

# The supply of part-time higher education in the UK



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*This report was produced for Universities UK by Professor Claire Callender and Anne Jamieson Birkbeck, University of London, and Geoff Mason National Institute of Economic and Social Research*

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**5 Preface**

**6 Summary**

1

**10 Introduction**

10 Study aims, objectives and scope

10 Our approach

12 Definition of part-time provision

12 Outline of the report

2

**14 Trends in part-time higher education enrolments in the UK**

3

**17 Characteristics of UK part-time students**

4

**25 Entry qualifications and intensity of study: English-domiciled undergraduates**

5

**27 The regional distribution of part-time higher education in the UK**

27 Part-time higher education provision in Government Office regions

29 Part-time higher education provision at city-region level

6

**37 Part-time provision: range and types**

37 Undergraduate level provision: types of awards

37 Models of provision

38 Location of provision

39 Hours of provision

39 Trends in the volume of part-time provision

7

**41 Institutional factors affecting part-time provision**

41 Legacy, mission and strategy

42 No incentive to change?

42 Ways of supporting different sorts of part-timers

42 The characteristics of the part-time student undergraduate population

44 Information and communications technology (ICT)

45 Staffing issues

45 Subject portfolios

8

**46 External factors affecting part-time provision: the local context**

46 The local labour market, industries and employers

48	Competing and complementary higher education providers
48	Partnerships with further education colleges
<b>9</b>	
<b>50</b>	<b>Labour government policies affecting part-time provision</b>
50	Signals and incentives from government and the funding council
51	The shifting public priorities towards part-time provision
51	Equivalent and lower qualifications (ELQ)
52	HEFCE funding methodology
54	Funding higher education teaching and research
54	Tuition fees
57	Government-funded support for students
<b>10</b>	
<b>61</b>	<b>Summary and conclusions</b>
61	Universities' legacy and mission
61	HEFCE's funding methodology and additional student numbers
62	Credit-based learning
62	Local context, employer-related provision and co-funding
63	Risk
64	Tuition fees and financial support for students
64	Conclusion
	<b>Appendix 1</b>
66	City-region hot spots and cold spots
	<b>Appendix 2:</b>
69	University case studies

- Tables
- 15 Table 1 Higher education enrolments analysed by mode of study and domicile, UK, 2003/04 to 2007/08
- 16 Table 2 Part-time students as a proportion of total higher education students, analysed by mode of study and domicile, UK, 2003/04 to 2007/08
- 17 Table 3 Higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08
- 18 Table 4 UK-domiciled students, 2007/08, analysed by mode of study, gender, age group and ethnic background
- 18 Table 5 UK-domiciled students, 2007/08, analysed by mode of study, entry qualifications and subject area
- 19 Table 6 Part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by gender and qualification aim, 2007/08
- 19 Table 7 Age distribution of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08
- 20 Table 8 Ethnic backgrounds of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08
- 21 Table 9 Highest entry qualifications of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08
- 21 Table 10 Main subject of study of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08
- 22 Table 11 Distribution of part-time students across UK universities, UK-domiciled students, 2007/08
- 23 Table 12 Part-time higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim and full-time equivalent ratio, 2007/08
- 23 Table 13 Part-time higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim and distribution of full-time equivalent ratios, 2007/08
- 24 Table 14 Part-time higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim and location of study, 2007/08
- 25 Table 15 Part-time English-domiciled undergraduates, analysed by entry qualifications and intensity of study, 2007/08
- 28 Table 16 Part-time undergraduate student numbers in UK universities per 1,000 working age population, analysed by Government Office region, 2007 – ordered by part-time undergraduate ratios
- 29 Table 17 Part-time undergraduate student numbers in universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, analysed by Government Office region, 2007 – ordered by part-time undergraduate ratios
- 29 Table 18 Reported travelling times for part-time students in the UK, 2006
- 31 Table 19 Part-time undergraduate student numbers in UK universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, analysed by city-region, 2007 – ordered by part-time undergraduate ratios
- 56 Table 20 Factors associated with employers contributing to tuition or course fees
- 57 Table 21 Fee grant and course grant: rates for 2009/2010
- 59 Table 22 Factors associated with students who receive a government fee grant
- 59 Table 23 Factors associated with students who receive help via a government course grant
- 60 Table 24 Shortfalls in government financial support for part-time students
- 66 Table 25 England: city-region hot spots by qualification aim
- 66 Table 26 England: city-region hot spots by number of students and universities
- 67 Table 27 England: city-region cold spots by qualification aim – entire institutions
- 67 Table 28 England: city-region cold spots by number of students and universities
- 70 Table 29 Proportion of students studying part-time by qualification aim at case study universities

## Charts

- 14 Chart 1 Part-time higher education students in further education institutions as a proportion of total part-time higher education students, UK, 1996/97 to 2008/08, analysed by qualification aim
- 33 Chart 2 Total part-time students (undergraduate and postgraduate) in universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, UK, 2007, analysed by city-region
- 34 Chart 3 Total part-time undergraduate students per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, UK, 2007, analysed by city-region
- 35 Chart 4 Total part-time first-degree students in universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, UK, 2007, analysed by city-region
- 36 Chart 5 Employment as a proportion of working age population, UK city-regions, 2007
- 37 Chart 6 The supply of part-time higher education
- 55 Chart 7 Sources used to pay for tuition or course fees
- 56 Chart 8 Percentage of students receiving employer contribution to tuition or course fees
- 58 Chart 9 English-domiciled part-time students' highest entry qualification by qualification aim, 2007/08
- 58 Chart 10 Part-time English-domiciled students' intensity of study by qualification aim, 2007/08

This report explores the supply of part-time higher education in the UK, with particular consideration to the study of part-time undergraduate provision in England. It is the final publication in the series of reports on individual student markets that were commissioned by Universities UK following the publication of the reports on the *Future size and shape of the higher education sector* in 2008/09. It considers the factors facilitating and inhibiting the supply and growth of undergraduate part-time higher education. The study charts the scale and nature of both the undergraduate and postgraduate part-time student population in the UK and maps the geography of part-time higher education, highlighting regions with high and low levels of part-time provision. The study includes case studies of 15 English universities located in regions with high and low levels of provision. The case studies aim to explain the regional distribution of part-time undergraduate courses and to understand the external and internal factors that promote and hinder part-time undergraduate higher education.

The final section examines part-time student funding and finances and explains why the present arrangements represent an important barrier to the development of this market. Universities UK supports as a long-term aim the movement towards a system of student support that is indifferent as to the incentives to pursue full-time or part-time undergraduate study. The introduction of variable fees in 2006 was based on the principle of a graduate contribution from full-time home and EU undergraduate students, but did not extend this to other groups. As a result part-time students – unlike full-time undergraduates – are required to make upfront fee payments unless they can secure a contribution from their employer. The absence of a graduate contribution scheme has also made it more difficult for universities to charge part-time fees pro rata to full-time fees, and thus secure the quality of the experience for these students.

In Universities UK's evidence to the independent review of higher education funding and student finance chaired by Lord Browne, it has proposed changes to the system of student finance that would enable government to devise an affordable solution for the expansion of loans to the other groups of students, including part-time students. The submission recognises the challenges of doing so at a time when public finances are under severe pressure but reform is essential if part-time higher education provision is to continue to meet the needs of students and society.

This report is about part-time students and part-time study, and the factors facilitating and inhibiting the supply and growth of undergraduate part-time higher education. The study consists of three components. First, a statistical review of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data which charts the scale and nature of both the undergraduate and postgraduate part-time student population in the UK. This review also maps the geography of part-time higher education highlighting regions with high and low-levels of part-time provision. Secondly, case studies of 15 English universities located in regions with high and low-levels of provision. These case studies sought to explain the regional distribution of part-time undergraduate courses and to understand the external and internal factors that promote and hinder part-time undergraduate higher education. Thirdly, an analysis of part-time student funding and finances which calls upon the findings of a recent survey of 3,704 part-time UK undergraduates.

The study was commissioned by Universities UK. It was undertaken by Professor Claire Callender and Anne Jamieson of Birkbeck, University of London and Geoff Mason of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

### Statistical review

Since the early 2000s, part-time undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments in UK universities have increased at a slower rate than for full-time students. There has been some weakening in the growth of part-time student numbers, especially since 2006/07. The data suggest that future growth of part-time higher education student numbers is not to be taken for granted – at least, not so far as UK-domiciled students are concerned.

In the UK, 39 per cent of all higher education enrolments in 2007/08 were part-timers. Compared to full-time students, part-timers are typically older, more likely to be female and more likely to hold vocational qualifications or general education qualifications below A level on entering higher education courses.

There are marked geographical differences in the provision of part-time undergraduate higher education. For example, in some city-regions the ratio of part-time undergraduates per 1,000 persons in the working-age population is four times the national average. At the other extreme, some city regions have no part-time undergraduate students at all.

### Part-time provision: range and types

Part-time undergraduate higher education, like the part-time undergraduate population, is heterogeneous – there is no typical part-time course. Amongst the case study universities we looked at, there are a number of models for organising and delivering part-time courses. Similarly, where, how, and when part-time teaching took place varies considerably.

Although nationally there has been a decline in part-time enrolments, some of the universities we examined are experiencing a rise in enrolments while others are seeing no change or a decline. Consequently, institutions' perceptions of the demand for part-time courses vary, which in turn influences their internal policies, allocation of resources, and attitudes toward the provision of part-time higher education.

### Internal and external factors affecting part-time provision

The nature of a university's legacy and mission is a good indication of the probable levels of its part-time undergraduate provision and any prospects for future expansion. This does not mean that 'old' or 'new' university is a handy predictor for a university's involvement in part-time higher education. 'Old' universities tend to have less part-time provision than 'new' universities, especially employer-related vocational courses. However, among our case studies several 'old' universities have high levels of non-vocational liberal arts provision: some 'new' universities that we looked at have very little part-time undergraduate provision.

A far more significant determinant of the overall patterns of part-time undergraduate higher education, and its potential future growth, are government policies and particularly the funding of institutions delivering part-time courses, the level of tuition fees they can charge, and the financial support available to students to pay for their fees and other costs.

The current HEFCE funding model favours full-time provision at the expense of part-time. It financially disadvantages institutions providing part-time courses and fails adequately to cover the additional costs and risks associated with delivering part-time courses. Part-time courses are less lucrative than full-time courses, and the market for part-time courses is more volatile and demand more difficult to predict. Consequently, there are now clear incentives for mixed mode institutions to grow their full-time undergraduate provision and run down their part-time undergraduate programmes.



The funding mechanisms limit the scope for growth and changes in patterns of part-time provision. They are largely inappropriate for delivering flexible, part-time provision that can respond to the needs of employers and employees.

The only way to expand part-time undergraduate provision among institutions with a full complement of full-time undergraduates and little provision for part-time students is a strong steer from government about the importance of part-time study, backed up by additional HEFCE funding to incentivise undergraduate part-time study alongside earmarked additional student numbers.

The system of student financial support favours full-time students at the expense of part-time students. All full-time undergraduates are eligible for government-funded loans to pay for their fees once they graduate. In contrast, part-time students have to pay their fees up front. Only 10 per cent receive any government-funded support towards their fees and this support is inadequate. This limits the fees institutions can charge for their part-time courses.

Radical reforms to student financial support are required to incentivise part-time study.

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## Detailed Findings

### Chapter 6 – Part-time provision: range and types

- Part-time undergraduate higher education, like the part-time undergraduate population, is heterogeneous – there is no typical part-time course.
- There are a variety of models for organising the delivery of part-time provision including:
  - provision that is fully integrated with full-time provision
  - mixed – where part-time provision is integrated with full-time provision but some part-time courses are provided separately
  - separate part-time provision which is the responsibility of a sole school or department in the university.

Where and how part-time teaching takes place also varies – it is not always exclusively at an institution's main site or campus. Sometimes it is:

- in partnership with or at other educational institutions, typically further education colleges
- at employers' premises – work-based provision
- electronically – via distance learning.

Sometimes part-time provision is delivered during normal university hours from 9.00am–6.00pm on weekdays, sometimes after 'normal' hours and at weekends. There is also in-fill provision: part-timers are taught alongside their full-time peers, and sometimes part-timers are taught separately.

The statistical review shows an overall decline in part-time enrolments since 2006/07. However, in recent years some universities among the case studies had experienced a rise in enrolments, while others had seen no change or a fall. Consequently, institutions' perceptions of demand varied – some perceived there was no demand, others believed there was considerable unmet demand, and sought to create demand.

A rise in demand for part-time learning was most often associated with the current economic cycle and internal institutional changes, including improved marketing and changes in the courses offered.

A fall in demand was associated with financial constraints, the current economic crisis, and changes in government policies, especially the policy about equivalent and lower qualifications (ELQs).

### Chapter 7 – Institutional factors affecting part-time provision

Interviews with 15 universities in England that made up the case studies highlighted a range of internal institutional factors that both facilitated and hindered their part-time provision. Universities had control over these issues and so could shape them in ways to promote or curtail part-time provision.

The most important institutional factors influencing patterns of part-time provision were a university's legacy and mission and how these were integrated into its strategic plans. Legacies and missions varied widely both within and between different types of institutions or to which mission group they belonged; high and low levels of part-time provision were found in both 'old' and 'new' universities.

The interplay between the characteristics of the part-time student population and the infrastructure required to support part-time students and to deliver part-time and flexible study was another significant factor explaining the patterns of part-time provision. The tailoring of an institution's infrastructure to the needs of both part-time students and part-time study facilitated provision, while its absence constrained provision and its expansion. The extent to which universities were willing to invest in this infrastructure reflected:

- the size and nature of their part-time provision
- their perceptions of the demand for part-time and flexible study
- the additional costs associated with developing such an infrastructure
- the opportunity costs – where demand for full-time provision was seen to exceed capacity.

Staff attitudes towards teaching part-timers similarly facilitated or hindered part-time provision and were largely influenced by the institution's culture and mission. Staff concerns focused primarily on:

- additional teaching loads, and
- the demands of teaching part-time and non-traditional students.

The subject portfolio of institutions – the range and type of subjects they offered – had a direct impact on their opportunities to develop undergraduate part-time provision, especially employer-related provision. Arts or humanities subjects may be less amenable to part-time provision, while other subjects may be more difficult to deliver as distance-learning courses.

## Chapter 8 – External factors affecting part-time provision: local context

A range of local external factors over which universities had limited control, both facilitated and hindered part-time provision. This local context is particularly significant for understanding patterns of part-time provision because part-time students usually attend their local university or an institution within an hour's commute of their home or place of work.

Three interconnected factors help to explain variations in universities' part-time provision and the regional distribution of part-time provision, especially the scale, nature, and patterns of employer-related part-time study:

- The nature and composition of a university's local labour market and the skills base of the local population – universities in regions with a highly educated workforce and local population could expect more demand for part-time courses than those in regions where the local populace had low educational aspirations.
- The nature and of a university's local industrial base and hinterland, combined with a university's subject portfolio and how well it met the needs of the industrial sectors of local establishments and employers, particularly large ones – the presence of nearby public sector employment was especially significant. However, the existence of local employers in the public or the private sectors did not guarantee employment engagement opportunities, nor did their absence preclude employer-related provision.
- Employers' ability or willingness to co-fund and sponsor their employees and courses, especially given cuts in their education and training budgets.

Competition from neighbouring education institutions, such as further education colleges and private providers, sometimes affected part-time provision, especially where competitor institutions were tapping similar pools of students.

The number of partnerships – for instance, with further education colleges – rather than their presence or absence, help to explain the amount of part-time provision and its regional distribution. The quantity of partnerships was often associated with an institution's legacy and mission.

An institution's accessibility also affected its provision. It had a direct impact on a university's potential pool of students, their participation in part-time courses, and the type of part-time provision. The location of some institutions, especially those in rural and/or sparsely populated areas, shaped the nature of their catchment area, their provision, and mode of delivery.

## Chapter 9 – Government policies affecting part-time provision

Government policies are probably the most significant factor facilitating or hindering patterns of part-time provision.

Case study universities thought government policies sent very mixed messages about the importance of part-time provision. There are not many policies aimed directly at promoting and incentivising part-time undergraduate provision. Universities believed that these were essential to main current provision and its expansion.

Several government and funding council policies in effect, had, undermined some forms of part-time provision and directly contributed to its decline; vocational courses and qualifications have been prioritised at the expense of liberal arts/continuing education.

The ELQ ruling was seen as a major reason for the decline in part-time numbers and as a potential inhibitor to existing provision and further growth, particularly non-vocational provision in separate departments of continuing education. Employer-related courses have similarly been affected as some employers are unable or unwilling to pay the higher fees which universities would have to charge for ELQ students.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England's current funding mechanism for teaching was believed to have the effect of favouring full-time provision at the expense of part-time students and part-time study. It was seen as an inappropriate model for delivering flexible part-time provision that could respond to the needs of employees and employers. Particular concerns that disadvantaged part-time providers included:

- part-time targeted allocations – or the part-time premium, which was considered inadequate to meet the additional costs of teaching part-time students and delivering part-time courses

- assumed fee income – institutions believed that this should be based on the actual tuition fee income
- grant adjustments – institutions wanted a more flexible system that recognised achievement irrespective of mode, type and place of study.

All institutions were concerned about the cap on student numbers and felt the only way they could expand their part-time provision was through additional student numbers (ASNs).

Tuition fee policies varied but the payment of fees upfront was seen as a barrier to part-time provision and its growth. A survey of part-time undergraduates showed that in 2007/08 the mean fee was £1,166 and the median £900. This varied considerably depending on students' qualification aim, subject of study, where they study, and their intensity of study.

The survey showed that a third of part-time undergraduates had all their fees paid for by their employer. However, employers were very selective in terms of which employees they were willing to invest in and help financially. Those most likely to receive such help were the least in need of employer support – they were the most privileged workers in full-time jobs, already with a Level 4 or 5 qualification, studying a vocational qualification, in vocationally orientated subjects, and from households with medium to high incomes.

The survey highlighted the inadequacy of government-funded financial support. Just over one in ten part-time undergraduates received a fee grant and less than one in five a course grant. For a sizeable minority who got a grant, the amount did not meet the cost of their fees or their course costs.

This report explores the supply of part-time higher education in the UK, with particular consideration to the supply of part-time undergraduate provision in England. Numerous recent official documents and research reports suggest that the demand for part-time study, especially at the undergraduate level is likely to grow in the near future. For example, meeting Leitch's 2020 target of 40 per cent or more 19–65-year-olds achieving a Level 4 qualification,<sup>1</sup> is predicated on part-time provision. Reports for Universities UK on the future size and shape of the higher education sector in the UK<sup>2</sup> suggest that in the next 20 years part-time undergraduate enrolments will increase at a much faster rate than full-time ones, and the mix between full- and part-time students could shift substantially towards part-time.

