



# Use of Contextual Data at Oxford University

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# The admissions process at Oxford

- 15 October application deadline
- 15,000 applications
- 75% of applicants take a pre-interview test in November  
*short-listing process in November*
- 10,000 applicants called for interview in December
- 3,500 offers made for 3,200 places
- All decisions are made by academics in Colleges according to Departmental guidelines
- Undergraduate Admissions Office works in an advisory capacity on admissions policy

# Why collect contextual data?

- Changes to the data collected by UCAS
- Work done at other institutions
- Internal pressure for centralised guidance
- Changes to our own application forms
  - some contextual information collected on Oxford Application Form (OAF) and special Oxford Access Scheme form, both now obsolete
- Development in conjunction with paperless admissions
  - copy forms no longer used; all applicant data held on web-based customisable system (ADSS)
  - users can print batches of applicants according to subject, college etc
  - system includes the contextual data we collect

# What we decided to use ...

Each applicant is flagged according to five individual criteria:

1. School GCSE profile (where student took these qualifications)  
*if less than UK average achieving five A\*-C grades*
2. School/College A-level profile  
*if less than national average of QCA points per qualification*
3. Postcode data  
*if in lowest two groups of ACORN data  
(‘Moderate Means’ or ‘Hard-Pressed’)*
4. Participation in a Sutton Trust Summer School or the Oxford Young Ambassador scheme  
*if participated in either (or both)*
5. Looked-after children  
*if identified as in care for three months or longer*

## ... and how we decided to use it

- Five individual flags are collected on ADSS
- An applicant receives an overall flag if they have ...
  - 3 out of 5 (or more)
  - or 2 out of 4 or 1 out of 3, where information is missing
- An overall flag means the applicant is “strongly recommended for interview” ... provided that they:
  - are predicted the minimum entry requirement of AAA or equivalent
  - score in the top 80% of their cohort in any pre-interview test
- If a tutor wishes not to interview a candidate fulfilling these criteria, they are obliged to provide clear justification to the subject coordinator

# Example of ADSS-produced pdf

<b>C700: Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry</b>			
Title:	Miss	Application No.:	
Surname / Family Name:		Personal ID:	
First/Given Name(s):		Date Applied:	01-10-2008
Address:		Application Source:	A
	Syston	Fee Code:	02
		Student Support Arrangements:	Leicester
	Leicester	Domicile / APR:	Leicestershire
Postcode	LE7 2EP	Residential Cat.:	UK Citizen/EU National
Country:		Route B:	N
Gender:	F	Criminal Convictions:	N
Date of Birth:	12-02-1991	Disability/Special Needs:	0: No disability
Age at 1st September:	18 years, 6 months	Country of Birth:	United Kingdom
Mobile Number:		Nationality:	United Kingdom
Home Number:		Entered UK:	
Email:		School:	Wreake Valley College
In Care:	Unanswered	Last Education:	14676

COURSE DETAILS							
Course	Campus	College	Short Name	Further Details?	Entry Point	Home	Entry Year
C700		MAG	BIOC		1		2009

SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION					
Name	From	To	PT/FT/SW	UCAS Code	
Wreake Valley College	9 / 2002	6 / 2009	FT	14676	


ACTIVITIES IN PREPARATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION					
Start Date	Duration	School Year	Location	Sponsor	
01-07-0008	5	12	University of Cambridge	Sutton Trust	
01-07-0008	31	12	Other	Other	

CONTEXTUAL DATA					
Care	Sutton/OYA	GCSE	A-Level	ACORN	Overall
N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y

