



22 October 2019

RECORDS MANAGEMENT SECTION

File ref: T3/39/110

Ms Claire Campion

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Dear Ms Campion

Freedom of information request

Thank you for your email of 24 September 2019 requesting information about A Level grades held by entrants to MBChB Medicine.

The University of Edinburgh is a global university, rooted in Scotland. We are globally recognised for our research, development and innovation and we have provided world-class teaching to our students for more than 425 years. We are the largest university in Scotland and in 2017/18 our annual revenue was £984 million, of which over £279 million was research income. We have over 41,000 students and more than 15,000 staff. We are a founding member of the UK's Russell Group of leading research universities and a member of the League of European Research Universities.

Edinburgh Medical School

The Edinburgh Medical School is renowned for preparing its students to be world class doctors. The Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) programme curriculum aims to ensure that our graduates are caring, competent, confident and reflective practitioners, and are able to function at the highest level in academic, hospital or community settings. Further information about the MBChB is published on the [Edinburgh Medical School website](#).

Medicine is a 'controlled subject'. This means the Scottish Funding Council determines the number of funded places available. Students resident in England, Wales or Northern Ireland and those from overseas are funded differently from those domiciled in Scotland and the EU. The places available for these groups are allocated separately. Further information about the allocation of places is available on the [Edinburgh Medical School website](#) and the [Scottish Funding Council website](#).

Contextual Admissions

The University of Edinburgh is committed to widening access and welcomes applications from students with diverse backgrounds. Our continuing commitment to diversity plays a vital role in ensuring the University's success as a great civic institution. We recognise that not everyone has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their full academic potential

from their school or college qualifications alone. For this reason, we aim to identify applicants who could benefit from additional consideration in the admissions process. This is known as contextual admissions, as it enables us to consider the achievements of applicants in context.

We use data from a number of sources along with information on the UCAS application to identify applicants for additional consideration in our contextual admissions process. Applicants can be flagged as either 'Context Plus' or 'Context'. The University website explains the full criteria for [widening access](#) on its website.

We prioritise applicants with the 'context' flag for an offer where there is competition for limited places. If an applicant is flagged 'context' and has achieved, or is predicted to achieve, our typical entry requirements, then, wherever possible, they will receive an offer at the typical level. If an applicant is flagged 'context plus' and has achieved, or is predicted to achieve, our minimum entry requirements, then, wherever possible, they will receive an offer at the minimum level. Our minimum entry requirements are set at a level that ensures applicants have the skills and knowledge to successfully complete their degree programme. As competition for entry to most of our degree programmes at Edinburgh is high and applications generally exceed the number of places available, many applicants are required to meet more challenging, typical requirements. The difference in grades required between the minimum and typical requirements varies by degree programme. Using MBChB Medicine as an example, for entry in 2020, the minimum requirement for A Levels is AAB, and the typical requirement is AAA.

A Level grades

You asked for the number of students starting MBChB Medicine in the academic years 2017/18 to 2019/20 who achieved specified combinations of A Level grades. I have provided this information in table 1 below.

You will see that I have not provided the exact number where the number is fewer than five. This is because disclosing these low numbers could enable individuals and their grades to be identified.

I have also aggregated the data for grades below AAA for the period. As explained above, the current standard entry requirement for MBChB Medicine is AAA. Grades below AAA may therefore indicate that the students were widening access applicants. Students who were widening access applicants may be identifiable, therefore disclosure of more detailed information may disclose their A Level grades.

Disclosure of low numbers and detailed information about grades below the standard entry would breach the data protection principles set out in data protection legislation. The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 does not require us to provide this sort of information as it is exempt under section 38(1)(b).

Table 1: A-Level grade combination of entrants to MBChB Medicine, 2017/18 to 2019/20

A-Level grade profile	Academic year		
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A*A*A*	41	41	31
A*A*A	22	30	18
A*AA	25	25	15

A-Level grade profile	Academic year		
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
AAA	9	14	12
A*AB/AAB	6		
A*AC	0	0	0
A-Level and other combination	0	<5	6

Table notes

- The grade profile used here may not accurately represent all of the entrance qualifications held by an applicant. For example, an entrant with two A-Levels at grade A* and a Cambridge Pre-U qualification would fall here under the 'A-Level and other combination' category, but this does not mean that two A* grades at A-Level is sufficient to secure entry to the programme. This is particularly relevant to the information provided under the 'A-Level and other combination' category above, which does not represent qualifications below our minimum requirements.
- A count of live applications with UF (Unconditional Firm) status is used here as a proxy for the number of entrants. A very small number of UF applicants do not proceed to enter the University, or withdraw soon after commencing their studies.
- The grade profiles are based on applicants' verified grades, which are provided to the University by UCAS.

Right to review

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you may ask the University to conduct a review of this decision by contacting the University's Records Management Section in writing (e.g. by letter or email) or in some other recorded form (e.g. audio or video tape). You should describe the original request, explain your grounds for dissatisfaction, and include an address for correspondence. You have 40 working days from receipt of this letter to submit a review request. The contact details for the Records Management Section are at the top of this letter. When the review process has been completed, if you are still dissatisfied, you may use the [Scottish Information Commissioner's guidance on making an appeal](#) to make an appeal to the Commissioner. If you do not have access to the Internet, please let me know and I will provide a copy of the relevant web pages.

Privacy notice for information request applicants

[The University of Edinburgh's request privacy notice](#), which describes how we use the information you have supplied about yourself and your request, is published on the University website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Don
Information Compliance Officer

If you require this letter in an alternative format, such as large print or a coloured background, please contact the Records Management Section on 0131 651 4099 or email recordsmanagement@ed.ac.uk