A recent National Audit Office report called for more part-time undergraduate courses to facilitate the widening participation agenda,<sup>3</sup> and another study of working adults highlighted their desire for part-time study in the evenings and weekends at a university close to home.<sup>4</sup> More recently the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills' (BIS) document, *Higher ambitions: the future of universities in a knowledge economy* suggested that we, 'can expect part-time study to increase' (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, para 34).<sup>5</sup>

Just as important, the previous Labour government voiced increasing concern about part-time provision and the need for more flexible learning opportunities, both to widen participation and to meet the need for high-level skills. For instance, the BIS (2009) document says:

'We aim to widen participation through the expansion of the number of adults at university and by promoting a broader range of course models alongside the three year degree ... to attract a greater diversity of students, more part-time study, more vocationally-based foundation degrees, more work-based study, more fast-track degrees, and more study at home must be available.' (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, para 8)<sup>6</sup>

The executive summary of the same paper suggests that:

'The next phase of expansion in higher education will hinge on providing opportunities for different types of people to study in a wider range of ways than in the past. The focus will therefore be on a greater diversity of models of learning: part-time, work-based, foundation degrees, and studying while at home.' (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009, page 9)

It was against this background that Universities UK wished to explore the supply of part-time provision and to update its previous work on part-time study and students.

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## Study aims, objectives and scope

The overall aim of the project was to explore some of the factors affecting the supply of part-time provision, especially at undergraduate level in England. It also updated some of the previous work commissioned by Universities UK on part-time study conducted by Professor Callender and colleagues.<sup>7</sup>

The objectives of the study were to:

- map the geography of part-time undergraduate provision, highlighting any 'cold spots'
- describe the nature of part-time provision of higher education and the part-time student population
- identify the external and internal factors both facilitating and inhibiting the growth of universities' part-time provision
- identify what steps universities, government, and the funding councils could take to encourage greater part-time undergraduate provision.

The study concentrated on factors affecting the supply of part-time higher education but also examined some issues affecting the demand for part-time provision among part-time students, specifically student financial support.

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## Our approach

The study consisted of the following linked elements:

- a statistical review
- case studies of universities
- an analysis of student funding and financial support

## Statistical review

Using 2007/08 HESA data this section provides background information on part-time provision in UK higher education, focusing on the apparent unevenness of regional opportunities to undertake part-time higher education study. The review also updates the statistical analyses in *Part-time students in higher education – supporting higher-level skills and lifelong learning*<sup>8</sup> (Universities UK, 2006).

## Case studies of universities

To gain a better understanding of the regional distribution of part-time higher education provision outlined in Charts 3 and 4, we selected 15 universities in England as case studies. The case studies examined the factors both facilitating and inhibiting universities' existing part-time provision and potential expansion. The focus was solely on undergraduate provision in England because it is here that we are likely to see the greatest growth in the near future.

In particular, the case studies assessed:

- the nature and extent of part-time provision
- why universities did not have more part-time provision
- what factors facilitated the provision of part-time courses
- the key constraints/barriers to such provision
- changes required to provide more part-time provision

## Selecting the case studies

Analysis of the data in the statistical review informed the selection of the 15 case study institutions. Five institutions selected were in city-regions of England that had been identified as 'cold spots', with relatively low part-time undergraduate provision; eight were in 'hot spot' city-regions with more extensive part-time provision.<sup>9</sup> We added Birkbeck, University of London and the Open University because together they dominate the part-time undergraduate market.

Our analysis showed that the city-regions (and hence the universities we could select) with high and low part-time provision vary depending on whether we examined:

- all part-time undergraduate students
- part-time first-degree students
- part-time foundation degree students
- part-time higher national diploma/higher national certificate students

- part-time other undergraduates

Table 25 shows the top five hot spot city-regions – those with the highest density of part-time undergraduate provision as a proportion of the population without a NVQ Level 4 by different qualification aims. This table clearly shows how the city-region defined as having the most part-time students varies, depending on the qualification aim selected. Table 26 shows the city-region hotspots by qualification aim and includes the actual number of students and the name of the universities within the city region. Tables 27 and 28 show the equivalent information for the top five cold spot regions – those with low part-time provision.

It was agreed with Universities UK that the case study institutions would represent a mix of those with high or low provision in different qualification aims. Selecting city-regions with low part-time provision posed another challenge. In these regions we have identified regions:

- with no universities at all
- with only satellite campuses
- where there are entire institutions, or where the main campus is located

It was agreed with Universities UK that we should only select city-regions where an entire institution is located.

Other issues also have influenced our selection of city-regions. First, it was agreed that the case studies would be confined to England, although some of the findings are likely to be relevant to universities outside England.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, we were asked to include – as either a hot or cold spot – an institution with a specialist focus – for example, the creative arts – plus a university where part-time provision is dominated by professional areas, such as teacher education, health and social care, where part-time study is effectively a mandatory requirement. We did this by analysing part-time provision in hot and cold spots city regions by broad subject groups.

Appendix 2 lists the case study institutions and shows the proportion at each institution of students studying part-time, by qualification aim (Table 29).

## Method of data collection

For each of the institutions selected, we obtained basic information through analysis of the relevant web pages to augment the data derived from further analysis of the HESA data. Through Universities UK we asked each institution whether it was willing to participate in the study and to identify someone for interview.

Our interviews were usually with the pro vice-chancellor for learning and teaching/student experience/academic, though in a few cases the person interviewed had other responsibilities. In several cases more than one person at an institution was interviewed. In each university interviews covered the following broad areas:

- the nature and extent of part-time undergraduate provision
- the factors that facilitate the provision of part-time undergraduate courses
- the key constraints/barriers to such provision and further growth
- the risks, if any, involved in part-time undergraduate provision
- changes required to provide more part-time undergraduate provision
- how government, the funding councils, and other stakeholders could encourage greater part-time undergraduate provision.

## Student tuition fees and financial support

The discussion of financial support for students' tuition fees focuses exclusively on provision in England. It draws on HESA data for English-domiciled students, and some of the findings of the first phase of a longitudinal study being conducted by Claire Callender and by David Wilkinson of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, for the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) on part-time students.<sup>11</sup>

Phase 1 of the research involved online and telephone surveys with 3,704 part-time students in either their first or final year of a course of higher education study, across a total of 29 UK universities. The sample consisted solely of students taking a first degree, foundation degree, or higher national certificate/higher national diploma – and studying engineering, technologies, social studies, law, business and administrative studies, or education. The sample, therefore, is not representative of all part-time undergraduates.

## Definition of part-time provision

We follow the HESA definition of part-time higher education students, that is, they are defined by default as those who do not meet its definition of full-time.<sup>12</sup> Thus part-time students are those who are not normally required to attend a higher education institution for at least 21 hours per week for 24 weeks per year of study. This definition includes students on block release from their places of employment and those studying during the evenings.

## Outline of the report

The first part of this report – Chapters 2 to 5 – consists of the statistical review of part-time provision and part-time students.

**Chapter 2** reports recent trends in part-time higher education participation by level of study and student domicile. Then we focus solely on UK-domiciled part-time students, who currently represent 92 per cent of all part-timers.

**Chapter 3** describes the main characteristics of UK-domiciled part-time students: qualification aims, gender, age, ethnic background, highest entry qualifications, subject of study, and intensity of study.

**Chapter 4** concentrates on English-domiciled students and explores both their entry qualifications and their intensity of study because these are two of the main criteria in England for receiving student financial support – an issue discussed in more depth in Chapter 9.

**Chapter 5** assesses the regional distribution of part-time higher education provision relative to the potential demand for it, namely, that proportion of the working-age population in each region who have not yet gained qualifications at NVQ Level 4 or higher.

The second part of the report – Chapters 6 to 10 – draws on the findings from the 15 case studies of English universities and their undergraduate part-time provision. The chapters examine the regional distribution of part-time provision in England outlined in Chapter 5 and discuss the key factors facilitating and hindering part-time undergraduate provision.

**Chapter 6** describes key aspects of provision, including the pattern, range and variations in the way it is organised. We then consider three sets of factors that explain variations in provision.

**Chapter 7** examines institutional factors while Chapter 8 concentrates on external/local conditions.

**Chapter 9** explores the role of government policies in the variations in provision.

**Chapter 10** is the conclusion; it draws on the findings from the previous three chapters highlighting some of the changes required to facilitate part-time provision and its growth.

In spite of encouraging statements by policymakers regarding part-time provision, there are now widespread concerns that part-time student numbers may be hit by the previous government's decision to phase out funding from 2008/09 for most students in England and Northern Ireland who are studying for qualifications that are equivalent to or lower than qualifications they already hold (ELQs). Recent HESA data on enrolments suggest that – among UK-domiciled students at least – some weakening in part-time enrolments may have developed even before the ELQ policy was implemented.

Table 1, column 1 shows data for 2003/04 that correspond with those published in *Part-time students in higher education – supporting higher-level skills and lifelong learning*<sup>13</sup>. The headcount total of 837,010 part-time students cited in that report consisted of 812,480 UK-domiciled students and 24,530 students classified as 'other EU' in domicile. These data include students on sabbatical and students writing up theses who were covered by HESA's definition of the student base population at the time (the standard registration population). In 2007/08, however, sabbatical and writing-up students were excluded from the population and a new time series of enrolments data using the new standard registration population definition was published, backdated to 2003/04. These data (shown in Table 1, columns 2–6) point to the following main conclusions:<sup>14</sup>

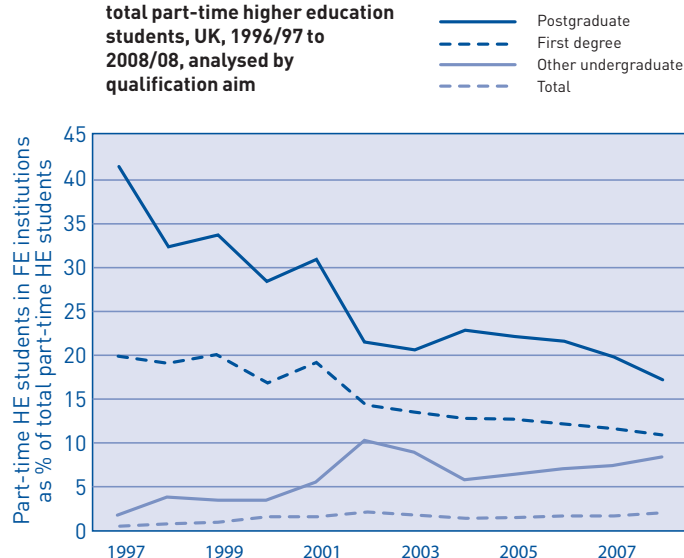
- Part-time enrolments grew more slowly than full-time enrolments between 2003/04 and 2006/07 at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels (Table 1, column 7).
- The growth in part-time enrolments during this period was more due to growing numbers of part-time international students than to growth in UK-domiciled part-timers.
- Total part-time enrolments are shown as falling by 3.2 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08 (Table 1, column 8). The HESA figures for 2007/08 are provisional. Nonetheless, the apparent decline in part-time enrolments over this 12-month period was much steeper for UK-domiciled students than for overseas students, which is consistent with trends in the mix of UK- and overseas-domiciled part-time students over the preceding four years. Furthermore, the HESA data do not show any decline in full-time UK-domiciled student enrolments between 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The provisional conclusion is that, as shown in Table 2, UK-domiciled part-time student numbers have fallen as a proportion of total student numbers at both postgraduate and undergraduate levels in the most recent four years for which we have data. This conclusion still holds if we take account of students on higher education courses provided directly by further education institutions, which are not included in HESA data. In 1996/97 higher education students in further education institutions represented just under 20 per cent of all part-time higher education students in the UK (referring to students from all domiciles, not just UK-domiciled students). By 2007/08 this proportion had fallen to 11 per cent (Chart 1).<sup>15</sup>

Given the changes in definitions, we need to be cautious in using past trends to inform our expectations about future developments. Nonetheless, if nothing else, the data suggest that future part-time participation in higher education is not so sure to grow as was expected a few years ago. This new uncertainty provides a considerable spur to our research into whether part-time higher education is constrained in some UK regions by limited opportunities for students to participate in this mode of study.

Chart 1

Part-time higher education students in further education institutions as a proportion of total part-time higher education students, UK, 1996/97 to 2008/08, analysed by qualification aim



Source: HESA, Higher Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, various issues

Note: This chart should be interpreted with caution due to potential inconsistencies in the underlying data from higher education institutions and further education colleges.



**Table 1**

**Higher education enrolments  
analysed by mode of study and  
domicile, UK, 2003/04 to 2007/08**

Base student population:	Former SRP(a)	Standard Registration Population (SRP) – excluding students on sabbatical and students writing up theses						Average annual rate of growth, 2003/04 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2006/07 to 2007/08
		2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	
<b>Postgraduate</b>									
<b>Full-time</b>									
UK	113,635	113,635	112,845	117,520	117,845	115,335	1.2	-2.1	
Overseas	106,760	106,760	113,215	116,700	125,225	133,050	5.3	6.2	
Total	220,395	220,395	226,060	234,220	243,070	248,380	3.3	2.2	
<b>Part-time</b>									
UK	253,635	225,745	224,840	226,375	225,980	218,320	0.0	-3.4	
Overseas	498,00	31,355	31,440	32,040	33,695	34,435	2.4	2.2	
Total	303,435	257,100	256,280	258,415	259,675	252,755	0.3	-2.7	
<b>Undergraduate</b>									
<b>Full-time</b>									
UK	102,1270	102,1270	103,8370	106,6885	107,1545	1,086,640	1.6	1.4	
Overseas	120,580	120,580	127,075	131,935	137,105	145,365	4.3	6.0	
Total	1,141,850	1,141,850	1,165,445	1,198,820	1,208,645	1,232,005	1.9	1.9	
<b>Part-time</b>									
UK	558,840	558,030	563,095	563,415	563,350	544,020	0.3	-3.4	
Overseas	22,925	22,805	25,390	26,365	29,960	28,945	9.1	-3.4	
Total	581,760	580,835	588,490	589,780	593,310	572,965	0.7	-3.4	
Base student population:	Former SRP(a)	Standard Registration Population (SRP) – excluding students on sabbatical and students writing up theses							
	2003/04	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Average annual rate of growth, 2003/04 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2006/07 to 2007/08	
<b>Total</b>									
<b>Full-time</b>									
UK	1,134,905	1,134,905	1,151,215	1,184,405	1,189,390	1,201,975	1.6	1.1	
Overseas	227,335	227,335	240,290	248,635	262,325	278,410	4.8	6.1	
Total	1362,245	136,2245	1,391,505	1,433,040	1,451,720	1,480,385	2.1	2.0	
<b>Part-time</b>									
UK	812,480	783,775	787,935	78,9790	78,9325	76,2340	0.2	-3.4	
Overseas	72,715	54,160	56,830	58,410	63,660	63,380	5.4	-0.4	
Total	885,195	837,935	844,765	848,200	852,985	825,720	0.6	-3.2	
of which: other EU	24,530								
<b>All modes</b>									
UK	1,947,385	1,918,680	1,939,150	1,974,195	1,978,715	1,964,315	1.0	-0.7	
Overseas	300,055	281,500	297,120	307,040	325,985	341,790	4.9	4.8	
Total	2,247,440	2,200,180	2,236,270	2,281,240	2,304,705	2,306,105	1.5	0.1	

Sources: Derived from *Higher education student enrolments and qualifications obtained at higher education institutions in the United Kingdom*, HESA Statistical First Releases, Nos. 117 (January 2008, Table 1) and 130 (January 2009, Table 1).

Note: (a) Based on previous Standard Registration Population (SRP) which included students on sabbatical and students writing up theses.

**Table 2**

**Part-time students as a proportion of total higher education students, analysed by mode of study and domicile, UK, 2003/04 to 2007/08**

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Part-time students as percentage of total students in each category					
<b>Postgraduates</b>					
UK	67	67	66	66	65
Overseas	23	22	22	21	21
Total	54	53	52	52	50
<b>Undergraduates</b>					
UK	35	35	35	34	33
Overseas	16	17	17	18	17
Total	34	34	33	33	32
<b>All students</b>					
UK	41	41	40	40	39
Overseas	19	19	19	20	19
Total	38	38	37	37	36

Source: derived from columns 2–5 in Table 1.

To summarise, since the early 2000s, part-time undergraduate and postgraduate enrolments in UK universities have increased at a slower rate than for full-time students. The data suggest that future growth of part-time higher education student numbers is not to be taken for granted – at least, not so far as UK-domiciled students are concerned. This situation warrants careful monitoring.

### 3 Characteristics of UK part-time students

In this chapter we focus solely on UK-domiciled students in 2007/08, focusing on six different types of qualification aim, three of which (first degrees, foundation degrees and higher national certificates/diplomas) are investigated in depth in this research.

As Table 3 shows, most higher education students on postgraduate taught courses, higher national courses and a large residual category of 'other undergraduate qualifications', which include professional qualifications at undergraduate level and institutional undergraduate credits are part-timers. Foundation degree students are fairly evenly divided between full-timers and part-timers. Part-time students are a minority among first-degree students and postgraduate research students.

**Table 3**  
Higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08

	Full-time student numbers	Part-time student numbers	Part-time as percentage of total students
Postgraduate research	33,051	20,406	38
Postgraduate taught	82,283	197,914	71
First degrees	974,720	188,548	16
Foundation degrees	30,645	28,060	48
Higher national certificate/diploma	14,609	15,827	52
Other undergraduate qualifications (a)	66,665	311,585	82
Total	1,201,973	762,340	39

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Note: (a) Other undergraduate qualifications consist mainly of diplomas and certificates in higher education, undergraduate diplomas or certificates, professional qualifications at undergraduate level and institutional undergraduate credits.

As is well-known, part-time students at undergraduate and postgraduate level are typically older than full-time students and are more likely to be female. While 68 per cent of full-time students are less than 22 years old, this is only true for 7 per cent of part-timers. About 63 per cent of part-time higher education students are female compared to 56 per cent of full-time students (Table 4).

In respect of ethnic background, 79 per cent of part-time students are white, much the same proportion as the 78 per cent of full-time students. This finding differs substantially from that reported for 2003/04 in *Part-time students in higher education – supporting higher-level skills and lifelong learning* (Universities UK, 2006) and requires further investigation; it may reflect the inclusion of other EU-domiciled students as well as a different treatment of students classified as 'not known or information refused' in the earlier data (Table 4).

In terms of entry qualifications, part-time students are conspicuous for having a relatively high share of students with prior qualifications gained at higher education level, compared to full-time students, two-thirds of whom hold as their highest entry qualification A levels or equivalent. (Table 5). Part-time students are also more likely than full-time students to be studying subjects allied to medicine and education.