QUALIFICATIONS COMPLETED OR CERTIFIED						
Date	Body	Level/Qual	Subject	Grade	Result	Centre
8/2007	OCR	GCSE	Design & Technology: Graphic Products	A		25172
8/2007	Edexcel	GCSE	English Literature	A		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	Mathematics B	A*		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	Geography A	A*		25172
8/2007	Edexcel	GCSE	English A	A*		25172
8/2007	OCR	GCSE	French	A		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	History B	B		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSE	Humanities	A*		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSEDA	Science	A*A*		25172
8/2007	WJEC	GCSESC	Religious Studies A	A*		25172
8/2007	AQA	GCSESC	Information & Communication Technology A	A*		25172
6/2008	OCR	A Sub (AS)	Physics :- Title: 2821 Grade: A Title: 2822 Grade: A Title: 2823	A		25172
6/2008	OCR	A Sub (AS)	Chemistry :- Title: 2811 Grade: A Title: 2812 Grade: A Title: 2813 Grade: A	A		25172
6/2008	OCR	A Sub (AS)	Biology :- Title: 2801 Grade: A Title: 2802 Grade: A Title: 2803/A Grade: B	A		25172
6/2008	Edexcel	A Sub (AS)	Geography B :- Title: 6471 Grade: C Title: 6472 Title: 6473 Grade: A	A		25172
6/2008	AQA	A Sub (AS)	Mathematics :- Title: MPC1 Grade: A Title: MPC2 Grade: A Title: SS1B Grade: A	A		25172

QUALIFICATIONS NOT YET COMPLETED OR CERTIFIED					
Date	Body	Level/Qual	Subject	Predicted Grade	Centre
6/2009	AQA	A	Mathematics	A	25172
6/2009	OCR	A	Chemistry	A	25172
6/2009	OCR	A	Physics	A	25172
6/2009	OCR	A	Biology	A	25172

# Example of ADSS web view



## ADSS

by OCAO

Logged in as user: [adms12](#) | [Log off](#) | Subject: [Admissions](#) | [Switch Subject](#)

Use detailed filter

College 1 (Clear) STJ

College 2 (Clear) All

Joint School All

Flag Widening P

[Apply Filter](#)

### Widening Participation Flags

[Save My Changes](#) [Export to Excel](#)

Records 1 to 21 of 21

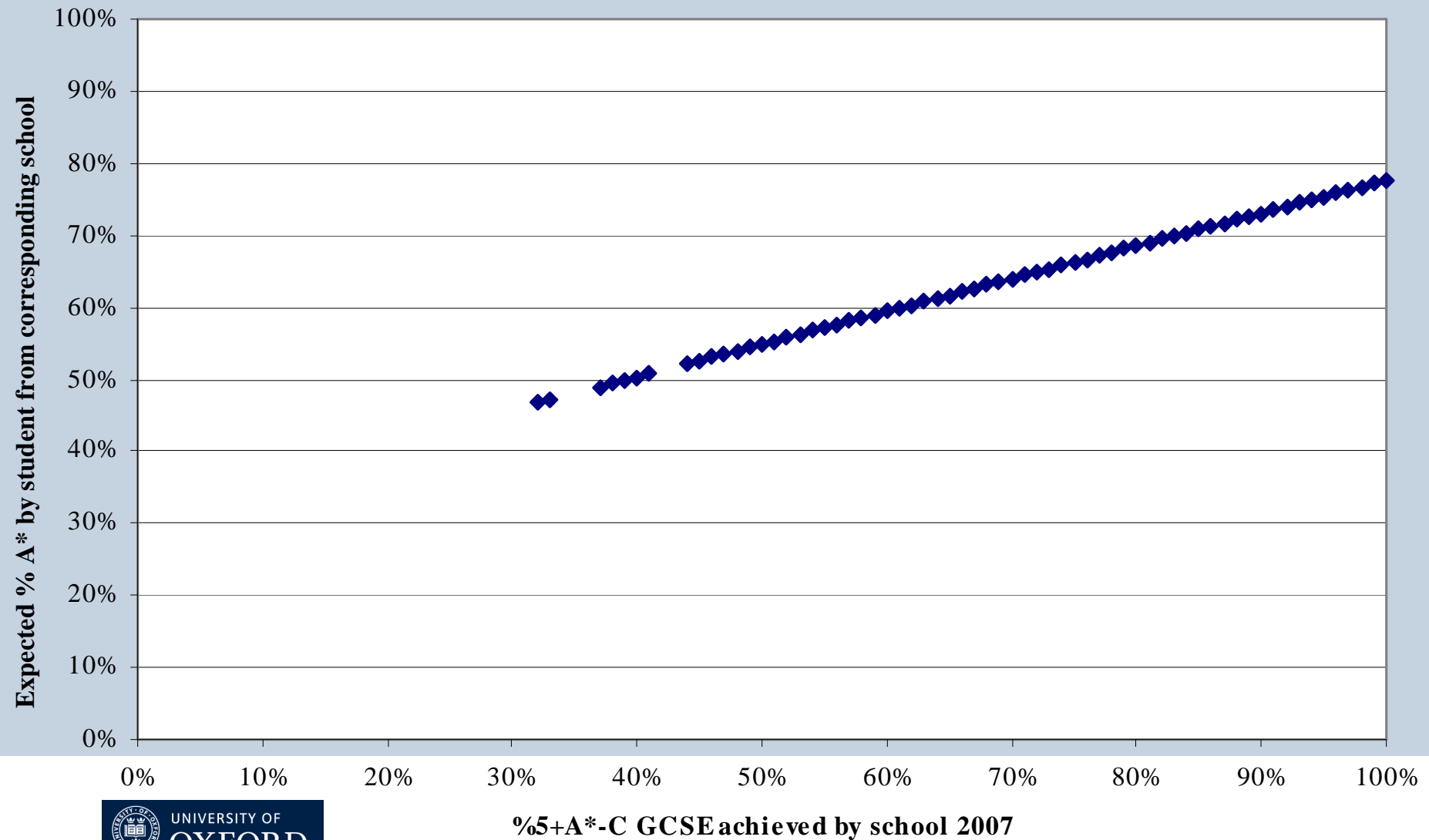
Records per page : [15](#) [30](#) [45](#) [60](#) [All](#)

