

Miss England beauty pageant to go make-up-free for the first time

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Organisers have introduced a new round for the 2019 competition, in a bid to promote body positivity.

Fatime Gashi, Alisha Cowie - who claimed the crown - and Jen Atkin at the 2018 Miss England finals.

It's a ritual long associated with glitzy gowns, sleek blow-outs and perfectly painted faces but, for the first time, Miss England is taking off its make-up.

The British beauty pageant is introducing a new round for its 2019 competition, which requires hopefuls to go bare-faced.

To be in with a chance of winning the optional new "Bare Face Top Model" round, contestants must submit an unedited photograph of themselves wearing no cosmetics and featuring no digital filters.

"We tell the girls they don't need fillers, fake eyelashes and tattooed brows to enter our contest, but it just shows what a damaging effect edited social media images can have on young women's self-esteem and mental health," event organiser Angie Beasley told The Telegraph.

â€œThe difference between what impressionable women see on social media and TV and reality is getting out of hand, which is why we decided to launch this round for the first time in the pageant's history â€“ to address this serious issue."

The winner of the bare-faced round, which will be assessed by a scout from Fascia Models, will be fast-tracked through to the final 20 in the contest. There are 54 participants in the 2019 pageant, though this will eventually be whittled down to just one.

Hopeful contestants have already started sharing their make-up-free selfies on social media, such as Bhasha Mukherjee, who said she was "owning [her] flaws".

"Make-up is a means of enhancement but how often do the lines get blurred between enhancement and concealment?" she wrote on Instagram. "It's just easier to blend into the crowd than own your flaws forgetting that it's these that make you you. So here I am owning my flaws. My imperfect skin. My short sparse eye lashes and brows. No filter. No enhancement. No Photoshop."

The Miss England final will take place in July, with the winner designated to represent Britain at the Miss World pageant in Thailand in December.

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