**Table 4**

UK-domiciled students, 2007/08,  
analysed by mode of study,  
gender, age group and ethnic  
background

	Full-time	Part-time
	Percentage of total	
<b>Gender</b>		
Percentage female	56	63
Percentage male	44	37
Total	100	100
<b>Age group</b>		
Under 18	1	1
18–21	67	6
22–25	16	12
26–29	5	13
30–39	6	28
40–49	3	24
50–59	1	10
60 plus	0.1	5
Age unknown	0.01	0.4
Total	100	100
<b>Ethnic background</b>		
White	78	79
Black or Black British-Caribbean	1	2
Black or Black British-African	4	3
Other Black background	0.3	0.4
Asian or Asian British-Indian	4	2
Asian or Asian British-Pakistani	2	1
Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	1	0.4
Chinese	1	0.5
Other Asian background	1	1
Other (including mixed)	4	2
Not known or information refused	3	9
Total	100	100
n =	1,201,973	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Note: (a) As in other tables in this report, row or column percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

**Table 5**

UK-domiciled students, 2007/08,  
analysed by mode of study, entry  
qualifications and subject area

	Full-time	Part-time
	Percentage of total	
<b>Entry qualifications</b>		
Postgraduate qualifications	2	13
First degree or equivalent	9	25
Foundation degree	0	0
Higher national certificate/diploma	3	6
Other higher education qualifications below degree level	3	15
A levels or equivalent	67	13
Other qualifications below higher education level	13	15
No formal qualifications	0	2
Not known	2	11
Total	100	100
<b>Subject area</b>		
Medicine and dentistry	4	1
Subjects allied to medicine	12	16
Biological sciences	8	3
Veterinary science, agriculture and related subjects	1	1
Physical sciences	4	2
Mathematical and computing sciences	5	4
Engineering and technology	5	4
Architecture, building and planning	2	3
Social studies	8	8
Law	4	2
Business and administrative studies	10	12
Mass communications and documentation	2	1
Languages	5	5
Historical and philosophical studies	4	4
Creative arts and design	10	2
Education	6	15
Combinations and interdisciplinary courses	11	18
Total	100	100
n =	1,201,973	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

We now go on to examine the characteristics of part-time students in more detail. In all the six qualification groups under consideration, most are female, except for higher national qualifications (HNQs), where only 31 per cent of part-time students are female (Table 6).

**Table 6**

**Part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by gender and qualification aim, 2007/08**

Qualification aim:	Female	Male	Total (a)	Percentage female
Postgraduate research	10,427	9,979	20,406	51
Postgraduate taught	119,639	78,237	197,876	60
First degrees	114,084	74,460	188,544	61
Foundation degrees	18,871	9,187	28,058	67
Higher national certificate/diploma	4,833	10,990	15,823	31
Other undergraduate qualifications	208,835	102,697	311,532	67
Total	476,689	285,550	762,239	63

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Note: (a) Figures exclude 101 students classified as indeterminate gender.

**Table 7**

**Age distribution of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08**

	Postgraduate research	Postgraduate taught	First degrees	Foundation degrees	Higher national certificates/diplomas	Other undergraduate qualifications	Total	n =
<b>Percentage of part-time students in each qualification group</b>								
Under 18	0	0	0.1	0.1	1	2	1	7,701
18–21	0.2	1	10	12	30	5	6	46,446
22–25	6	12	15	16	20	10	12	91,786
26–29	12	16	13	13	13	11	13	100,445
30–39	31	33	27	28	19	26	28	213,650
40–49	28	26	22	23	13	24	24	181,985
50–59	17	10	8	6	3	12	10	78,140
60 plus	5	1	4	1	1	9	5	38,771
Age Unknown	0.1	0.4	0	0.2	0.2	1	0.4	3,416
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Note: Column or row percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. This applies to all tables in this report.

The higher national group is also an exception when it comes to the student age distribution and ethnic mix. Some 52 per cent of all part-time students are aged 30–49 and only 19 per cent are aged under 26 (Table 7). However, among part-time higher national students, just over half are aged below 26 (many of whom are presumably apprentice trainees). Similarly, disaggregation by qualification aim shows that the proportion of ethnic minority students is smaller for higher national students than for part-time students as a whole (Table 8).

**Table 8**

**Ethnic backgrounds of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08**

	Postgraduate research	Postgraduate taught	First degrees	Foundation degrees	Higher national certificates /diplomas	Other undergraduate qualifications	Total
<b>Percentage of part-time students</b>							
White	79	78	80	82	87	79	79
Black or Black British-Caribbean	1	1	2	2	1	1	2
Black or Black British-African	2	3	4	2	2	3	3
Other Black background	0.3	0.3	1	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4
Asian or Asian British-Indian	3	3	2	1	1	2	2
Asian or Asian British-Pakistani	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Asian or Asian British-Bangladeshi	0.2	0.4	1	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4
Chinese	1	1	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.5
Other Asian background	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Other (including mixed race)	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Not known or information refused	10	9	6	8	4	10	9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
n=	20,406	197,914	188,548	28,060	15,827	311,585	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Before enrolling in higher education in 2007/08, the highest qualifications of about a quarter of part-time students on first degree, foundation-degree and higher national courses were A levels or equivalent qualifications (Table 3.7).<sup>16</sup> The mix of entry qualifications held by part-time students varied sharply between qualification aims. For example, some 14 per cent of part-time first degree students already held first degrees or postgraduate qualifications while another 32 per cent already held other higher education qualifications below first degree level. On foundation degree courses around 33 per cent of part-timers held vocational qualifications or general education qualifications below A level and on part-time higher national courses this percentage rose to 43 per cent.

Foundation degree and higher national courses are also conspicuous for the concentration of part-time student numbers in a small range of subject areas (Table 10). Around two-thirds (65 per cent) of part-time foundation degree students, for example, are pursuing studies in only three subject areas: education, business studies and social studies (which includes social work). As many as three-quarters of part-time higher national students are classified to engineering and technology, architecture, building and planning and business and administrative studies.

Part-time enrolments for first degree courses are more evenly distributed between subject areas, with the largest single area being subjects allied to medicine (9 per cent). About one in five first degree part-timers are classified to combined subject or interdisciplinary courses.

**Table 9**

**Highest entry qualifications of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08**

	Postgraduate research	Postgraduate taught	First degrees	Foundation degrees	Higher national certificates /diplomas	Other undergraduate qualifications	Total
Percentage of part-time students							
<b>Highest entry qualifications:</b>							
Postgraduate qualifications	53	26	4	2	2	9	13
First degree or equivalent	35	50	10	7	5	20	25
Foundation degree	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Higher national certificate/diploma	0	2	13	7	8	4	6
Other higher education qualifications below degree level	2	8	18	13	5	18	15
A levels or equivalent	1	2	26	26	24	11	13
Other qualifications below higher education level	1	4	19	33	43	18	15
No formal qualifications	0	0	2	2	1	3	2
Not known	7	8	6	10	12	16	11
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
n =	20,406	197,914	188,548	28,060	15,827	311,585	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

**Table 10**

**Main subject of study of part-time students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim, 2007/08**

	Postgraduate research	Postgraduate taught	First degrees	Foundation degrees	Higher national certificates /diplomas	Other undergraduate qualifications	Total
Percentage of part-time students							
Medicine and dentistry	12	3	0.1	0	0	0	1
Subjects allied to medicine	9	15	14	9	2	20	16
Biological sciences	9	3	8	1	1	1	3
Veterinary science, agriculture and related subjects	1	0.4	0.2	2	5	1	1
Physical sciences	3	1	3	0	2	1	2
Mathematical and computing sciences	4	3	5	4	6	3	4
Engineering and technology	5	4	4	5	35	1	4
Architecture, building and planning	1	4	4	4	25	1	3
Social studies	8	6	9	12	3	8	8
Law	2	3	4	2	1	1	2
Business and administrative studies	6	20	8	20	16	8	12
Mass communications and documentation	1	1	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.4	1
Languages	5	1	5	0	0	8	5
Historical and philosophical studies	10	2	6	2	0	4	4
Creative arts and design	5	2	2	3	3	2	2
Education	16	28	5	33	1	12	15
Combinations and interdisciplinary courses	2	3	22	2	1	29	18
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
n =	20,406	197,914	188,548	28,060	15,827	311,585	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Just under 24 per cent of part-time students are enrolled at the Open University (Tables 11 A–C). The next 47 largest institutions account for another 47 per cent of part-time students. The remaining 29 per cent of part-time students are spread between 156 different higher education institutions. Five of the eight universities with more than 10,000 part-time students are post-1992 universities. When we compare institutions on the ratio of part-timers to total student headcount, then eight of the ten institutions least active in part-time recruitment are pre-1992 universities (Table 11D).

**Table 11**

**Distribution of part-time students across UK universities, UK-domiciled students, 2007/08**

<b>A. Distribution of part-time student headcounts between institutions</b>				
<b>Headcounts of part-time students</b>	<b>Number of institutions</b>	<b>Proportion of total part-time students</b>		
20,000+	1	23.8		
10,000-19,999	7	11.3		
5,000-9,999	40	36.0		
1,000-4,999	72	27.3		
<1,000	44	1.6		
Total	164	100		
<b>B. Part-time student headcounts in eight largest institutions</b>				
Open University		181,082		
Birkbeck College		15,469		
University of Teesside		15,084		
Edge Hill University		12,871		
University of Warwick		11,620		
University of the West of England		10,954		
University of Plymouth		10,206		
London Metropolitan University		10,173		
<b>C: Part-time students as percentage of total student headcount: top ten institutions</b>				
	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage part-time</b>
Open University	282	181,082	181,364	99.8
Birkbeck College	555	15,469	16,024	96.5
University of Wales, Lampeter	881	5,780	6,661	86.8
Institute of Education	1,300	4,928	6,228	79.1
Institute of Cancer Research	51	174	225	77.3
London Business School	176	323	499	64.7
Edge Hill University	7,089	12,871	19,960	64.5
Harper Adams University College	1,454	2,546	4,000	63.7
Cranfield University	873	1,486	2,359	63.0
University of Teesside	8,913	15,084	23,997	62.9

**D: Part-time students as percentage of total student headcount: bottom ten institutions (excluding specialist arts institutions)**

	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage part-time</b>
Royal Holloway University of London	5,112	783	5895	13.3
University of Edinburgh	16,461	2,323	18,784	12.4
Loughborough University	11,211	1,555	12,766	12.2
University of Durham	11,708	1,612	13,320	12.1
Imperial College	7,479	1,003	8,482	11.8
London School of Economics and Political Science	2,594	341	2,935	11.6
St Marys University College	896	104	1,000	10.4
Royal Veterinary College	1,454	159	1,613	9.9
Queen Mary University of London	9,446	1,004	10,450	9.6
University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	14,229	1,359	15,588	8.7

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

The intensity of study by part-time students can be assessed from their universities' estimates of how their study loads compare with those of full-time students on similar courses. Overall, part-time students represent on average about 35 per cent of full-time equivalent students (Table 12). However, this figure is held down by the large numbers of part-time students in the 'other undergraduate' qualifications category.

The full-time equivalent ratio rises to 59 per cent on average for part-time foundation degree students, 54 per cent for part-time higher national students and 44 per cent for part-time first degree students. As shown in Table 13, these averages conceal marked variation in part-time student loads within each category. For example, 24 per cent of part-time foundation degree students are classified as 75 per cent or more of a full-time equivalent student, much higher than in any other qualification category.



**Table 12**

**Part-time higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim and full-time equivalent ratio, 2007/08**

	Part-time student numbers	Sum of full time equivalent	Part-time full-time equivalent as percentage of part-time headcount
<b>Qualification aim:</b>			
Postgraduate research	20406	10,373	51
Postgraduate taught	197,914	68,326	35
First degrees	188,548	82,220	44
Foundation degrees	28,060	16,622	59
Higher national certificates/diplomas	15,827	8,579	54
Other undergraduate qualifications	311,585	77,483	25
Total	762,340	263,603	35

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

**Table 13**

**Part-time higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim and distribution of full-time equivalent ratios, 2007/08**

Percentage of full time-equivalent student load:	Under 25%	25 -49%	50 -74%	75% or more	Total	n =
<b>Percentage of students in each qualification category</b>						
<b>Qualification aim:</b>						
Postgraduate research	9	13	69	9	100	20,406
Postgraduate taught	30	36	31	3	100	197,914
First degrees	19	29	41	11	100	188,548
Foundation degrees	10	14	52	24	100	28,060
Higher national certificates/diplomas	9	15	67	9	100	15,827
Other undergraduate qualifications	55	24	19	2	100	311,585
Total	36	28	31	6	100	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

About 31 per cent of part-time students are engaged in distance learning, almost all of them through the Open University (Table 14). Just over half of part-time first degree students are studying through distance learning compared to only 14 per cent of part-time foundation degree students. No part-time higher national students are reported as studying through distance learning.

**Table 14**

**Part-time higher education students, UK-domiciled, analysed by qualification aim and location of study, 2007/08**

	At returning and/or franchised institution for whole year	Distance learning: Open University	Distance learning: Other universities	Other study locations	Total	n =
<b>Percentage of students in each qualification category</b>						
<b>Qualification aim:</b>						
Postgraduate research	97	3	1	0.02	100	20,406
Postgraduate taught	79	7	14	0.01	100	197,914
First degrees	49	48	3	0.1	100	188,548
Foundation degrees	76	14	10	0.02	100	28,060
Higher national certificates/diplomas	94	0	6	0.02	100	15,827
Other undergraduate qualifications	72	23	5	0.1	100	311,585
Total	69	24	7	0.1	100	762,340

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

- Overall, around 39 per cent of all higher education enrolments in 2007/08 were part-timers. On postgraduate taught courses, higher national courses and a large residual category of 'other undergraduate qualifications', which include professional qualifications at undergraduate level and institutional undergraduate credits, most university-based students are part-time. Foundation degree students are fairly evenly divided between full-timers and part-timers. It is mainly among first degree students and postgraduate research students that part-time students are a minority.
- Compared to full-time students, part-time students are typically older, more likely to be female and more likely to hold vocational qualifications or general education qualifications below A level on entering higher education courses. Part-time students aiming for qualifications such as foundation degrees and higher national certificates/diplomas are also more likely than most students to be concentrated in a small number of subject areas (for example, education, business studies and social studies, including social work, in the case of part-time foundation degree students).

Following the Labour government's decision to phase out funding from 2008/09 for most students in England and Northern Ireland who are studying for qualifications that are equivalent to or lower than qualifications than they already hold (ELQs), there is now considerable interest in finding out how many part-time students are 'ELQ' students. This is particularly important in relation to eligibility for government-funded student financial support which will be discussed in more depth in a later chapter. Students in England who already hold a Level 4 qualification are ineligible for this support. This chapter, therefore, unlike the previous chapters which include students throughout the UK, focuses exclusively on English-domiciled students.

Part-time English-domiciled undergraduates are typical of the wider UK population of part-timers, described in chapter 2. They are disproportionately female and tend to be concentrated in the 30-49 year old age group and in subject areas such as education, subjects allied to medicine, and combined or inter-disciplinary subject areas (see Appendix 1).

Table 15, based on the 2007/08 figures, shows some marked contrasts between undergraduate qualification aims, in terms of both the part-time students' entry qualifications and their intensity of study (calculated as a proportion of a full-time equivalent student load), which also has a bearing on the student financial support for which they are eligible.

Around 38 per cent of part-time first degree students hold prior qualifications equivalent to NVQ4 or higher; a further 29 per cent are working at less than 50 per cent of a full-time equivalent student load. For part-time foundation degree students the equivalent proportions are, respectively, 21 per cent and 18 per cent while for part-time higher national students, the equivalent proportions are 16 per cent and 14 per cent. As many as 42 per cent of part-time students pursuing other undergraduate qualifications hold prior qualifications equivalent to NVQ4 or higher while another 47 per cent are working at less than half a full-time equivalent student load.

**Table 15**

**Part-time English-domiciled undergraduates, analysed by entry qualifications and intensity of study, 2007/08**<sup>17</sup>

<b>A: Part-time first degree students</b>					
<b>Entry qualifications:</b>	<b>Percentage of full-time equivalent student load</b>				<b>Total</b>
	<b>Under 50%</b>	<b>50-59%</b>	<b>60-74%</b>	<b>75% or more</b>	
<b>Percentage of total part-time first degree enrolments (n = 158,840)</b>					
Above or equal to NVQ4	20	11	4	4	38
Below NVQ4	22	15	5	7	49
Not classified	7	4	1	1	13
Total	49	30	10	11	100
<b>B. Part-time foundation degree students</b>					
<b>Entry qualifications:</b>	<b>Percentage of full-time equivalent student load</b>				<b>Total</b>
	<b>Under 50%</b>	<b>50-59%</b>	<b>60-74%</b>	<b>75% or more</b>	
<b>Percentage of total part-time foundation degree enrolments (n = 26,369)</b>					
Above or equal to NVQ4	6	6	5	5	21
Below NVQ4	14	16	16	15	62
Not classified	4	4	5	4	17
Total	24	27	25	24	100

**C. Part-time higher national students**

	Percentage of full-time equivalent student load				Total
	Under 50%	50-59%	60-74%	75% or more	
<b>Entry qualifications:</b>	<b>Percentage of total part-time higher national enrolments (n = 104,77)</b>				
Above or equal to NVQ4	2	4	7	3	16
Below NVQ4	12	19	31	7	70
Not classified	2	6	5	2	14
Total	16	29	43	12	100

**D. Part-time other undergraduate students**

	Percentage of full-time equivalent student load				Total
	Under 50%	50-59%	60-74%	75% or more	
<b>Entry qualifications:</b>	<b>Percentage of total part-time other undergraduate enrolments (n = 250,647)</b>				
Above or equal to NVQ4	33	7	1	1	42
Below NVQ4	25	5	1	1	32
Not classified	22	4	0	0	26
Total	80	16	2	2	100

**E. Total part-time undergraduate students**

	Percentage of full-time equivalent student load				Total
	Under 50%	50-59%	60-74%	75% or more	
<b>Entry qualifications:</b>	<b>Percentage of total part-time undergraduate enrolments (n = 446,333)</b>				
Above or equal to NVQ4	26	8	2	2	39
Below NVQ4	23	10	4	4	41
Not classified	15	4	1	1	21
Total	64	22	7	7	100

Source: HESA Student Record, 2007/08

In this chapter we explore regional inequalities in the supply of part-time higher education with particular emphasis on undergraduates. We estimate the numbers of part-time undergraduate students per 1,000 working-age population by Government Office region and carry out a more disaggregated analysis at city-region level.

This analysis has proved helpful in guiding our choice of case study institutions for this project and in helping us to identify those universities located in regions with high and low part-time provision. However, it is important to note that our analysis is limited to universities in the UK (including courses franchised out to further education colleges). As noted in chapter 2, about 11 per cent of all part-time higher education enrolments in 2007/08 related to courses offered directly by further education colleges; however, these are not covered by HESA data upon which our analysis is based.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, as shown in Chart 1, the proportion of part-time students enrolled directly in further education colleges rises to about 17 per cent for qualifications below first degree level. Estimates for England prepared at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) suggest that about 25 per cent of home entrants for foundation degrees in 2005/06 were registered and taught in further education colleges.<sup>19</sup> The proportion of part-time higher national students may be even larger in further education colleges, because they have traditionally been the largest providers of these courses, even though higher national courses have been replaced by foundation degree courses in many colleges in recent years.<sup>20</sup>

With the resources available, it is not possible to incorporate further education data on part-time higher education students into our analysis at city-region level. For this reason we emphasise that our city-region analysis (based solely on HESA data) can only be regarded as exploratory. In some city-regions that appear to be poorly served by universities providing part-time courses, it may be that the gap is partly being filled by further education colleges. This issue has been explored in some of our case studies, as will be discussed below.

### Part-time higher education provision in Government Office regions

As shown in Table 16, column 1, there are marked differences between Government Office regions<sup>21</sup> in part-time provision by universities, with the highest ratio in Wales almost three times higher than the ratio in the East Midlands. These differences persist when we look at particular qualification aims but with some variation in the ordering of regions. For example, the highest ratio of part-time first degree students in universities per head of working age population is in London while North East England leads on part-time foundation degree students based in universities and Wales on part-time higher national students in universities.

