

# Verification Service

## UCAS Verification Service Report 2023

### 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 2023 cycle (UK domiciled applicants only)

In the 2023 cycle, 565 applications from UK domiciled applicants were flagged for further consideration, which equates to 0.1% of the total UK applicant population. Of these, 115 applicants had their applications cancelled (0.02%). Table 1 shows these results in comparison to previous cycles.

In comparison to the 2022 cycle, there has been a 17% decrease in the number of flagged applications from UK domiciled applicants with a 26% decrease in the number of cancelled applications.

**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.
2019	565810	1825	40	55	100
2020	577575	960	20	65	60
2021	607000	640	15	60	50
2022	616320	680	10	90	65
2023	604285	565	15	70	45
All	2970990	4670	95	340	315

### 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 ethnic groups has broadly remained the same as seen in the 2022 cycle.

In the 2023 cycle, 40% of flagged applicants were classified as black in comparison to 38% in the 2022 cycle. The percentage of cancelled applications in the flagged black ethnic group remains at 39%, the same as the 2022 cycle.

21% of flagged applicants were classified as white in comparison to 25% in the 2022 cycle. The percentage of cancelled applications in the flagged white ethnic group has increased from 23% in the 2022 cycle to 30% in the 2023 cycle.

**Table 2: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each ethnic group comprises (2023 cycle)**

Ethnic Group	Applicant Baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Asian	93,610	15	110	20	20	17
Black	62,625	10	225	40	45	39
Mixed	34,415	6	45	8	10	9
Other	20,030	3	40	7	10	9
Unknown or Prefer Not to Say	11,915	2	20	4	0	0
White	381,695	63	120	21	35	30
All	604,285	100	565	100	115	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 the applicants of this group, who commonly apply without the support of a school or college, are more likely to find their applications flagged.

In the 2023 cycle, this accounted for 59% of flagged applicants. This represents a decrease of 6% compared to the 2022 cycle. The proportion of cancelled applicants aged 21 and over has slightly declined from 71% in the 2022 cycle to 70% in the 2023 cycle.

**Table 3: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each age band comprises (2023 cycle)**

Age Band	Applicant Baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>17 or Under</b>	2695	0	5	1	0	0
<b>18</b>	325005	54	90	16	10	9
<b>19</b>	91440	15	90	16	15	13
<b>20</b>	35725	6	50	9	10	9
<b>21+</b>	149420	25	330	59	80	70
<b>All</b>	604285	100	565	100	115	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 2023 cycle, 32% 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 2023 cycle, 72% of flagged applications were classified as independent applicants with a 2% drop from the 2022 cycle.

**Table 4: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each apply centre comprises (2023 cycle)**

Apply Centre	Applicant Baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Apply Centre</b>	411770	68	160	28	20	17
<b>Independent</b>	192515	32	405	72	100	87
<b>All</b>	604285	100	656	100	115	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 2023 cycle, this accounted for 28% of flagged applications. However, this is a significant decrease from 47% in the 2022 cycle.

**Table 5: UK domiciled undergraduate applicants, total flagged and cancelled and relative proportion each region comprises (2023 cycle)**

Region	Applicant Baseline		Flagged		Cancelled	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	1710	0	5	0	0	0
<b>East Midlands</b>	34000	6	100	5	5	4
<b>East of England</b>	46675	8	155	8	10	9
<b>London</b>	105080	19	520	28	55	58
<b>North East</b>	19150	3	45	2	5	4
<b>North West</b>	61725	11	195	11	10	9
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	18820	3	30	2	0	0
<b>Scotland</b>	49830	9	90	5	5	4
<b>South East</b>	72300	13	225	12	5	4
<b>South West</b>	40690	7	95	5	5	4
<b>Wales</b>	23720	4	60	3	5	4
<b>West Midlands</b>	50110	9	185	10	10	9
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	42000	7	125	7	5	4
<b>All</b>	565810	100	1825	100	115	100