



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Reach for Excellence

Teacher Referee Guidelines 2023 Online Application Form

THE CONTEXTUAL OUTREACH TEAM



Guidance for Teachers, Tutors and Careers Advisers supporting an application:

To support a student's application to Reach for Excellence, you will need to complete an online referee confirmation form. This will be emailed to you using the email address provided by the student in their application form, along with the password you will need to access it.

You do not have to complete your reference in one sitting; there is a 'Finish later' button at the bottom of each page of the form. If you wish to save your responses and return to the form 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. We recommend that you do both to avoid losing the link. **The referee form does not save automatically and we cannot unite referees with their unfinished confirmation form if they have lost their 'finish later' link.**

The deadline for completing references is midday on Thursday 23rd November.

Section 2 of the form (applicant's circumstances) is very important. We need you to confirm the applicant's eligibility for the Reach for Excellence scheme, by ticking the box next to any criteria you believe the applicant meets. You may need to double check a student's details in order to do this – we'd advise that you speak to the student in advance about the criteria they believe they meet, so that you can confirm this in school if necessary and provide more detail about this in your reference where appropriate. Further guidance on the eligibility criteria can be found in the next section of this document.

After ticking the relevant criteria, section 4 of the form will ask you to write a statement in support of the student's application. In this statement you must confirm that you believe the student has the *potential* to succeed at a research intensive university and that they meet the Reach for Excellence criteria. In some cases, a student may have not achieved as highly as you suspect they might be able to if given extra support and motivation – if this is the case for a student whose reference you have been asked to write, please give as many details as you are able.

Please also include any further information you believe would support the student's application, and provide as much detail as possible about any special achievements, the student's commitment to their studies and their potential to benefit from the scheme. Places on the Reach for Excellence programme are highly competitive and, as such, it is crucial that we can obtain as much information about a student as possible in order to accurately assess their suitability for the scheme.

We understand that it can sometimes be difficult to provide a detailed reference for some students, particularly if they are new to your institution. If this is the case, simply confirming the applicant's eligibility criteria in writing will suffice.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for Reach for Excellence, students must:

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 a student meets more than two criteria, please make sure you confirm all that apply, so that we can best assess their application.

1) 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.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) 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.

5) 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.

6) 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.

Contact Us

The Reach for Excellence team will be happy to help if you have any queries or you need more guidance to complete the referee confirmation form.

Our email address is reachforexcellence@leeds.ac.uk and you can also telephone us on 0113 343 8471.