

## School of Geography Outstanding Potential Award scheme

Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) is committed to providing an outstanding learning experience for students of all backgrounds. We aim to recruit students of the highest intrinsic talent and potential and to give you educational opportunities that will prepare you for the future, whether you choose a career, further study or another individual path to attaining your goals. Our admissions process is designed to identify students who demonstrate potential, motivation and commitment to joining our diverse community of staff and students.

Our Outstanding Potential Award (OPA) scheme has been introduced to provide students with the opportunity to secure a place at Queen Mary before they have completed their sixth form studies. Selected applicants, identified as having outstanding potential through a rigorous assessment process, are invited to attend an interview with one of our academic staff at one of our Festival of Geography Offer Holder Days, and are offered an OPA if they choose to attend and do well in the interview.

### How does the OPA scheme work?

1. You apply to Queen Mary through UCAS as usual.
2. If you meet our general criteria for admission, we make you a conditional offer.
3. We review your application against specific OPA scheme criteria and if you meet these, we invite you for an interview with one of our academic staff.
4. You attend the interview and perform well.
5. We make you an offer of an OPA.
6. If you accept your conditional offer firmly by the relevant UCAS deadline, we will make your offer unconditional.

### Who is the OPA scheme for?

Our OPA criteria are designed to identify students who are high performers, as well as students who have the potential to be high performers on our programmes. We understand that not all learners have the same opportunities to excel in their sixth form education. This may be for a variety of reasons relating to the personal and educational context in which you are studying. Some of our students experience disruption to their A level or other level 3 studies for reasons beyond their control, for example because of problems with their health, their family situation, or because of unexpected changes to teaching arrangements in their school or college. Our OPA scheme is designed to be inclusive and when selecting you for interview, we will take into account not only your academic attainment so far, your predicted grades, but also factors which may affect your ability to get the best possible grades.

## What we expect from our OPA scholars?

Our OPA scheme is intended to identify serious, ambitious students who want to come to Queen Mary and get a good degree. We invest a lot of time in meeting you and supporting you to join Queen Mary, and we expect you to work hard in your preparation in return. We expect you to complete three A levels or the equivalent qualifications you are taking and to attain the best grades possible. This will mean you are well prepared for the programme you are joining and put you in a good position to do well on your programme from the outset.

## Some rules about the OPA scheme

We have tried to make the OPA scheme as straightforward as possible, but there are some rules you need to be aware of:

1. If you are invited for an OPA interview and decide not to come, you will still keep your conditional offer from Queen Mary and can accept that as your firm or insurance choice. You will also retain your original conditional offer if you attend but decide not to place us as your firm choice.
2. The OPA offer is valid only in the year you apply. If you apply for deferred entry we will not consider you under our OPA scheme. If you are offered and accept an OPA, you do not automatically have the right to defer to the next year of entry. We will consider deferral requests on an individual basis and may grant your request in exceptional circumstances, for example, where you provide documentary evidence of health-related reasons why you need to take a gap year.
3. Attendance at an OPA interview does not mean we guarantee to offer you an OPA. The offer of an OPA is made on the recommendation of academic staff who interview you and we reserve the right not to offer an OPA, although this is very unusual in our experience of running the scheme for several years. There is no right of appeal if you do not receive an OPA offer after attending an interview.
4. We are unable to make awards to applicants who are required to achieve English proficiency (e.g. IELTS) if the qualification is outstanding. These students will instead be considered for a standard conditional offer. We also cannot consider overseas applicants who require a visa to study in the UK.