Surname	UCAS	WP Care	WP Sutton Trust	WP Acorn	WP GCSE	WP A-Level	WP Overall	School GCSE Score %	School A-Level Score
		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	52	166.7
		N	Y	NA	NA	Y	Y	66	202.5
		N	N	NA	NA	Y	Y		206.8
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	58	206.6
		N	N	NA	Y	NA	Y	54	
		N	Y	N	NA	NA	Y	-2	-2.0
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	38	188.4
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	51	196.6
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	40	205.0
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y	-2	
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	48	178.0
		N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	52	206.0
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	52	201.0
		N	Y	N	NA	NA	Y		
		N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	50	202.1
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	NA	NA	Y		
		N	N	Y	NA	Y	Y		203.1
		N	N	NA	NA	Y	Y		191.3

[Save My Changes](#)

# Additional contextual aspect for Medicine

expected proportion of A\*





# Impact modelling and validation

- We analysed 2008 entry data to see the predicted impact:
  - 14,109 applicants; 411 (5.7%) would have been overall flagged
  - 177 of the 411 (43.1%) had not been short-listed for interview
- 2009 entry applicants – what actually happened:
  - 15,277 applicants; 510 (6.4%) were overall flagged
  - 165 of the 510 (32.4%) had not been short-listed for interview

Ucas Cycle	Score	Deselect	Reject After Interview	Missed Offer	Placed	Withdrew	Grand Total
<b>2009</b>	4	7	9	1	5	0	<b>22</b>
	3	48	91	1	34	2	<b>176</b>
	2	34	38	4	7	3	<b>86</b>
	1	55	72	3	17	7	<b>154</b>
	Totals	144	210	9	63	12	<b>438</b>
	%	32.9%	47.9%	16.4%		2.7%	
<b>2008</b>	%	43.1%	37.2%	16.3%		3.4%	

# Data sources: positives and negatives

- Sutton Trust / OYA and Looked-after child status

- ✓ *self-identified by applicant on UCAS application*

- Postcode

- ✓ *ACORN classification of postcodes checked against home address*

- GCSE and A-level school and college profiles

- DCSF data (for GCSE year, e.g. 2007 for 2009 entry)*

- ✗ *Data incomplete or unavailable for Scotland, Wales, NI*

- ✗ *UCAS school code & DCSF school code do not always match*

- ✓ No input at all required from the applicant (or tutors!)

- ✓ No applicants disadvantaged – supernumerary exercise

# Conclusion

- System designed to have low impact
- Use of many criteria allows better evaluation
- Contextual data informs *short-listing*, not *offer-making*
- Other institutions may feel a different approach is more appropriate for their applicant pool

Please contact for further information

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