

Poor teens disadvantaged during uni applications

POOR teenagers are being put at a disadvantage by the university application system, which relies heavily on predicted grades and personal statements, it has been suggested. Bright teenagers from poor backgrounds are more likely to be predicted A-level grades lower than they

actually achieve, according to a study published by the Sutton Trust.

This means that they can end up applying for degree courses with lower entry requirements than they are capable of getting.

At the same time, disadvantaged students are less likely to get help in preparing their personal

statements, and to be able to provide many examples of their work and life experiences, it says.

The study, by Dr Gill Wyness of the UCL Institute of Education, calls for a major overhaul of the system, with youngsters applying for degree courses after they receive the results of

their A-levels and other qualifications.

It says that official figures show that in 2016, the most advantaged university applicants were about six times more likely to go to a "high tariff" institution – those with the highest entry requirements – compared with the most disadvantaged. "Though the UK's admissions

process is highly centralised, the process is still complex, time-consuming, and requires young people to make potentially life-changing decisions far in advance of university entry," it says. "Many of the elements of this process may put students from poorer backgrounds at a disadvantage." Bright poor students lack

the information, advice and guidance they need when applying to university, it says, which leads to many making "sub-optimal decisions when choosing their universities".

"Students must make their course choices based on predicted rather than actual A-level exam grades," the study says.