**Table 16**

**Part-time undergraduate student numbers in UK universities per 1,000 working age population, analysed by Government Office region, 2007 – ordered by part-time undergraduate ratios**

	<b>Part-time undergraduates</b>	<b>Part-time first degree students</b>	<b>Part-time foundation degree students</b>	<b>Part-time higher national students</b>
	<b>Total part-time students in universities per 1,000 working age population</b>			
Wales (a)	19.3	2.5	0.5	1.6
North East	16.3	2.9	1.0	0.7
London	12.2	5.0	0.4	0.3
Scotland (a)	11.1	3.0	0.0	0.6
West Midlands	11.0	2.9	0.7	0.5
North West	10.7	3.0	0.8	0.4
Yorkshire and Humberside	9.2	2.5	0.5	0.3
South West	7.6	2.4	0.7	0.2
Northern Ireland (a)	7.2	2.8	0.1	0.0
South East (a)	6.9	1.7	0.6	0.2
East of England	6.9	1.5	0.5	0.4
East Midlands	6.6	2.2	0.5	0.2
Total UK	14.2	5.1	0.6	0.4

Sources: HESA: Part-time student numbers; NOMIS/LFS: Population of working age (men aged 16–64; women aged 16–59)

Note: (a) Open University students classified to centres in these regions have been excluded from regional totals.

One of the aims of this project was to find out which part-time higher education courses are available to people who currently lack higher education qualifications and where there are gaps in provision for such potential students. Accordingly, Table 17 presents similar ratios of part-time student numbers in universities per 1000 working age population who lack qualifications at least to NVQ4 level. So this Table highlights potential unmet demand for part-time higher education courses. This leads to some changes in regional ordering in columns 2-4.

**Table 17**

**Part-time undergraduate student numbers in universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, analysed by Government Office region, 2007**  
– ordered by part-time undergraduate ratios

	Part-time undergraduates	Part-time first degree students	Part-time foundation degree students	Part-time higher national students
<b>Total part-time students in higher education institutions per 1000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications</b>				
Wales (a)	25.9	3.4	0.7	2.1
North East	21.5	3.8	1.3	1.0
London	19.5	8.0	0.6	0.5
Scotland (a)	16.6	4.6	0.0	0.9
West Midlands	14.5	3.8	0.9	0.6
North West	14.4	4.1	1.0	0.6
Yorkshire and Humberside	12.0	3.3	0.7	0.4
South West	10.8	3.4	1.0	0.3
South East (a)	10.0	2.5	0.9	0.4
Northern Ireland (a)	9.6	3.7	0.1	0.0
East of England	9.3	2.0	0.7	0.6
East Midlands	8.8	3.0	0.7	0.3
Total UK	19.9	7.1	0.8	0.6

Sources: HESA: Part-time student numbers; NOMIS/LFS: Population of working age (men aged 16–64; women aged 16–59)

Note: (a) Open University students classified to centres in these regions have been excluded from regional totals.

### Part-time higher education provision at city-region level

Since Government Office regions are large, we have developed a more disaggregated regional analysis that allows us to judge whether part-time higher education courses are available within prospective students' reasonable travelling distance. Since there is no reason to imagine that smaller geographical units, such as counties or local authorities, encompass student travel journeys in any realistic way, we have used a dataset for 45 UK city-regions that geographical researchers have found to have a considerable overlap with the commuting patterns of most managers and professionals; they tend to be the most mobile occupation groups in the workforce. This attribute makes city-regions an attractive geographical unit of analysis for assessing the provision of higher education courses within reasonable travel distance for potential students.

In a 2005/06 survey of part-time students, Callender et al (2006) found that many of them travel half an hour or more to get to their places of study, whether departing from home or work (Table 18).<sup>22</sup>

**Table 18**

**Reported travelling times for part-time students in the UK, 2006**

	Work	Home	All
Per cent travelling from:	46	54	100
Of which, per cent reporting time travelled			
Less than ¼ of an hour	14	7	10
¼ to ½ hour	29	19	24
½ to 1 hour	43	36	39
1 hour to 1½ hours	11	24	18
1½ hours or more	3	14	9
N =			1,909

Source: C Callender, D Wilkinson, and K Mackinon [2006] *Part-time students and part-time study in higher education in the UK: A survey of students' attitudes and experiences of part-time study and its costs 2005/06*, Universities UK

To carry out our analysis, we allocated all part-time students to city-regions using university campus postcodes – not just the postcodes of the universities' central administrative offices. As in any analysis of this kind, we must bear in mind that some students may cross city-region boundaries to attend higher education courses, especially if city-regions adjoin each other.<sup>23</sup> In addition, we cannot distinguish between university-registered students who are taught on university campuses and those who are taught on further education campuses on courses which have been franchised. Our city-region analysis can only serve as a preliminary exploration of geographical inequalities in the provision of part-time higher education.

Typically, city-regions are large metropolitan areas – or contiguous metropolitan areas – together with their surrounding hinterlands.<sup>24</sup> Our own definition of city-regions derives from Robson et al (2006)<sup>25</sup> who made use of employment, housing, retail and commuting data to identify 39 relatively self-contained city-regions in England and their constituent local authority districts. We reduced this list to 38 English city-regions<sup>26</sup> and added data for seven more city-regions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Together these 45 city-regions account for about 80 per cent of UK employment. Using this definition, researchers at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) have built up a city-regions dataset, with data at local authority district level that has been derived from several sources, such as the Labour Force Survey and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

Combining Labour Force Survey data with HESA data for 2006/07, we can estimate the ratio of part-time higher education student numbers in universities per 1,000 working-age persons without a NVQ Level 4 or equivalent – at city-region level. The results suggest that at city-region level there are far greater disparities than we found at Government Office region level.

Table 19, column 1, for example, shows that in some city-regions, such as Preston, Cambridge, Coventry, Brighton/Hove and Plymouth, the ratio of part-time university-based undergraduates to persons without NVQ4 qualifications is two to four times the national average. At the other extreme some city-regions such as Peterborough and Ipswich have no part-time university-based undergraduate courses at all.

There is also a high degree of variation in respect of specific undergraduate qualification aims. For example, the ratio ranges from 21.2 to zero for part-time first-degree students (column 2). Note that equivalent ratios for foundation degrees, higher national qualifications and other undergraduate qualifications shown in Table 19 should be treated with greater caution than the first degree numbers, because the proportion of part-time higher education students based in further education colleges is greater in qualification groups below first degree level.<sup>27</sup>

The regional contrasts stand out strongly in the UK maps shown in Charts 2 and 3. Some parts of the country, such as the North West England, West Midlands and East Anglia have several 'cold spots' (city-regions with the lowest levels of part-time higher education provision in universities) for part-time first degree provision in universities without adjoining city-regions that might be regarded as 'hot spots'. By contrast, some apparent cold spots such as Exeter adjoin a hot spot (Plymouth) and it may well be that the lack of provision in Exeter is made up for, at least partly, by Plymouth institutions that attract some part-time students from the Exeter region.

These contrasts between city-regions raise a number of questions. It might be posited that part-time higher education provision is partly related to the level of economic buoyancy at city-region level, as indicated by employment rates, which have been found to be significantly negatively related to inactivity and dependency rates at city-region level (Mason, Bishop and Robinson, 2009). However, as shown in Chart 4, there is no obvious overlap between employment rates and the distribution of part-time higher education provision (shown in Chart 2) and correlation analysis confirms that the two variables are not significantly related at city-region level ( $r = -0.16$ ,  $p = 0.39$ ).

As noted above, these findings should be treated as purely exploratory because they do not take account of part-time students on higher education courses run directly by further education colleges. Nonetheless, the analysis raised questions that we have investigated through the case studies to which we now turn.

- To summarise, there are marked regional differences in the ratio of part-time university-based students per 1,000 persons in the working age population. Other research for this project has investigated the reasons for this, with particular emphasis on higher education institutions' differing policies and courses designed to attract part-time students.



**Table 19**

**Part-time undergraduate student numbers in UK universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, analysed by city-region, 2007 – ordered by part-time undergraduate ratios**

	Part-time undergraduates	Part-time first degree students	Part-time foundation degree students	Part-time higher national students
Total part-time students in UK universities per 1000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications				
Preston	80.8	21.2	9.1	4.3
Cambridge	59.7	3.5	1.7	0.2
Coventry	45.7	5.6	0.5	0.7
Brighton/Hove	38.0	5.7	2.8	0.2
Plymouth	35.0	14.7	6.6	1.7
Middlesbrough/Stockton-on-Tees	34.4	4.1	2.5	3.2
Worcester	33.6	10.2	3.3	2.3
Dundee	29.2	11.8	0.0	0.0
Oxford	28.7	4.5	0.3	0.2
Kingston upon Hull	28.1	3.6	0.4	0.0
Other Wales	27.0	3.0	0.2	0.2
Glasgow	26.5	5.7	0.0	0.2
Cardiff (a)	26.5	3.4	0.7	3.2
Chester	26.3	5.1	3.2	2.8
Swansea	23.3	4.6	0.6	1.6
Bournemouth/Poole	23.1	9.4	2.1	0.9
Norwich	20.1	4.6	0.8	2.0
Bristol/S. Gloucestershire	19.6	3.6	0.6	0.3
York	19.6	4.8	2.8	0.0
Luton	19.3	6.0	3.5	0.0
Lincoln	18.9	5.7	0.8	0.3
Aberdeen	18.1	7.5	0.0	0.6
Belfast (a)	17.9	6.3	0.2	0.0
Newcastle/Gateshead/Sunderland	17.4	3.9	0.9	0.1
Stoke on Trent	17.1	5.4	0.2	0.4
Reading	15.0	0.9	0.2	0.9
Other North West	14.9	1.6	0.7	0.1
Liverpool	14.8	5.9	0.5	0.3
Greater London	13.9	5.5	0.5	0.5
Nottingham/Derby	13.8	4.7	1.1	0.2
Leicester	13.4	5.3	1.7	0.6
Sheffield	13.0	5.7	0.7	0.7
Edinburgh (a)	12.7	6.0	0.0	0.0
Carlisle	12.6	1.8	0.7	0.0
Leeds/Bradford	11.7	3.5	0.8	0.5
Portsmouth/Southampton	11.4	5.4	1.4	0.7
Birmingham/Sandwell/Wolverhampton	10.6	4.1	1.4	0.7
Telford and Wrekin	10.5	1.7	0.2	1.1
Northampton	10.1	2.4	0.3	1.3
Other South East	9.4	2.5	1.3	0.5
Exeter	7.8	0.9	0.0	0.0
Other Scotland	7.6	1.4	0.0	2.0
Manchester/Salford	7.5	3.6	0.6	0.6
Gloucester/Cheltenham	5.2	2.6	0.1	0.2
Colchester	4.8	1.8	0.6	0.4

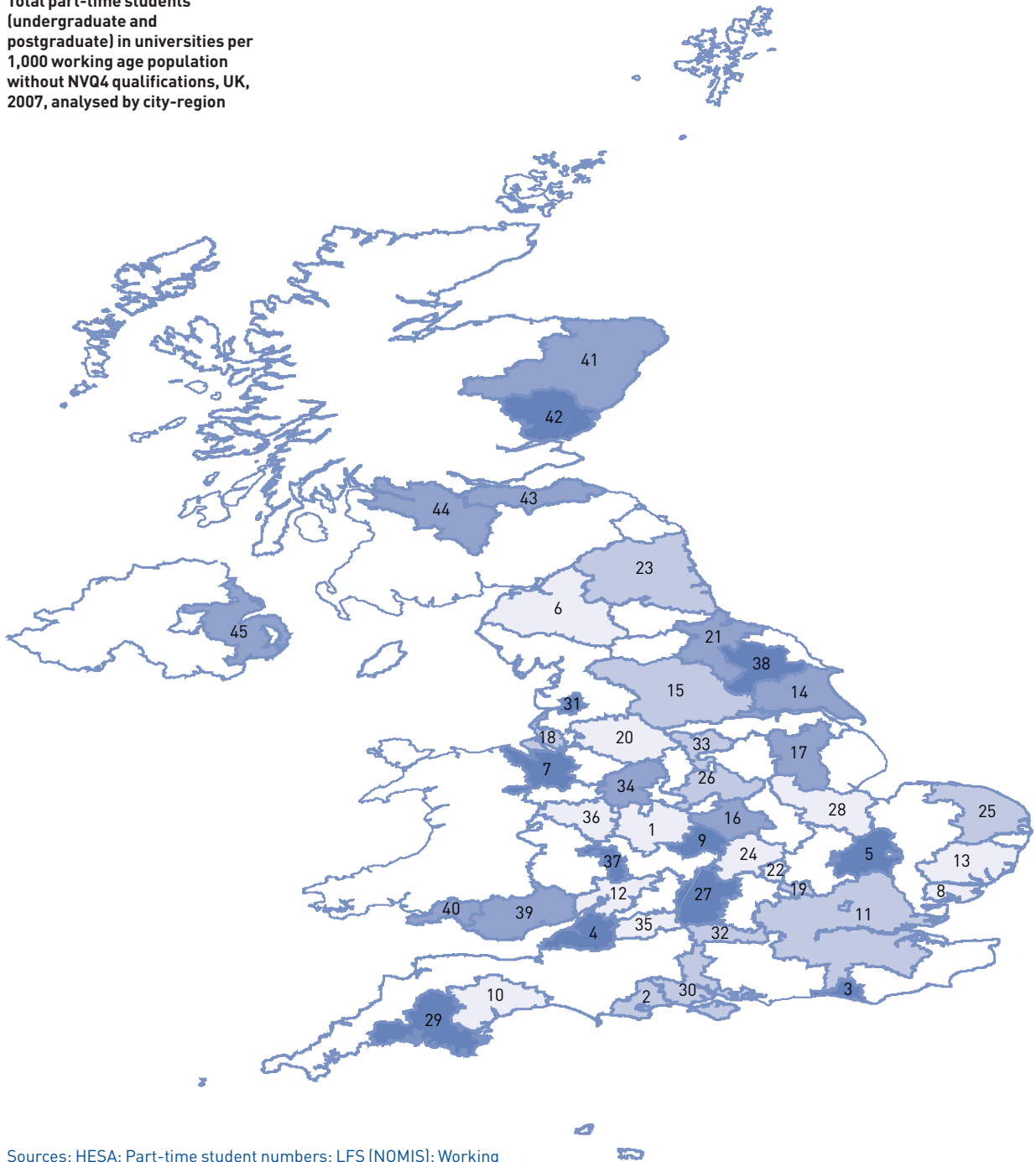
	Part-time undergraduates	Part-time first degree students	Part-time foundation degree students	Part-time higher national students
<b>Total part-time students in UK universities per 1000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications</b>				
Other Northern Ireland	1.3	1.1	0.0	0.0
Swindon	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Eastern	1.0	0.2	0.1	0.0
Other Yorkshire and Humberside	0.7	0.1	0.2	0.1
Other East Midlands	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0
Other South West	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Other West Midlands	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Peterborough	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other North East	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Milton Keynes (a)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ipswich	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total UK	19.9	7.1	0.8	0.6

Sources: HESA: Part-time student numbers; NOMIS/LFS: Population of working age (men aged 16-64; women aged 16-59)

Note: (a) Open University students classified to centres in these regions have been excluded from regional totals.

Chart 2

Total part-time students (undergraduate and postgraduate) in universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, UK, 2007, analysed by city-region



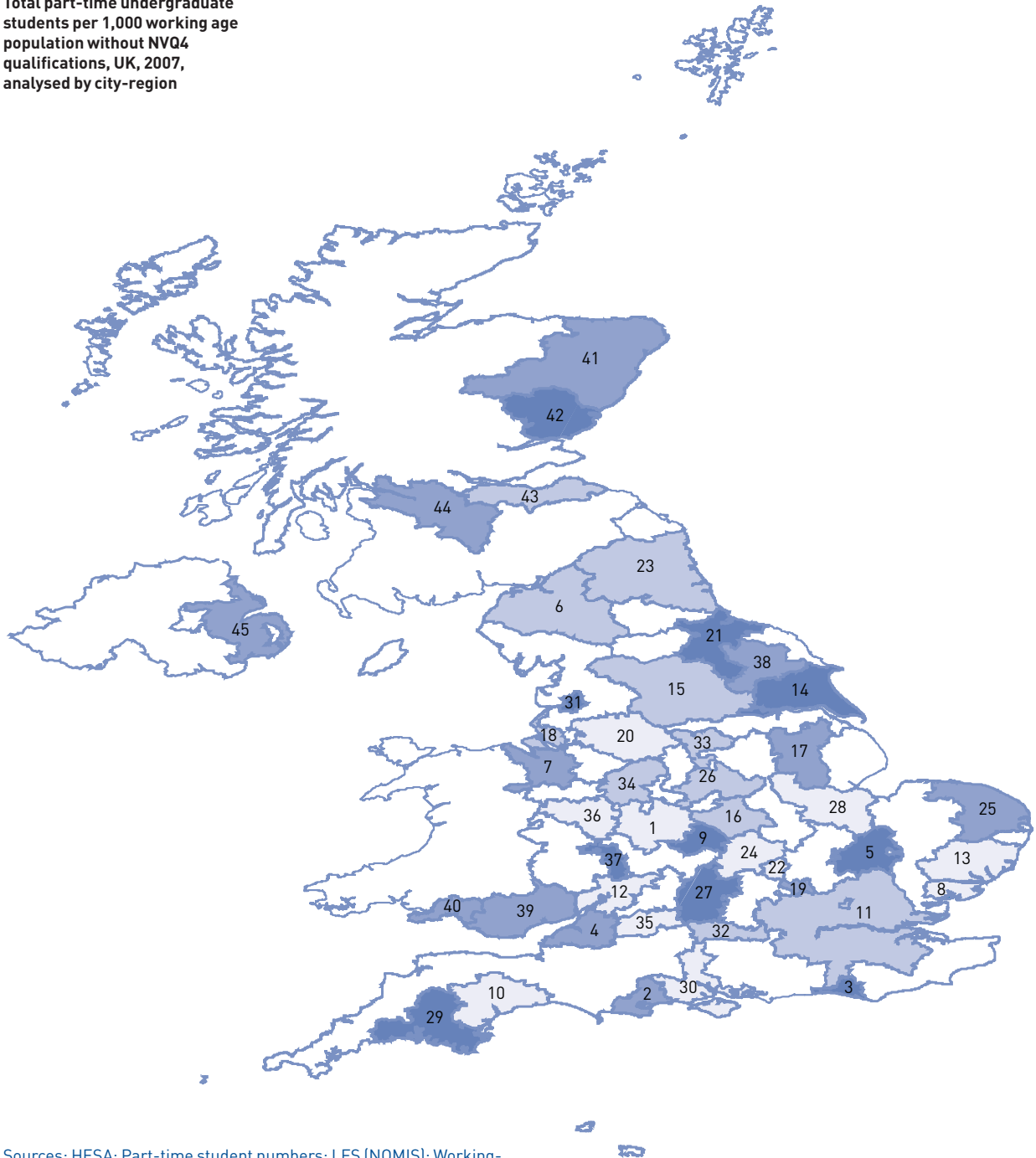
Sources: HESA: Part-time student numbers; LFS (NOMIS): Working age population without NVQ4 qualifications

