Verification Service

UCAS

UCAS Verification Service Report 2022

Introduction

UCAS supports around 700,000 applications every year from domestic, EU, and international applicants to higher education in the UK. The role of the verification service is to help check that applications include true, complete and accurate information, and to support applicants in providing this. Verification activities also help prevent anyone from gaining an unfair advantage or securing a place by deception. UCAS' activities complement those undertaken by universities and colleges, and other service providers, such as the Student Loans Company.

Applications submitted to UCAS are subject to checks using fraud detection software, and personal statements are screened using similarity detection software. Universities and colleges may also identify issues with applications. If information is incorrect, missing or an issue is raised, the application will be flagged, and applicants or their referees will be asked to provide additional information or clarification. If, ultimately, the issues cannot be resolved, the application may be cancelled. Applicants may appeal cancellation decisions.

As part of our commitment to transparency, we publish an annual report and statistics on the performance of the verification service for the undergraduate admissions service, including numbers of applications that were flagged and cancelled, and an analysis of the characteristics of these applicants.

Statistical reporting on the 2022 cycle (UK domiciled applicants only)

In the 2022 cycle, 610 applications from UK domiciled applicants were flagged for further consideration, equating to 0.1% of the total UK applicant population. Of these, 145 applicants had their applications cancelled (0.02%). Table 1 shows these results in comparison to previous cycles.

In comparison to the 2021 cycle, there has been a 5% decrease in flagged applications from UK domiciled applicants. However, there has been a 24% increase in cancelled applications from UK domiciled applicants.

Table 1: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled for each cycle.

Cycle	Applicant baseline	Flagged	Reinstated	Cancelled	Suspended
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.
2018	562,260	1,815	0	240	0
2019	565,810	1,825	40	60	95
2020	577,575	960	20	65	60
2021	607,000	640	15	60	50
2022	616,320	610	10	80	65
All	2,928,965	5,845	85	505	265

UK domiciled applicants by ethnic group

Table 2 shows the number and percentage of flagged and cancelled applications by ethnic group.

The proportion of flagged applications across the ethnic groups has broadly remained the same as seen in the 2021 cycle. In the 2022 cycle, 39% of flagged applicants were classified as black in comparison to 41% in the 2021 cycle. The percentage of cancelled applications in the flagged black ethnic group has also decreased slightly at 38%, in comparison to 41% in the 2021 cycle.

In the 2022 cycle, 24% of flagged applicants were classified as white in comparison to 26% in the 2021 cycle. The percentage of cancelled applications in the flagged white ethnic group has decreased from 27% in the 2021 cycle to 21% in the 2022 cycle.

Table 2: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each ethnic group comprises (2022 cycle)

Ethnic group	Applicant baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asian	87,500	14	130	21	30	21
Black	59,185	10	235	39	55	38
Mixed	33,430	5	40	7	15	10
Other	17,890	3	35	6	0	0
Unknown or Prefer Not To Say	9,810	2	25	4	10	7
White	408,500	66	145	24	30	21
All	616,320	100	610	100	145	100

UK domiciled applicants by age

Mature applicants are defined as those aged 21 and over, and typically account for a quarter of UK domiciled applicants. Our figures show members of this group, who commonly apply without the support of a school or college, are more likely to find their applications flagged. In the 2022 cycle, this accounted for 68% of flagged applicants. This is an increase of 4% in comparison to the 2021 cycle. The proportion of cancelled applicants aged 21 and over has however declined from 77% in the 2021 cycle to 72% in the 2022 cycle.

Table 3: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each age band comprises (2022 cycle)

Age band	Applicant baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
17 or under	2,765	0	0	0	0	0
18	331,165	54	85	14	5	3
19	91,495	15	60	10	15	10
20	35,445	6	45	7	15	10
21+	155,455	25	415	68	105	72
All	616,320	100	610	100	145	100

UK domiciled applicants by Apply centre (i.e. with the support of a school or college)

Independent applicants are defined as those who apply without the support of a UCAS-registered centre (typically a school or college). In the 2022 cycle, 31% of individuals applying to higher education were classified as independent applicants. Our figures show these applicants are more likely to have their applications flagged. In the 2022 cycle, 76% of flagged applications were classified as independent applicants.

Table 4: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each apply centre comprises (2022 cycle)

Apply centre	Applicant baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Apply Centre	422,375	69	140	23	15	10
Independent	193,945	31	465	76	135	93
All	616,320	100	610	100	145	100

UK domiciled applicants by region

Our data shows that applicants living in London are more likely to have their applications flagged than those living in other parts of the UK. In the 2022 cycle, this accounted for 48% of flagged applications. This is an increase of 8% in comparison to the 2021 cycle.

Table 5: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each region comprises (2022 cycle)

Region	Applicant baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	1,795	0	0	0	0	0
East Midlands	38,260	6	30	5	5	3
East of England	52,430	9	35	6	10	7
London	117,400	19	295	48	55	38
North East	19,125	3	10	2	0	0
North West	67,450	11	70	11	15	10
Northern Ireland	18,870	3	0	0	0	0
Scotland	50,960	8	20	3	0	0
South East	81,165	13	40	7	10	7
South West	42,250	7	15	2	5	3
Wales	25,540	4	10	2	0	0
West Midlands	55,220	9	45	7	10	7
Yorkshire and The Humber	45,845	7	35	6	15	10
All	616,320	100	610	100	145	100