Do you want to improve your confidence? Are you looking to learn more about the different courses and career options that are open to you, or build up your employability skills? This is the space to let us know.

Reach for Excellence is a competitive programme so we would suggest that you put some time and thought into answering these questions fully, in order to provide us with any relevant information that supports your application. We recommend that you plan, write and save your answers to these questions in a separate document before pasting them into the boxes on the form, as it can be easier to check spelling and grammar on programmes like Microsoft Word.

If you know what subject(s) you would like to study at university, please tell us what motivated you to make that decision. Equally, it’s fine if you haven’t yet decided on what you’d like to study.

If you have undertaken any work experience, volunteering, additional courses, or roles of responsibility within your school or college, please provide details of these in your second supporting statement. If you haven’t yet completed any, or are hoping to obtain work experience alongside your current studies – particularly if it’s linked to the subject(s) you are interested in studying at university – we’d like to hear about your plans too. Remember, competition for university places is highly competitive, so it’s good to start thinking about these things now.

Top Tip!

When you’re telling us about your extra-curriculars, try and think of the different skills you’ve improved on or gained from participating in them, and tell us about those too. This will be really important for your UCAS application, so it’s good to start practicing early!

Section 5 – School and College Information

Please tell us where you studied for your GCSEs in the first box, and where you are studying for your A Levels / equivalent in the second box. If you are studying at the same place, **do not** leave the second box blank. Type the same school and/or college into **both** boxes.

Section 6 – A Level Qualifications Summary

Please select the subjects you are studying for A Level from the dropdown boxes provided. The format for this section is similar to that of the GCSE section. **We do not require your predicted grades.**

If you are studying for a different kind of qualification, the drop down boxes should accommodate this, for example BTEC, International Baccalaureate, etc.

If your subject or qualification type isn't listed, simply select 'Other' from the dropdown list and use the free-text box in the third column to tell us which subject or qualification type you have studied.

Please note, if you are studying an EPQ then simply tick the box. We **do not** require an email providing additional details such as the subject or title of your EPQ.

Section 7 – University Subject Interest

Please select the subject cluster that you think best aligns with your interest. This is not fixed, and you are free to change your mind during your time on RfE. You can then choose up to three specific subjects that you are particularly interested in studying at university. If you have not yet decided, you might like to think about which subjects you enjoy and which subjects sound interesting, or that you would like to hear more about. Think about what potential career you might like in the future. Don't worry if you're not entirely sure, we just want to see what ideas you currently have.

Section 8 – Eligibility Criteria


This section is designed to confirm that you are eligible for the Reach for Excellence scheme. Please tick the box next to any criteria you believe that you meet. If you are not sure which boxes to tick, please give us a call or email us using the contact details provided on the last page of this booklet.

Eligibility Criteria

Please tick which of the criteria you meet below **📌 Required**

Please select at least 2 answer(s).

- I am in the first generation of my immediate family to apply to higher education
- I attended or attend a school which achieved below the national average Attainment 8 score at GCSE
- I currently live in or grew up in public care
- My studies have been disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in my personal, social or domestic life
- I live in a geographical area with low levels of progression to higher education
- I am from a household with a gross annual income of £25,000 or below



Think carefully and use the guidelines on pages 3-6 of this booklet to make sure you tick all the options that apply to you.

Section 9 – Referee’s Details

You need to fill in the details of the teacher, tutor or careers advisor who has agreed to act as your referee so that we can check any details of your application with them. You will need to include the following information:

- School/College
- Name of Referee
- Referee’s Job Title
- Referee’s email address
- Telephone number to reach Referee (e.g. this may be the School/College telephone number)
- LEA (Local Education Authority)

Make sure your Referee is an individual who has knowledge of your academic and personal capabilities so they can give the best and most accurate reflection of you.

Completing Your Application

Click ‘Finish’ to submit your application. You should see a message like the one below. We recommend making a note of the completion receipt number and downloading a copy of the PDF for future reference.

Reach for Excellence 23/24 Entry




Complete

Your responses to this survey have been submitted.

If you need a formal record of your submission, please use the following details:

Completion receipt

Receipt number: 1-1-1
Submission time: 2021-09-10 09:33:26 BST

 [Print](#)  [Download PDF](#)  [Email](#)

Thank You For Your Application

Once we receive an application from a student, the Contextual Outreach Team will contact their named teacher referee to ask that they complete a referee confirmation form online before the referee deadline of Thursday 23rd November at 12 noon.

Applications are assessed after the closing date, and decisions about places on the programme can be expected mid December.

Contact Us:

The Reach for Excellence team will be happy to help if you have any queries or if more guidance on is needed for you to complete your application.

Reach for Excellence email address: reachforexcellence@leeds.ac.uk

You can also telephone us: 0113 343 8471