Key to city-regions:

- |                                     |                                   |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Birmingham/Sandwell/Wolverhampton | 16 Leicester                      | 31 Preston            |
| 2 Bournemouth/Poole                 | 17 Lincoln                        | 32 Reading            |
| 3 Brighton & Hove                   | 18 Liverpool                      | 33 Sheffield          |
| 4 Bristol/S.Gloucester              | 19 Luton                          | 34 Stoke-on-Trent     |
| 5 Cambridge                         | 20 Manchester/Salford/Trafford    | 35 Swindon            |
| 6 Carlisle                          | 21 Middlesbrough/Stockton         | 36 Telford and Wrekin |
| 7 Chester                           | 22 Milton Keynes                  | 37 Worcester          |
| 8 Colchester                        | 23 Newcastle/Gateshead/Sunderland | 38 York               |
| 9 Coventry                          | 24 Northampton                    | 39 Cardiff            |
| 10 Exeter                           | 25 Norwich                        | 40 Swansea            |
| 11 Greater London                   | 26 Nottingham/Derby               | 41 Aberdeen           |
| 12 Gloucester/Cheltenham            | 27 Oxford                         | 42 Dundee             |
| 13 Ipswich                          | 28 Peterborough                   | 43 Edinburgh          |
| 14 Kingston upon Hull               | 29 Plymouth                       | 44 Glasgow            |
| 15 Leeds/Bradford                   | 30 Portsmouth/Southampton         | 45 Belfast            |

**Chart 3**

**Total part-time undergraduate students per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, UK, 2007, analysed by city-region**



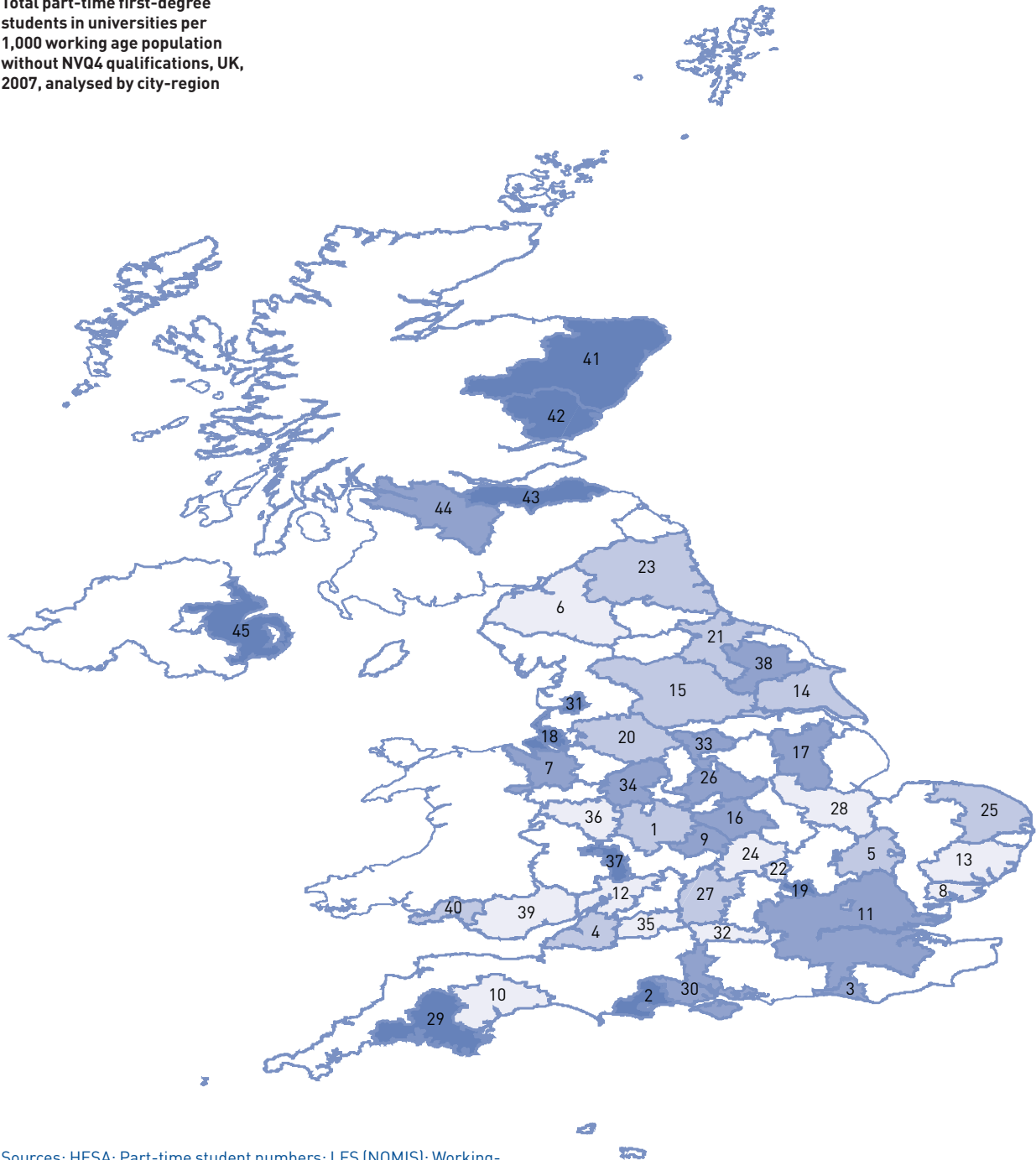
Sources: HESA: Part-time student numbers; LFS (NOMIS): Working-age population without NVQ4 qualifications

**Key to city-regions:**

- |                                     |                                   |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Birmingham/Sandwell/Wolverhampton | 16 Leicester                      | 31 Preston            |
| 2 Bournemouth/Poole                 | 17 Lincoln                        | 32 Reading            |
| 3 Brighton & Hove                   | 18 Liverpool                      | 33 Sheffield          |
| 4 Bristol/S.Gloucester              | 19 Luton                          | 34 Stoke-on-Trent     |
| 5 Cambridge                         | 20 Manchester/Salford/Trafford    | 35 Swindon            |
| 6 Carlisle                          | 21 Middlesbrough/Stockton         | 36 Telford and Wrekin |
| 7 Chester                           | 22 Milton Keynes                  | 37 Worcester          |
| 8 Colchester                        | 23 Newcastle/Gateshead/Sunderland | 38 York               |
| 9 Coventry                          | 24 Northampton                    | 39 Cardiff            |
| 10 Exeter                           | 25 Norwich                        | 40 Swansea            |
| 11 Greater London                   | 26 Nottingham/Derby               | 41 Aberdeen           |
| 12 Gloucester/Cheltenham            | 27 Oxford                         | 42 Dundee             |
| 13 Ipswich                          | 28 Peterborough                   | 43 Edinburgh          |
| 14 Kingston upon Hull               | 29 Plymouth                       | 44 Glasgow            |
| 15 Leeds/Bradford                   | 30 Portsmouth/Southampton         | 45 Belfast            |

**Chart 4**

**Total part-time first-degree students in universities per 1,000 working age population without NVQ4 qualifications, UK, 2007, analysed by city-region**



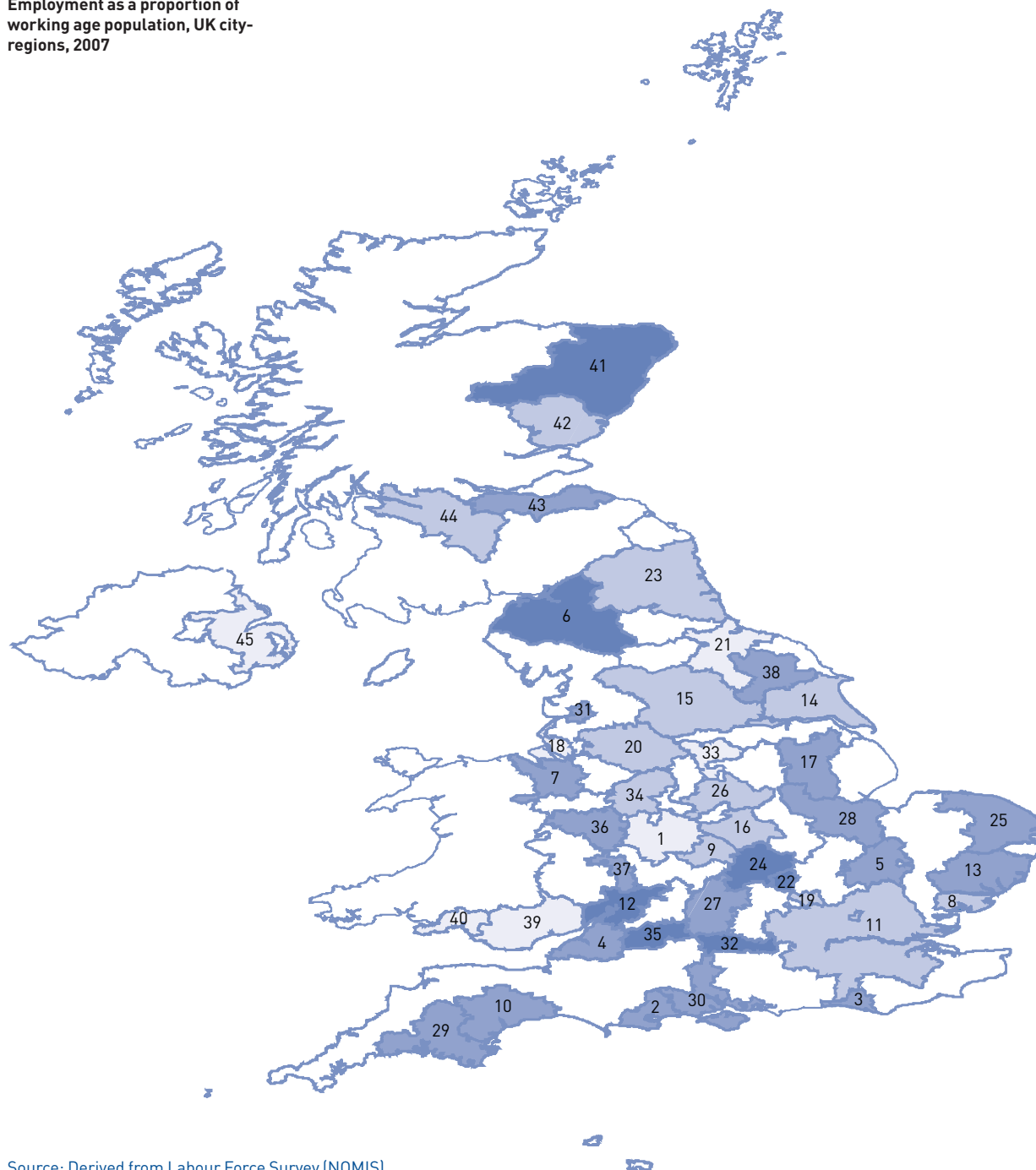
Sources: HESA: Part-time student numbers; LFS (NOMIS): Working-age population without NVQ4 qualifications

**Key to city-regions:**

- |                                     |                                   |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Birmingham/Sandwell/Wolverhampton | 16 Leicester                      | 31 Preston            |
| 2 Bournemouth/Poole                 | 17 Lincoln                        | 32 Reading            |
| 3 Brighton & Hove                   | 18 Liverpool                      | 33 Sheffield          |
| 4 Bristol/S.Gloucester              | 19 Luton                          | 34 Stoke-on-Trent     |
| 5 Cambridge                         | 20 Manchester/Salford/Trafford    | 35 Swindon            |
| 6 Carlisle                          | 21 Middlesbrough/Stockton         | 36 Telford and Wrekin |
| 7 Chester                           | 22 Milton Keynes                  | 37 Worcester          |
| 8 Colchester                        | 23 Newcastle/Gateshead/Sunderland | 38 York               |
| 9 Coventry                          | 24 Northampton                    | 39 Cardiff            |
| 10 Exeter                           | 25 Norwich                        | 40 Swansea            |
| 11 Greater London                   | 26 Nottingham/Derby               | 41 Aberdeen           |
| 12 Gloucester/Cheltenham            | 27 Oxford                         | 42 Dundee             |
| 13 Ipswich                          | 28 Peterborough                   | 43 Edinburgh          |
| 14 Kingston upon Hull               | 29 Plymouth                       | 44 Glasgow            |
| 15 Leeds/Bradford                   | 30 Portsmouth/Southampton         | 45 Belfast            |

Chart 5

Employment as a proportion of working age population, UK city-regions, 2007



Source: Derived from Labour Force Survey (NOMIS)

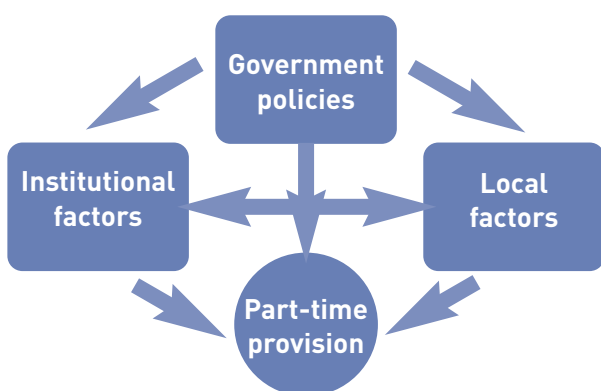
Key to city-regions:

- |                                     |                                   |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Birmingham/Sandwell/Wolverhampton | 16 Leicester                      | 31 Preston            |
| 2 Bournemouth/Poole                 | 17 Lincoln                        | 32 Reading            |
| 3 Brighton & Hove                   | 18 Liverpool                      | 33 Sheffield          |
| 4 Bristol/S.Gloucester              | 19 Luton                          | 34 Stoke-on-Trent     |
| 5 Cambridge                         | 20 Manchester/Salford/Trafford    | 35 Swindon            |
| 6 Carlisle                          | 21 Middlesbrough/Stockton         | 36 Telford and Wrekin |
| 7 Chester                           | 22 Milton Keynes                  | 37 Worcester          |
| 8 Colchester                        | 23 Newcastle/Gateshead/Sunderland | 38 York               |
| 9 Coventry                          | 24 Northampton                    | 39 Cardiff            |
| 10 Exeter                           | 25 Norwich                        | 40 Swansea            |
| 11 Greater London                   | 26 Nottingham/Derby               | 41 Aberdeen           |
| 12 Gloucester/Cheltenham            | 27 Oxford                         | 42 Dundee             |
| 13 Ipswich                          | 28 Peterborough                   | 43 Edinburgh          |
| 14 Kingston upon Hull               | 29 Plymouth                       | 44 Glasgow            |
| 15 Leeds/Bradford                   | 30 Portsmouth/Southampton         | 45 Belfast            |

Our 15 case studies of universities in England which concentrate exclusively on undergraduate part-time provision, inform the following chapters. First, we describe the key aspects of provision, including the pattern, range and variations in the way it is organised. We then consider in more depth three sets of factors – institutional, external/local conditions, and government policies – that explain variations in provision; no single factor operates in isolation. For example, specific government policy measures can have very different, indeed opposite, effects on provision in different institutions. The model below illustrates these relationships.

**Chart 6**

**The supply of part-time higher education**



The chapter first highlights the diversity of awards included in the category of ‘undergraduate’ and discusses some of the different models of undergraduate part-time provision at the case study universities. Having briefly explored the types of part-time provision and particularly where and how the universities provide their part-time courses, we begin to identify factors explaining the patterns of part-time provision.

### Undergraduate level provision: types of awards

The many forms of undergraduate provision – individual modules, higher nationals, higher education certificates/diplomas, foundation degrees to bachelor’s degrees – tend to attract different kinds of students, both in their backgrounds and their study aims, and ultimately therefore in the degree to which they serve the aims of government policy. The newer, vocationally-orientated foundation degrees were specifically designed, for example, in response to government policies aimed at widening participation and at improving employment-related skills, and they usually attract a very specific student body.

Other programmes, such as certificates, attract a much wider range of students, including a significant proportion of adults whose study aims may not be primarily employment oriented. Many of these certificate programmes were developed from the traditional, separately funded extra-mural type programmes, found in the ‘old’ universities, and which had a broader ‘adult education’ mission, and attracted a large proportion of relatively well educated adults. With the mainstreaming of the funding of extra-mural provision, and the subsequent changes in funding to include only ‘completed’ students, the provision of many of these certificate awards increased.

The more recent ELQ funding rule has led institutions to reduce their provision in some subject areas. Some certificate programmes are used as part of continuing professional development programmes, and these appear to have increased, although for those universities with a lack of funded students, continuing professional development programmes – funded fully through fees – had been developed to complement HEFCE-funded students.

In short, when considering institutional variations in part-time provision, the award type is an important factor, which not only explains variations and trends in provision, but also explains why government policies have resulted in a decline in provision in some institutions, and growth in others.

### Models of provision

There was no dominant model of provision at the non-specialist part-time institutions – in other words, excluding the Open University and Birkbeck. A variety of models were evident:

#### Part-time provision fully integrated with full-time provision

At a university in the south of England – a region with high part-time provision – the boundaries between full- and part-time study were blurred because the part-time provision was based on modules and many full-time students were taking advantage of classes scheduled in the evenings, and taking days off to go to work.

### **Mixed part-time provision partially integrated with full-time provision and some separate part-time provision**

Several universities in both hot and cold city-regions across England provided some of their part-time courses through 'in-fill': part-time students were taught alongside full-time students and a designated school or department within the institution also ran part-time courses for them. Often this varied according to the course qualification. For instance, at two universities part-time students taking a first degree were taught alongside full-time students, while those taking accredited certificates and foundation degrees – the bulk of the part-time students – were taught separately through the centre of lifelong learning or continuing education.

### **Separate part-time provision**

Several universities provided their part-time courses exclusively via a designated school, department or faculty. The University of Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education typifies such provision. All its part-time undergraduate courses are 'other undergraduate' qualifications. Provision is based on the notion of *extra mural* because the part-time mode of delivery does not fit within the overall Cambridge model of education, which demands a collegiate residential experience. Another variation of this model was found in a post-92 university, where there was a faculty for 'university colleges', which included representatives from (mainly further education) partner institutions. These models seemed unrelated to the amount of part-time provision, whether the university was in a hot or cold city-region, and the proportion of the student body at each institution studying part-time (Table 29).

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### **Location of provision**

Not all the case study universities provided all of their part-time courses at their institution or at their main site.

### **Partnerships**

Some universities among our case studies delivered their part-time provision through partnerships, usually with further education colleges, but occasionally with private or independent providers. Sometimes the university was primarily responsible for validating the courses, and sometimes it collaborated with others, sharing delivery and in some cases providing staff.

Only one university had no partnership arrangements, while some delivered nearly all their part-time provision through partnerships, mostly with further education colleges. One university worked closely with 18 partners, reaching a large area well beyond its own region. Courses taught by partners ranged widely, depending on the specialisms of the particular college. For example, undergraduate programmes in 'early years education' were among those delivered by further education partners. But mostly, they were foundation degrees.

However, the presence or absence of such partnerships alone cannot account for the amount of part-time provision at each institution, whether the university was in a hot or cold city-region, and the proportion of the student body at each institution studying part-time (Table 27).

These partnerships have implications for the interpretation of the maps showing the distribution of part-time provision (Charts 3 and 4). Students studying at partner organisations are not necessarily included in a university's HESA returns and students who are reported in the HESA data as studying at a particular university, may live and study outside of that university's city-region. For instance, for historical reasons, the University of Central Lancashire in the Preston city-region has partnerships with further education colleges in the Carlisle city-region. The methods used to identify hot and cold spot regions (Charts 3 and 4) could not take such eventualities into consideration because HESA data do not distinguish between students taught by universities themselves and those taught by further education colleges on courses that are franchised by universities. It was not possible to find out systematically how many students were studying in partnership organisations nor the location of the partnership organisations.

### **Work-based delivery**

Some of the case study universities provided work-based learning that was undertaken on employers' premises and/or at their institution. The proportion of part-time undergraduates on work-based courses varied widely, ranging from zero at one university to 80 per cent at another.



And as with partnerships, the presence of work-based learning cannot in itself explain patterns of part-time provision. However, as we will see, the people we interviewed considered that employers' attitudes to part-time study were an important factor in facilitating or hindering part-time provision.

### **Distance learning**

All courses at the Open University are distance learning. A few other universities also provided some distance learning, most often as modules and combined with face to face tuition.

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### **Hours of provision**

A wide variety of part-time programmes were scheduled at different times of the day. Nearly all of Birkbeck's part-time undergraduate courses, including their first-degree programmes, are run in the evening between 6.00–9.00pm and occasionally at weekends.

Birkbeck, however, and the University of Worcester, which operated from 9.15am to 9.00pm, were exceptional. A few other institutions, such as the universities of Coventry, Central Lancashire, and Warwick delivered a few part-time courses outside 'normal' hours. Part-time courses usually took place during the day, either as in-fill or separately for part-timers.

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### **Trends in the volume of part-time provision**

The statistical analysis of national trends clearly shows a decline in part-time undergraduate provision since 2006/07 (Table 1). Among the universities that made up our case studies part-time provision was in flux. The location of a university – in a hot or cold city-region – was no predictor of trends in student numbers.

Of the 15 institutions that we looked at half had seen a rise in part-time student numbers in the last two years while five had seen a decline; in the remaining three there had been no change. Our interviewees highlighted several factors as having influenced the trends in their particular institution, and especially the demand for part-time provision. Some of these will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters where they also impact on the supply of part-time higher education.

Interviewees saw the current economic climate as a significant factor affecting the demand for part-time provision. Both the Open University and Birkbeck attributed the rise in part-time numbers in 2009/10 primarily to economic factors and specifically individuals' desire to improve or refresh their skills to help them survive in the recession. Other institutions regarded the current economic climate as one of the reasons for the fall in their part-time numbers, and pointed in particular to employers' unwillingness or inability to sponsor students for all, or part, of their course. This affected both headcount numbers and full-time equivalents.

Growth in demand for part-time provision was also attributed to internal factors, such as improvements in marketing and the university's offer. At the University of Cumbria, the growth was linked to the recent creation of the university in 2007 and its determined efforts to create demand – an issue we will return to.

Government policies, particularly the introduction of the ELQ ruling, were seen as a major reason for the decline in numbers. All five of the universities reporting a fall in student numbers attributed this to ELQ. Universities whose part-time numbers had grown were also concerned about the impact of ELQ on their potential for growth. ELQ will be discussed in more depth in chapter 9.

Universities' perceptions of the demand for part-time provision could encourage them to provide for part-timers or could act as a constraint. Some, particularly those in regions with currently high part-time provision believed that there was a growing demand for their courses, as did two institutions in regions with low levels of provision for part-time students, both of whom talked about how they had had to create demand. In one of these, an interviewee described their university as a 'service university', delivering courses wherever they were needed and suggested that skills requirements for public sector workers, such as the children's workforce, nurses and paramedics had opened up numerous opportunities for part-time continuing professional development. The other institution, in a region with low part-time provision but with a strong commitment to part-time study, pointed to the low educational aspirations of the local community as a factor holding down demand.

All the other institutions in regions with low levels of part-time provision did not see any clear demand for part-time provision. The absence of perceived demand, therefore, in part, accounts for their low levels of part-time provision. Also the demand from the full-time undergraduate market more than covered their capacity and funded student numbers, giving them little incentive to create demand for part-time courses.

Cost was a further deterrent. For part-time provision to succeed, the universities needed to make investments in courses, and due to perceived lack of demand they could see no guarantee of any return on such an investment. Breaking into new areas, identifying demand from groups of students or employers, tailoring provision to their needs, and addressing any barriers to provision and student participation was seen as too expensive and risky.

Nearly all the case study universities mentioned the difficulty of assessing and predicting demand, and the lack of market research information equivalent to the UCAS data for full-time provision. This made developing new courses a risky endeavour. (The notion of risk is a recurrent theme throughout this study.) For example, a university in the north of England, located in a region with low part-time provision, was developing some new part-time engineering courses. These were very expensive to run because they demanded a lot of costly equipment. They were also a risky investment because there was no guarantee that employers would take advantage of these courses.

A good example of the unpredictability of demand for part-time study is the opening of Birkbeck's campus in Stratford, east London. Its success demonstrates that there was unmet demand that could be tapped into. An unanticipated consequence of the launch of the Stratford site was an increase of applications to courses at Birkbeck's central London site.

Universities can control and influence a range of internal institutional factors either to promote or curtail their part-time provision. All the key issues discussed in this chapter helped to promote part-time provision in some of the universities in our case studies, while in others they constrained it.

A constellation of factors explain the geographical distribution and patterns of part-time provision highlighted in the maps (Charts 3 and 4), and why regional levels of part-time provision vary. We have tried to pick out factors affecting provision, which are inevitably interlinked. Although we have attempted to focus only on issues affecting supply, some of these affect demand and student motivation to participate in higher education.

In this chapter we examine the role of a university's legacy, mission and ensuing strategy, one of the most significant factors influencing the overall pattern of part-time provision. We also explore the interplay between the characteristics of the part-time student population and the infrastructure required to support part-time students. The chapter also looks at staffing issues affecting the supply of part-time provision, and at subject portfolios.

### Legacy, mission and strategy

Among the most important factors explaining the patterns of part-time provision among the case study universities were their institutional history, their current mission, and how both were incorporated into the university's strategic plans. An institution's legacy, mission, and strategy help to clarify why some institutions had extensive part-time provision, while others had very little.

In 1965, in his famous speech about the binary policy, the Labour Secretary of State for Education Antony Crosland, declared:

'There is an ever increasing need and demand for vocational, professional, and industrially based courses in higher education – at full-time degree level, at full-time just below degree level, at part-time advanced level and so on. This demand cannot be fully met by the universities. It must be fully met if we are to progress as a nation in the modern technological world. In our view it therefore requires a separate sector, with a separate tradition and outlook within the higher education system.'<sup>28</sup>

The wisdom, or otherwise, of Crosland's binary policy and the subsequent development of polytechnics is open to debate.<sup>29</sup> The legacy of polytechnics continues today among our case studies that were formerly polytechnics and gained university status following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, such as the universities of Central Lancashire, Coventry and Plymouth. This accounts for these universities' original commitment to part-time provision, especially to vocational subjects and qualifications, which has been developed into their current mission and strategy.

Likewise, institutions such as the Universities of Worcester, Cumbria, Gloucestershire and Edgehill, which were formerly colleges of further and/or higher education and have gained university status more recently, have a longstanding involvement in part-time vocational provision. However, Edgehill University now wants to diversify its student population and attract more full-time students while the University of Gloucestershire reported low demand for part-time study.

Such universities often see part-time provision as fulfilling other aspects of their – and the government's – higher education agenda, particularly widening participation and employer engagement. The University of Central Lancashire's student access strategy includes part-time students as one of its growth priorities and plans to increase the number of part-time places available at its main campus and partner institutions.

Cumbria is a region with large pockets of social and economic deprivation. The lack of a skilled workforce means that there is little incentive for companies to start up in the region. Part of the rationale for the creation of the University of Cumbria was to aid economic regeneration in the area and specifically to grow a local pool of skilled workers, to raise the educational aspirations of young people, and encourage progression post Level 3. Its mission, therefore, has shaped the nature of its part-time provision and its extensive work-based courses.

Universities had other pragmatic and business reasons, as well as ideological ones, for providing and expanding part-time provision, and for its inclusion in a strategic plan. Part-time provision is another way of attracting more students and an important additional income stream, where demand for full-time places is relatively low. Many institutions considered that the part-time higher education market has the potential for growth and saw continuing professional development courses as a potentially lucrative source of income.

Part-time study sometimes offered universities opportunities to use their resources more efficiently, particularly where provision was flexible and modular, and the distinction in practice between full-time and part-time study was blurred. These strategic drivers account for why part-time provision was incorporated within some universities' mission and strategic plans, and in turn, for the uneven distribution of part-time study across different city-regions.

History also explains part-time provision at the universities of Cambridge and Warwick, which both taught part-timers in separate departments. Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education was founded in 1873; it was the first English university department in continuing education and runs liberal arts courses. Warwick started such courses in the 1970s only a few years after its creation.

Both universities see their part-time provision primarily as an important contribution to community engagement, while Warwick also considers it as one of its distinctive features, compared with other Russell Group universities. At both universities, however, the number of part-time students is in decline. Arguably, this brings into question how far they can sustain their commitment to part-time provision, especially where it may be at the expense of resources for full-time provision. This is particularly the case in Warwick, whose overall strategic plan focuses on enhancing its international reputation.

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### **No incentive to change?**

At the other pre-1992 universities that we studied, part-time provision and undergraduate vocational education and training did not feature in their current mission or strategic plans – it was 'off their radar'. Unlike most post-1992 case study institutions, these universities did not see part-time provision as a potential vehicle for widening participation; they saw the challenge of widening participation almost exclusively in terms of broadening the access of 18-year-old school leavers and sometimes characterised part-time provision as detracting from their quest for excellence and their reputation as research-intensive universities.

There were no incentives for pre-1992 universities to change their perspective on part-time teaching. They had filled all their full-time undergraduate places. They preferred to expand the more lucrative full-time postgraduate and international student markets and regarded the part-time undergraduate market as riskier, less profitable, and more expensive to enter and to deliver.

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### **Ways of supporting different sorts of part-timers**

The interplay between the characteristics of the local part-time student population and the infrastructure required to support them is another significant factor explaining the pattern of part-time provision. When an institution paid attention to tailoring its infrastructure to the needs of both part-time students and part-time study this facilitated provision; predictably, lack of such attention had the opposite effect.

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### **The characteristics of the part-time student undergraduate population**

As our statistical review shows, part-time undergraduates are heterogeneous – there is no typical part-time student – but part-timers tend to be much older than their full-time peers and more likely to be female. Most are in full-time employment and have family responsibilities, and thus their part-time study has to be fitted around their existing commitments.<sup>30</sup> They are, as one respondent remarked, a more 'volatile cohort to teach because life happens'. They have diverse educational backgrounds and some have not studied since leaving school.

There is evidence that part-time students tend to be far more 'risky' to teach than full-time students. Part-time students may have different needs and require additional support compared with full-time students. A recent HEFCE report shows that only 44 per cent of first degree part-time students who start a course of more than 30 per cent of a full-time equivalent complete their programme within seven academic years.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, around 78 per cent of full-time students complete their degrees.<sup>32</sup> When institutions' funding is linked directly to completion rates, then higher non-completion rates have consequences.

Institutions committed to part-time teaching saw the distinctive characteristics and experiences of part-time undergraduates, together with the management of their learning as a welcome challenge and, in principle, as a worthwhile emotional and financial investment. Some of these universities were, however, reassessing that investment.

Without the prospect of financial incentives to take on part-timers, other universities were deterred from investing in them. Partly because of the characteristics of part-time undergraduates, part-time and flexible provision is more challenging and expensive to deliver and manage compared with full-time study, especially when provided outside of 'normal' teaching hours. Some mentioned that the courses' longer running time imposed constraints in making changes to the curriculum.

### **The infrastructure for part-time teaching and its costs**

Birkbeck and the Open University, as specialist part-time providers, have designed their facilities and support systems accordingly, but they face financial constraints that limit for instance, the scope of the non-financial support available to students such as personalised academic and pastoral help.

However, few of the other case study institutions had done anything to tailor their infrastructure to the needs of part-time delivery. One exception was a university where the distinction between full- and part-time study was seen to be insignificant in practice. Provision was modular and included evening and weekend delivery, open to both full-time and part-time students.

Another university had opened a graduate and continuing professional development centre in 2005, explicitly to meet the needs of its undergraduate part-time students. The centre provides prospective part-time students with help at times that suit them and makes it easy for them to enrol. The centre's facilities are open until 9.00pm and evening courses are run there. It is also the part-time students' home base and acts as a 'one stop shop' for them with catering/café provision, additional security, and dedicated support staff such as IT and advice staff. However, no academic staff were available at the centre to provide guidance and support after normal teaching hours and much of the university's part-time undergraduate provision is dispersed throughout the university and is taught during the day alongside full-time students.

The part-time students on full-time courses still have to meet the same assessment and examination commitments as their full-time peers. Indeed, the limited provision of 'true' part-time courses, delivered in evenings and at weekends, was considered a barrier to potential part-time students' participation in higher education.

In another example, a centre for lifelong learning provides the infrastructure for part-time provision, including staff with particular expertise in teaching adult students and in adult learning. However, a critical mass of part-time students was required to ensure the sustainability of these services and, because of costs and the effects of ELQ, adult education courses are being cut and the centre is at risk.

It is clear that the lack of a supportive infrastructure hinders both the delivery of part-time study and the further expansion of existing provision. Two universities with low levels of part-time provision reported that their systems were not designed either to support part-time study or the particular needs of part-time students. Their admissions systems, student records systems, timetabling, student support, their campus environment and facilities were not devised to handle part-time students. Historically, everything was geared towards the needs of full-time students.

Universities such as the two mentioned in the paragraph above saw part-time students as a potential threat to their academic and research reputation. They prided themselves on their high ratings in a variety of higher education metrics including the National Student Survey, and worried that part-time students would bring down their institutional ratings, because of doubts about some part-timers' academic ability and therefore whether it was possible to maintain standards on part-time courses.

Most case study universities, including those with high and low part-time provision, reported that part-time students and part-time study were more resource-intensive than their full-time equivalent peers. When compared to full-time students, for instance:

- Part-timers were more expensive to recruit and enrol because there was no centralised admissions process like UCAS. ELQ requirements were demanding, and some students, like those at the Open University, only enrol for one module at a time, adding extra administrative costs.
- Part-time funding was more complicated and costly to administer, especially because of ELQ – at the pre-registration stage universities had to assess whether a student was HEFCE fundable; ELQ and non-ELQ students were charged different levels of fee; and for non-ELQ students evidence that they had completed their qualification had to be collected before HEFCE funds could be claimed.
- The curriculum had to be tailored to the needs of part-timers, especially in work-based learning. This made such courses more costly to develop and meant that they had a more limited 'shelf-life'.
- Part-time students required more academic and pastoral support and were more demanding and challenging to manage because they have other lives outside of the university.

A large investment would be required to cover the additional direct and indirect costs of changing the infrastructure and culture to support part-time students and study, and universities with low-levels of part-time provision regarded such investment as too much of a financial risk. How far universities were willing to invest in this infrastructure reflected: the size and nature of their part-time provision; their perceptions of the demand for part-time and flexible study; the additional costs associated with developing such an infrastructure; and the opportunity costs where demand for full-time provision was seen to exceed capacity. For some case study universities these costs were prohibitive.

Apart from the specialist part-time universities only two universities with extensive part-time provision regularly kept their campus and facilities open from 9.00am to 9.00pm and at weekends. Some who wanted to deliver more flexible courses outside 'normal' hours did not have the capacity or resources to do so, which limited the development and expansion of after-hours part-time courses. One university wanted to keep just one building open in the evenings in order to keep costs down, but doing so posed timetabling challenges. There were also worries about whether part-timers, studying after hours, would be getting as good a student experience as their full-time peers.

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### **Information and communications technology (ICT)**

All the universities that we looked at delivered the vast majority of their courses face to face, with the exception of the Open University. However, a sizeable number of them had distance learning modules, using a wide variety of packages and applications to create a virtual learning environment, such as 'PebblePad' (an academic version of Facebook), Moodle, WebCT, Blackboard, and 'Wimba', some of which enable on-line tutorials. Some had built these applications into their teaching and learning strategies in very imaginative ways. For example, one was using 'PebblePad' for students on placement, to cut down on placement visits and for workplace mentoring. It had also developed an off-line version of Blackboard because it was not possible to get a signal in all parts of the region.

There was a general consensus that a greater and better use of ICT would facilitate the expansion of flexible and distance learning. The barriers to such greater utilisation were resource constraints and an unwillingness by staff to engage with such developments.

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## Staffing issues

At some institutions part-time provision was largely attributable to a few individual champions, at both senior and junior levels, and their personal commitment to part-time study. On the whole case study respondents reported that many academic staff attitudes to part-time study and students tended to limit their provision. Staff attitudes were largely influenced by their institution's culture and mission. In one institution with very low part-time provision we were told that the biggest barrier to part-time provision was the mentality of staff.

Staff concerns focused primarily on teaching loads and the demands of teaching part-time and non-traditional students. Staff were generally resistant to teaching in the evenings and weekends. At some universities, staff with full-time teaching loads had no capacity to take on additional teaching. In research-intensive case study universities with low levels of part-time provision, staff were unwilling to teach 'after-hours', saying it would detract from their research activities, but we heard about similar attitudes in institutions with higher levels of part-time provision. This helps to explain why part-time courses were available in certain subjects or departments but not in others.

Arguably, part-time undergraduates have different characteristics to their full-time peers and are more demanding to teach. Some staff, especially those employed at universities with low part-time provision, perceived part-time students as an 'extra burden' and were uninterested in teaching such students.

Staff (both senior administrative staff and teaching staff) often stereotyped part-time students as difficult to teach, more needy and of poor quality – who missed classes and assignment deadlines. The large early years teaching programme at one university had been transferred to the continuing education department because it did not fit with 'the ethos of the [original] department'. The programme intake – primarily part-time and non-traditional students – was considered problematic, with high non-completion rates. The transfer resulted directly from staff attitudes to such non-traditional students.

A couple of case study institutions, again with the low levels of part-time provision, argued that they did not have staff with the appropriate skills to teach adults and deliver a suitable curriculum. They voiced concern that such staff would not be qualified to be submitted to the Research Excellence Framework as they would be preoccupied with teaching rather than research.

Staff contracts and additional staff costs were other recurring themes, irrespective of the amount of their part-time provision; both were perceived as barriers to provision, particularly for universities wanting to expand their evening and weekend provision. The institutions were concerned about the implications of evenings and weekend working for the terms and conditions of employment of both their teaching and support staff. Difficulties in predicting demand for new part-time courses (see Chapter 6), meant that staff were often recruited on short-term contracts in case the course did not recruit and many universities that we looked at relied heavily on part-time and/or short-term contract staff for their part-time courses.

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## Subject portfolios

The range and type of subjects offered by the case study universities directly affected their opportunities to develop undergraduate part-time provision, and particularly how they taught it. With the extent of vocational and employer-related provision largely shaped by the public sector workforce development agenda, universities teaching subjects allied to medicine were able to take advantage of lucrative contracts with the NHS, while those offering courses in education had similar opportunities.

Some respondents suggested that non-vocational subjects such as the arts or humanities were less amenable to part-time provision. Arguably, such subjects may not be so easily adaptable to vocational qualifications such as foundation degrees, which require employer involvement. But some institutions, like Birkbeck and the Open University, do offer other undergraduate awards in these subjects.

Providing some subjects in a flexible manner may be more challenging. The institution with the largest creative arts provision among our case studies argued that it would be very difficult to deliver some of their courses – fine arts, performance arts, music and theatre – via blended or distance learning. Several institutions referred to part-time provision in the arts and humanities, which have traditionally attracted well educated students motivated by general interest, as being particularly threatened by the ELQ issue.

The local context is particularly significant for part-time students and for understanding patterns of part-time provision. Part-time students usually attend an institution within an hour's commute of their home or place of work,<sup>33</sup> unlike most full-time students, who live away from home while studying.<sup>34</sup>

This chapter examines the role of the local labour market, industries and employers in both encouraging and constraining part-time provision and its expansion. Then we explore the significance of competing higher education providers in the universities' locality, and assess the importance of partnerships with further education colleges.

### **The local labour market, industries and employers**

The nature and composition of a university's local labour market and the make-up of the local industrial base and hinterland had a considerable impact on the scale and type of their part-time provision. Together, they shaped both their pool of potential students and opportunities for employer-related provision which, in turn, had been affected by the current economic climate. These three interconnected factors help explain the regional distribution of part-time provision, especially employer-related part-time study.

### **Local labour market and skills base of the local population**

The local labour market and the education and skills base of the local population throw considerable light on varying regional patterns of part-time provision. Charts 3 and 4 plot the proportion of the population in a city-region without a Level 4 qualification against the number of part-time students in that city-region. To some extent, therefore, these maps are a reflection of the educational attainment levels in each city-region.

The regional distribution of the graduate population (those with a Level 4 qualification) is very unequally distributed throughout the UK.<sup>35</sup> Also, as Table 9 shows, many part-time undergraduates already have a level 4 qualification. In 2007/08 nearly half of all part-time UK domiciled undergraduates' highest qualification on entry was a Level 4 or above.<sup>36</sup> Other research confirms that people with higher level qualifications are more likely to engage in some form of continuing education and training.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, city-regions with large graduate populations are more likely to have a higher demand for part-time provision of general interest courses, all other things being equal, and potentially higher levels of provision. This helps explain why Cambridge, for example, is the city-region with the highest 'other undergraduate qualifications' and has large numbers currently attending the Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge (Table 29).

Conversely, city-regions with low levels of educational attainment, below Level 4, would need very extensive part-time provision to compensate. This helps explain why, for instance, some city-regions in North East England were cold spots.

### **Local industry and employer-related provision**

The nature of local industries and employers sheds light on the regional patterns of part-time provision.<sup>38</sup> In the universities we looked at employer-related part-time provision consisted primarily of vocational courses, including foundation degrees and HNC/HNDs, continuing personal or professional development courses, as well as one-off tailored courses, and niche training courses.

As analysis based on the Labour Force Survey shows, part-time employed undergraduates work in a limited range of industrial sectors and most work in the public sector. Taken together, public administration, education, health and social work account for as many of 60 per cent of all part-time undergraduate students in employment.<sup>39</sup> The type of employment-related courses they undertake similarly reflects this sectoral distribution and is mirrored in the distribution of part-time undergraduates across broad subject areas.

It is no surprise, therefore, that by far the most prevalent employer-related and sponsored part-time provision delivered by the universities was targeted at the public sector workforce. Several institutions had contracts with their local health authorities and primary health care trusts and provided post-registration and specialist courses for the NHS. Other universities delivered courses for the Teacher Development Agency, especially in learning support and early years education. Local authorities and the police were also common clients.



Universities teaching such courses had benefited enormously from central and local government initiatives aimed at improving the skills of the public sector workforce. The need for such retraining was often prompted by changes within, for instance, the NHS.

There were a few exceptions to the dominance of public sector employer provision. For instance, one case study university has focused its employer-based part-time provision on a range of niche areas because there are no large centres of population in the region. It provides very specialist skills to the staff of a local nuclear waste management company. The decommissioning of a nuclear power station has provided opportunities for courses in technical and renewable engineering alongside courses in supply chain and logistics management. The nuclear waste management company has also contracted out its training to another nearby university, which provides a broad range of courses, including supervisory skills and leadership training.

We found that delivering education and training courses for one big private sector employer was the exception: one university in the Midlands, with a longstanding relationship with the local car industry and its supply chain, was still providing courses for employees. The institution also provided courses for public sector workers, especially the local authority.

Employer-related part-time provision tended to draw on large employers and establishments. Again this reflects national trends: large employers and establishments are far more likely to provide educational and training opportunities to their employees than small and medium-sized companies.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the presence of large local employers was no guarantee of opportunities to engage with such employers. A university with large multi-national companies in its neighbourhood had been unable to attract these employers because of the high staff turnover and the companies' desire for lower level qualifications in subjects outside the university's portfolio, such as marketing and customer relations.

Some case study universities did succeed in providing courses sponsored by small and medium-sized businesses. For example, two universities in the west and south-west reported working with a large number of small and medium-sized enterprises. One institution counted 50 employer links, 30 of which were in the private sector, covering a range of industries such as IT, creative and media. These employers offered one graduate internship each, and such links were used to generate more students, although it entailed a great deal of work.

Work-based learning programmes also created challenges in management, delivery and development, which often added to their costs and may deter some universities from engaging in such provision. Several institutions told us about the fragmentation of funding sources. The NHS and Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) have no centralised funding sources to pay for higher education; within the NHS, for instance, budgets are devolved to NHS trusts. One institution had negotiated contractual arrangements with 14 NHS trusts for health-related courses.

Usually, the pedagogy dictates how courses are taught, but, as one university told us, when devising bespoke courses for work-based learning, the delivery can be as important as the curriculum. This particular university put on courses for the police: because of the constraints imposed by officers' shifts and rotas, having a regular slot every week at the university was not feasible and affected how and where the course was delivered. What was taught had to be tailored to students' work environments.

Clearly, the local presence of large employers, often from the public sector has a huge influence on opportunities for universities to provide employer-related part-time provision. Conversely, as some pre-92 universities reported, the absence of an industrial hinterland, a rural location, and sparsely populated area accounted for their lack of part-time provision and employer-related provision in particular. Yet we noticed that some post-92 institutions, also in sparsely populated rural areas and lacking an industrial hinterland, were providing extensive employer-related provision. To understand these differences we must return to the universities' respective missions.

In the present economic climate some employer-sponsored part-time provision is at risk, especially with the prospect of cuts in public sector expenditure. Employer-sponsored education and training is particularly vulnerable at times of fiscal constraint, especially where such spending is perceived to be discretionary<sup>41</sup> and where training budgets are competing with other more pressing demands, such as in the NHS.

Several universities were already finding employers unwilling or unable to pay for vocational education and training. Another reported that its local NHS trust was now only willing to pay for those modules required for the job. Students wanting to take additional modules so that they could upgrade to a qualification, had to pay for the additional modules themselves. In the past, the NHS trust would have paid for the whole qualification.

Most of the universities providing some employer-related courses would like to expand this provision. The largest obstacles they encountered were employers' attitudes, concerns about the costs, and about the 'free rider' issue – not recouping training costs because, once trained, employees would leave – all familiar issues. They found that some employers preferred to recruit the skills they required rather than train up existing staff. Those universities that had tried to take advantage of additional co-funded employer-engagement student numbers had encountered all these difficulties.<sup>42</sup> Most had failed to enrol additional students because employers are very unwilling to contribute to the costs of courses, even in kind.

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### **Competing and complementary higher education providers**

It is interesting to see what can happen when a city-region with high part-time provision is next to a region with low provision. Plymouth is a hot spot while the adjoining city-region of Exeter is a cold spot. The low-levels of provision at Exeter and the extensive provision at Plymouth may mean that some part-timers in the city-region of Exeter commute to Plymouth. It may be that some of the part-time students recorded in the HESA data as attending a particular university live outside that university's city-region. Our statistical analysis of HESA data and the methods we have used to identify hot and cold spot regions (Charts 3 and 4) cannot quantify flows between city-regions.

We selected the universities at Exeter and Plymouth partly to obtain some insights into adjoining hot and cold spots, and specifically to ask whether such universities adopted any particular strategies in relation to other nearby universities. Neither Exeter nor Plymouth University considered themselves in competition with each other. Rather they saw themselves as having complementary approaches and had no desire to compete by offering courses that the other institution was providing. Indeed, Exeter's former law conversion course had been transferred to Plymouth because it fitted better into Plymouth's mission.

We found a similar approach among other universities: tacit agreements were reached, often because the neighbouring institution had a different mission and portfolio of courses. Cooperation facilitated provision by safeguarding market shares.

There were some case study universities who regarded other local educational providers as a real or potential threat to their provision and student numbers. Several universities reported that other institutions – especially further education colleges – with similar missions, were offering similar courses more cheaply and attracting more students. One of them acknowledged that another university 'mops up' a lot of part-time students who might be attracted to them. A few universities also singled out private sector suppliers as a threat to their continuing professional development provision, alongside professional bodies that wanted their own accredited courses, for example, BPP. There was particular concern about the possibility of private sector providers winning public sector contracts, and the substantial damage that this would inflict – especially in business and professional courses.

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### **Partnerships with further education colleges**

Some case study universities delivered all or some of their part-time provision through partnerships, usually with further education colleges (see Chapter 6). Such partnerships, many of which were longstanding and highly valued, offered considerable opportunities for part-time provision and tapped into student groups that some universities may not have easy access to. A few universities saw such partnerships as the only way to grow their student numbers.

However, such partnerships cannot on their own account for the amount of part-time provision at each university, and whether the university was in a hot or cold city-region. For instance, the University of Plymouth, in a city-region with high part-time provision, delivered most of its part-time courses in partnership with further education colleges but so did the University of Essex, which was in a region with low levels of provision.

What was more significant was the number of such partnerships. Universities with many partnerships tended to have more part-time students, especially those taking foundation degrees. And in turn, the volume of partnerships was often associated with an institution's legacy and mission.

This chapter focuses on how the previous Labour government's policies and those of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) have influenced part-time provision, mostly constraining rather than boosting provision. It discusses issues raised in the case studies as well as data from a survey of students.

The chapter analyses the signals embedded in the Labour government's and HEFCE's policies. It traces how priorities towards part-time provision have gradually shifted with a greater emphasis on vocational and employer-related part-time provision. More generally we look at HEFCE's funding model for the allocation of its teaching grants, exploring the targeted allocation for part-time students, the assumed fee income in the calculation of the assumed resource, and grant adjustments. The chapter also examines how tuition fees, government financial support for part-time students, and the issue of the number of student-funded places affect both the supply of, and the demand for, part-time provision.

### Signals and incentives from government and the funding council

The sole policy directed explicitly at part-time provision lies in HEFCE's funding methodology, specifically, the teaching grant which will be discussed shortly. However, part-time provision has benefited from other Labour Government policies. For example, the expansion of part-time higher education provision in areas such as health and education may be seen as an unintended consequence of the central and local government policy of improving skills in the public sector workforce. Many private sector providers have similarly benefited from this policy.

Two other initiatives have benefited part-time higher education provision. The lifelong learning networks (LLNs)<sup>43</sup> and the piloting of additional co-funded employer engagement student numbers<sup>44</sup> both aim to encourage greater vocational provision and employer engagement. Neither the lifelong learning networks nor co-funded additional student numbers (ASNs) were designed to promote part-time undergraduate provision. The case study universities' experiences of both initiatives were limited, and several had struggled to gain any additional co-funded student numbers.

The universities we spoke to offered mixed reports on the effectiveness of the lifelong learning networks. For some the lifelong learning networks had facilitated partnerships with further education colleges. One commented on how its new partnerships had brought extra capacity and welcome funding, for instance, for market research into employer needs. It has also brought people together around curriculum development. For others they had little relevance or were considered ineffective. Our evidence suggests that the policy's success depended on the existing portfolios, networks and missions of institutions.

Other Labour government higher education policies and priorities such as 'widening participation', have similarly benefited part-time providers, although part-time providers have not been the focus of such policies. The sole policy directed explicitly at part-time provision lies in HEFCE's funding methodology, specifically, the teaching grant.

HEFCE's part-time premium aside, universities stressed the lack of government or HEFCE policies aimed directly at promoting part-time undergraduate provision and incentivising such provision. Institutions committed to part-time study and students welcomed the Labour government's endorsement of part-time provision in various ministers' speeches and in documents such as the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills' 2009 document, *Higher ambitions*. They were concerned, however, about the lack of a coherent and concrete policy framework for supporting and encouraging all types of undergraduate part-time provision and qualification aims.

Most felt that part-time undergraduate provision had been very low on the Labour government's higher education agenda and always played second fiddle to full-time provision. They suggested that both government and HEFCE thinking focused too narrowly on full-time students and this was reflected in policies towards higher education.

Some universities stated that the government needed to decide whether part-time undergraduate provision was important and its growth a priority, and whether it was an alternative, or complementary to, full-time provision. If part-time study was central to the agenda for widening participation and increasing skills then the government had to clarify who was responsible for paying for it and encouraging its sustainability: employers' funding could not be relied on, particularly in the current economic climate.

Above all, everyone agreed that the government had to provide some additional financial incentives to institutions, both to maintain current levels of part-time provision and to expand provision; HEFCE's part-time premium was not an adequate inducement. None of the universities with low-levels of provision had any intention of changing their preference for full-time undergraduate (and postgraduate) provision, in the absence of clear financial incentives and additional student numbers, ring-fenced for part-time undergraduates.

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### The shifting public priorities towards part-time provision

Most case study universities suggested that several government and HEFCE policies had undermined some forms of part-time provision and directly contributed to its decline. They pointed to the prioritising of vocational courses and qualifications at the expense of liberal arts/continuing education provision. This prioritising of vocational education has a long history and is an important backdrop for understanding more recent policies, particularly ELQ. These policies have been prompted by the desire to ensure that universities meet the skills needs of a global knowledge economy and the needs of employers, as articulated in the 2003 White Paper, *The future of higher education* and more recently in *Higher ambitions* (2009).<sup>45</sup> In the latter document we also see another shift in government policy, with a greater prominence given to employers 'fund[ing] programmes from which they benefit in the form of more specialist staff'.<sup>46</sup>

Following the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) and the creation of HEFCE, government policies for funding part-time provision and continuing education have largely dictated the fortunes of this type of provision. A HEFCE circular issued in 1993 announced that as much as possible of non-vocational provision – essentially non-award-bearing work – was 'to become award bearing, or to carry credits toward an award'.<sup>47</sup> In other words, this provision was to be 'mainstreamed'. The circular made an important distinction between students registered on accredited courses and the funding of students who actually achieved a credit or qualification ('completions').

At that point both types of students were to attract HEFCE funding. HEFCE later tightened its definitions of student completion and eligibility for funding. In essence, credit-bearing components had to be part of a recognised award in order to be recognised for funding – only students who successfully complete their stated credit or qualification aim are funded.

The thrust of this policy was to favour more vocationally orientated provision over non-vocational provision in the liberal arts, which has been the bedrock of university continuing education departments. The attachment of HEFCE funding exclusively to students who complete their stated credit or qualification aim has added to the financial risks associated with such part-time provision. As we have seen, part-time non-completion rates are much higher than those of full-time students. This mainstreaming of non-vocational part-time provision also underlies recent policy developments affecting part-time provision.

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### Equivalent and lower qualifications (ELQ)

The introduction of the ELQ ruling in 2008/09 was seen by the universities we talked to as a major reason for the decline in part-time numbers and as a potential inhibitor to provision and further growth.

HEFCE no longer funds institutions for those students whose higher education qualification aim is equivalent or lower than their entry qualification (ELQ), with some exceptions. The government decided this because, 'While there may be much benefit to an individual, or their employer, in them retraining for a second qualification at the same level, this is not... as high a priority for public funding as support for students who are either entering higher education for the first time, or progressing to higher qualifications'.<sup>48</sup> The ELQ ruling was directed at both full- and part-time provision, but has disproportionately affected part-timers.

The government promoted the ELQ ruling as part of its agenda for widening participation. The main plank of its policy was to look to employers to co-fund courses and programmes of study to enable universities to prioritise the recruitment of students without a Level 4 qualification. In 2008, the House of Commons Select Committee on Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills stated,

'the ELQ debate can be seen as a surrogate debate about the involvement of employers funding higher education. It is clear, however, that as a result of the £100 million switch in resources, much of the funding given by one hand of government to assist part-time students will be taken by the other from those studying ELQs part-time'.<sup>49</sup>

As a temporary measure some universities gained additional HEFCE funding to compensate for their financial losses, and to ensure that the short-term viability of some part-time provision was not threatened and that entrants did not find their opportunities for part-time study suddenly reduced. However, not all the case study universities had received such funding; all those reporting a fall in student numbers attributed this to ELQ.

The universities that had obtained temporary funding were concerned about their long-term ability to recruit enough non-ELQ students to compensate for their eventual loss of income. Even universities that had seen a growth in their part-time numbers also were concerned about the lasting impact of ELQ on their provision and potential for growth. They anticipated that certain courses would close because they would not attract enough non-ELQ students while ELQ students would be unable or unwilling to pay the substantially increased fees that would need to be charged to reflect the full unsubsidised course costs.

ELQ has not affected all part-time provision equally. It seems to be having the greatest impact on liberal arts courses and qualifications delivered by institutions and departments providing extra mural studies and continuing education – the same types of provision and universities/departments affected by the mainstreaming of their non-vocational provision. Among the universities we looked at, the worst affected institutions, apart from Birkbeck and the Open University, were those with separate departments of continuing education and lifelong learning. In a city-region with low levels of part-time undergraduate provision, one such department had closed because it was deemed no longer financially viable. In two other universities, both in city-regions with high levels of provision, part-time courses were being reduced drastically. One university in 2007/08 had 7,000 part-time students representing 540 full-time equivalents taking ‘other undergraduate qualifications’ – primarily liberal arts accredited courses. It was in the process of reducing its provision to just 90 full-time equivalents.

These institutions firmly believed that they would be unable to recruit students if they started charging fees high enough to compensate for the loss of HEFCE funding and the evidence for this was already emerging.

In a city-region with high part-time provision one university had increased its fees for ‘ELQ’ students. When tuition fees for full-time students were raised to £3,000 in 2006, part-time students were charged pro-rata fees. In 2009/10, a module cost £537 and for an ELQ student a further £296. Part-time first-degree enrolments had fallen from 1,899 full-time equivalents in 2007/08 to 800 in 2009/10 while the number of ELQ students had fallen from 214 in 2008/09 to 56 in 2009/10. The most affected provision was employer-sponsored vocational part-time provision.

This university’s predicament highlights another shortcoming of the ELQ policy – the assumption that employers would meet the additional costs in tuition fees resulting from ELQ; such co-funding was not forthcoming, partly because of the recession and employers cutting down on their education and training budgets (see Chapter 8).

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### HEFCE funding methodology

The universities we talked to identified various elements of HEFCE’s funding methodology that they believed had curtailed their part-time provision.

### Part-time targeted allocations

The only mechanism directed explicitly at part-time provision is HEFCE’s teaching grant. HEFCE’s targeted allocations take into account some of the additional costs of teaching part-time students (see Chapter 7).

In 2008/09, HEFCE allocated £43 million out of its total teaching budget of £4,632 million to support part-time undergraduates. The amount is ‘determined by the funding previously associated with the part-time premium for undergraduates (including those studying for a foundation degree). This premium was calculated as 10 per cent of the unweighted part-time student full-time equivalent’.<sup>50</sup>

Universities with high part-time undergraduate provision criticised the size of the premium, arguing that it was inadequate to meet all the direct and indirect costs associated with part-time teaching. One university cited HEFCE research<sup>51</sup> that suggested that on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis the costs of part-time students to an institution could be up to 44 per cent more than a full-time student. This research concluded that the additional costs associated with part-time students arose from the administration and academic time involved.

There were different types of additional costs:

- some additional costs arose on a full-time equivalent basis
- some on a person (headcount) basis
  - and for some cost elements, the costs incurred for a full-time student were at the same level as those incurred for a part-time student
- additional costs fall relative to full-time funding, as the full-time equivalent rises, for example, additional costs of an 0.4FTE student were higher (in terms of relative addition to FTE0.4 funding) than an 0.7FTE student (in terms of FTE0.7 funding).

The shortfall between the part-time premium/allocation and the actual costs of providing part-time higher education, as calculated by this research, shows why universities whose part-time students make up a large proportion of their student body were at a financial disadvantage. Indeed, for some the inadequacy of the premium constrained further part-time growth.

The part-time premium was certainly not a large enough financial incentive to encourage universities with low levels of provision to enter the 'risky' part-time market or to increase any existing part-time provision, especially where they could rely on income from full-time provision.

### Assumed tuition fee income

Another element of the current HEFCE funding methodology that disadvantaged universities with high part-time undergraduate provision is the assumed income from tuition fees in the teaching grant. In the calculating the allocation, an adjustment is made for an assumed income from tuition fees paid by students, the Student Loans Company, local education authorities, employers and others. Several universities criticised this assumption because it further reduced the money they received from HEFCE, especially when compared with full-time provision.

The current assumed tuition fee income per full-time equivalent student is the same for both full and part-time students.<sup>52</sup> Nearly all universities actually obtain this assumed fee income for their full-time undergraduates.<sup>53</sup> However, this may not be the case for part-time students, especially where universities have decided to hold down the fees they charge part-timers because of concerns about its impact on participation and widening access. This financially handicaps part-time undergraduate providers in two ways.

- There may be a shortfall between the assumed fee income and the actual fee part-time providers charge – it may be lower than the assumed fee (for example, less than £1,255 in 2008/09)
- Since the introduction of variable fees in 2006 almost all universities now charge their full-time undergraduate students the maximum tuition fee, currently £3,225.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, they are receiving sums far higher than the assumed fee. However, only a minority of part-time providers have set their fees on a pro-rata basis of full-time fees.<sup>55</sup>

In other words, the assumed fee income within the current HEFCE teaching grant puts universities with a large proportion of part-time undergraduate provision at a serious financial disadvantage. Specialist part-time institutions such as Birkbeck and the Open University cannot cross-subsidise their part-time provision with income from full-time provision.

### Grant adjustment

HEFCE funding is linked to students completing their courses. Grants are adjusted where an institution has failed to retain the number of students for which the previous year's grant was allocated. Non-completion rates among part-time students are higher than for full-timers. Part-time providers may receive no HEFCE funding for students who do not complete their credit or programme qualification aim successfully.

Universities were concerned about their completion rates and they highlighted the rigidity of the current HEFCE funding methodology, which failed to promote flexible and part-time learning and to recognise achievement, irrespective of mode, type and place of study. Several universities called for modular or credit-based funding, which they believed would recognised student achievement and facilitate part-time provision and would provide greater flexibility for students to come in and out of part-time higher education. Their views echo the conclusions of the government's 2008 review of part-time study.<sup>56</sup>

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## Funding higher education teaching and research

The final and major factor affecting the pattern of part-time provision was the basic university funding framework. First, all had felt the effects of the cap on student numbers: the most popular universities had received far more applications than they could absorb, and several observed how this squeeze on university places contradicted the Labour government's stated higher education policies of expanding provision and widening participation. The most affected would-be students are those with lower 'A' level results and people wanting to study part-time – in other words those who are the primary focus of the government's widening participation strategies.

Most universities we spoke to had filled their funded places and nearly all had reached the upper limit of the tolerance band.<sup>57</sup> Unsurprisingly, all wanted additional student numbers (ASNs), irrespective of the extent of their part-time provision. Those already engaged in employer-related learning and fully engaged with the lifelong learning networks reported that they were able to take advantage of the additional student numbers associated with these networks. But even these additional student numbers were inadequate. The only way that universities committed to part-time provision could expand their provision was if they had additional student numbers.

Universities providing mainly full-time courses (for entrants with high A-levels) and with low part-time provision argued they would need earmarked additional student numbers if they were to provide part-time courses. They had no desire to use any of their full-time places for part-time provision, given that the former were far more lucrative and contributed to their priorities such as research excellence and improving their quality-related (QR) funding. Research potential was a particularly important factor in decisions about teaching programmes. Part-time programmes tended to be associated with less research-intensive subject areas, and therefore as unhelpful for the university's survival.

It is clear that government and HEFCE policies work differently for higher education institutions with different types of missions. This is not just for part-time provision, but the pattern and nature of all their provision – both full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate and their research. Universities with less of a research focus and with existing part-time provision responded to initiatives such as co-funded employer additional student numbers more than those with a strong research focus. They had to do so, because of their low income from research. Universities relying on their research income and reputation needed to take these more into consideration in their strategy. Some welcome such policies because they support and reinforce a diverse higher education sector, while others interpret them as perpetuating a hierarchical higher education sector.

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## Tuition fees

The tuition fees for full-time undergraduate courses are regulated; universities can charge whatever they feel the market will bear for part-time undergraduate courses. Universities repeatedly identified fees, especially when paid up-front rather than deferred, as a barrier to part-time provision and its growth and suggested that the rising costs of tuition had deterred potential students and led to employers reducing their sponsorship of vocational education and training. Indeed, it is within the context of fees that we see the interaction of both the supply of, and demand for, part-time provision.

## Universities' policies on fees

The universities that we looked at had a range of policies on tuition fees for part-time students. Most had increased their fees for part-time undergraduate courses since the introduction of variable fees for full-time students, in line with national trends.<sup>58</sup> Very few had increased them pro-rata and only a few, at the time of this study, had introduced a two-tier system of tuition fees for ELQ and non-ELQ part-time students. Most universities recognised that they would soon have to raise the fees for all part-time undergraduate students.

Universities argued that the level of fees they could charge depended on the nature of their part-time provision and the sort of students attending their courses. Universities with large numbers of employer-sponsored students tended to raise their fees more than those with low-income students or students taking non-vocational subjects.



As we have seen (Chapter 8), one institution had increased its fees both on a pro-rata basis to their full-time fees and had added an ELQ supplement. It attributed its fall in enrolments directly to the higher fees, competition from other providers with lower fees, and employers' unwillingness to pay higher fees. Others had closed courses or rationalised their part-time provision because they did not believe the market would bear full cost fees for ELQ students and they could not afford to cross-subsidise such students and courses.

Several universities had tried to cushion the impact of fees on their students. A few had introduced new or more generous bursary schemes targeted at part-time students. A university in a city-region with high provision but experiencing a fall in part-time student numbers had increased the number of instalments for the payment of fees from five to twelve over an academic year. Another was offering three modules for the price of two. They were also offering people 'taster' modules for just £75, which was proving particularly successful in law and counselling, as it encouraged some students to enrol for the full programme.

Most of the universities singling out fees as a barrier to participation that therefore affected their provision, in the same breath identified problems with government funded financial support for part-time undergraduates.

### The amount of tuition fees paid by students surveyed

A survey in 2008 of part-time students has yielded data on the amount of fee they paid and who paid for their fees.<sup>59</sup> The sample of 3,704 part-time students was drawn from 29 universities and consisted of undergraduates in their first or final year of study, aiming for a first degree, foundation degree or higher national qualification and studying a selected number of subjects (JACS subject code in brackets): engineering (H); technologies (J); social studies (L); law (M); business and administrative studies (N); education (X). This excludes all students taking 'other undergraduate qualifications'.

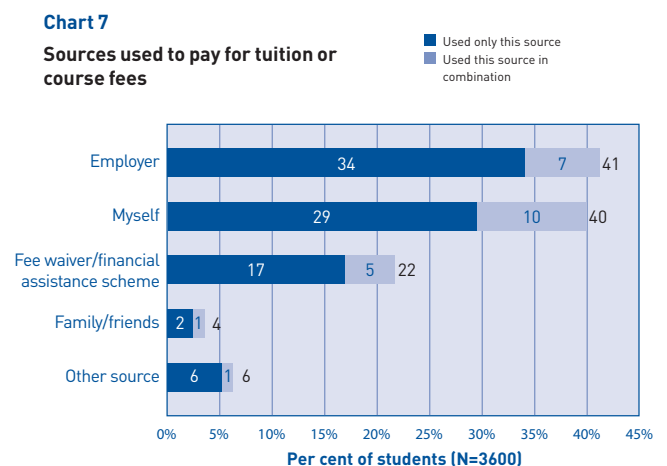
The study was conducted before the full impact of the recession was being felt.

The mean amount of tuition fees paid by the students surveyed was £1,166 while the median amount was £900 for the 2007/08 academic year. The 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Survey found similar levels of tuition fees (£1,006).<sup>60</sup> The amount of fees payable by the students surveyed depended on a range of characteristics, including qualification aim, subject of study, whether studying at the Open University and the intensity of study. The highest fees were for law (mean £1,646, median £1,500) while the lowest were for courses at the Open University (mean £910, median £680).

### Sources used to pay for tuition fees

Chart 7 shows the sources used to pay tuition or course fees in 2007/08. Overall 41 per cent of students received an employer contribution to their fees; employers paid all the fees for 34 per cent of students, and part of the fees for the remaining 7 per cent. The extent of employer support recorded in this survey was considerably higher than that reported in other student surveys and in the HESA data.<sup>61</sup>

Two out of five students paid at least some of their fees themselves, with 29 per cent paying all of their fees and 10 per cent having to pay part of their fees. More than one-fifth of students received some support from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme and in most of these cases this covered all of their fees (17 per cent) with just 5 per cent where the fee waiver or financial assistance scheme covered part of their fees. Only very few (4 per cent) had contributions to fees from family or friends or from any other sources (6 per cent).



Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount

Source: Futuretrack Part-time, 2008

## Employer contributions to fees

The survey like others before<sup>62</sup>, confirmed that employers were very selective in terms of who they were prepared to sponsor, favouring the most advantaged in their workforce. Table 20 shows the wide range of factors associated with receiving support from employers from the results of a multivariate logistic model. Students in higher paid jobs and those who already had a Level 4 or 5 qualification, and with medium to high household incomes – arguably, those least in need of employer support – were most likely to receive it. The students most likely to miss out were those most in need of help to improve their labour market position and human capital – those from low income households with poorly paid jobs, low qualification levels, and no experience of higher education. Instead, these students had to pay their fees themselves or rely on government grants.

**Table 20**

**Factors associated with employers contributing to tuition or course fees**

Factors associated with employer fee support	Factors associated with no employer fee support
Female	Male
White	Not white
Full-time employee	Part-time employee
Students from high- and medium-income household	Students from low-income household
Students with level 4 or 5 qualification	Students with level 3 qualification
Foundation degree or higher national students	First degree students
Students studying engineering or technology	Students studying law and education
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University
Students studying at least 50 per cent of full-time equivalent or intensity of study not reported	Students studying less than 50 per cent of full-time equivalent

Source: Futuretrack Part-time, 2008

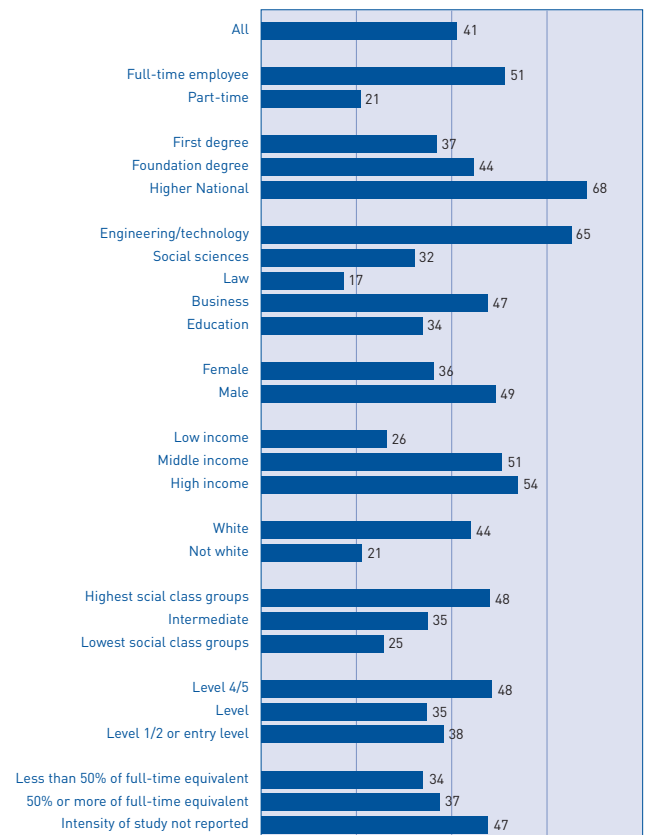
Chart 8 shows the percentage of students receiving employer support by some of these characteristics. Differences in nearly all of the characteristics presented are large. Typically they follow the patterns outlined in Table 20, except for differences by gender. Chart 8 shows a higher percentage of men (49 per cent) received an employer contribution to their fees than women (36 per cent), whereas this difference is overturned in the multivariate analysis when all other factors are taken into account.

Full-time employees (51 per cent) were much more likely to get fee support than part-time employees (21 per cent) and students undertaking higher national qualifications (68 per cent) were much more likely to get employer fee support than foundation degree (44 per cent) or first degree students (37 per cent). Engineering or technology students were the most likely to get employer support (65 per cent) and law students (17 per cent) the least likely.

Some socio-economic disadvantages were also amplified in both the descriptive and multivariate analysis. Students from low-income households, the lowest social class groups, non-white students and students who did not already have a level 4 or 5 qualification were less likely to receive employer fee support than students from middle- or high-income households, the highest social class groups, white students and students with a level 3 qualification or less.

**Chart 8**

**Percentage of students receiving employer contribution to tuition or course fees**



Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount

Source: Futuretrack Part-time, 2008

## Government-funded support for students

Government-funded financial support for part-time students, like tuition fees, affects both the supply and demand of part-time provision. All full-timers are eligible in principle for financial assistance with their tuition fees and maintenance, but provision for part-timers is far less generous; for a start, they have to pay for their fees upfront whereas full-timers are eligible for a student loan, repaid after graduation.

The case study universities repeatedly mentioned the inadequacy of financial support for part-time undergraduates. Most of their students received no government financial help and for those that did, the amount seldom met all their tuition fees and course costs. These shortcomings also affected the case study universities' tuition fee policies and how much they felt they could charge, especially in the absence of employer support. Many respondents remarked how the funding situation was unfair to part-time undergraduates.

### Part-timers' eligibility for financial support

Table 21, taken from the Direct.gov website, sets out the financial support currently available to part-time undergraduate students in England. Students are potentially eligible for two means-tested grants:

- a fee grant for tuition of up to a maximum of £1,210 with a varying amount depending on the students' intensity of study
- a course grant to meet the costs of books, travel and other course expenditure of up to a maximum of £260.

Eligibility is restricted to a narrow definition of part-time, namely, to part-time students:

- whose higher education qualification aim is not lower or equivalent than their existing higher education qualification on entry (who do not already have a Level 4 qualification or above)
- students studying 50 per cent or more of a full-time course across their years of study
- students with low household incomes – the grants are means-tested and depend on the students' own income, their partner's income, and the number of dependent children.

If a student has a partner, their partner's gross income is added to the student's income. Then, just like income tax, deductions are made from this amount as follows:

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| ■ Student's personal allowance                  | £16,510 |
| ■ Allowance for partner                         | £2,000  |
| ■ Allowance for first/eldest dependent child    | £2,000  |
| ■ Allowance for each subsequent dependent child | £1,000  |

To receive full support, in the 2009/10 academic year, a student's household income must be less than £16,510 (after the deductions listed above) and if it is between £16,511–24,915 help is available on a sliding scale, reducing first their tuition fee grant, and then their course costs grant.

Thus students may find that they are ineligible for this student support because of their existing qualification on entry, their intensity of study (studying less than 50 per cent), and/or their household income is too high. Access to support is not driven by financial need, but is determined initially by a student's existing qualifications and how many hours they study.

Table 21

Fee grant and course grant: rates for 2009/2010

Household income	Fee grant*			Course grant
	Course intensity 50-59 per cent	Course intensity 60-74 per cent	Course intensity 75 per cent+	
Less than £16,510	Full grant – £805	Full grant – £970	Full grant – £1,210	Full grant – £260
£16,510	£755	£920	£1,160	Full grant – £260
£16,511 to £24,915	Partial grant (at least £50)			Full grant – £260
£24,916 to £25,509	No grant			Full grant – £260
£25,510 to £27,505	No grant			Partial grant
£27,506 or more	No grant			No grant

Source: Direct.Gov student finance

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/Applyingforthefirsttime/DG\\_171530](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/UniversityAndHigherEducation/StudentFinance/Applyingforthefirsttime/DG_171530)

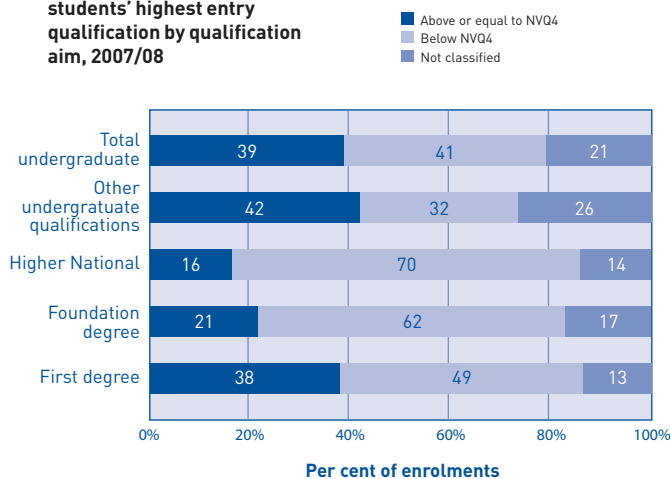
## Who receives financial support?

Let us look more closely at the criteria for eligibility for student support: student's qualification on entry, intensity of study, and household income.

Chart 9, using HESA data, shows the proportion of all English-domiciled undergraduates entering higher education with a qualification above Level 4 by their qualification aim. Almost 40 per cent of all part-time undergraduates are automatically excluded from financial support because their highest entry qualification was a Level 4 or above. Those aiming for an 'other undergraduate qualification' are particularly likely to be excluded while those studying for a higher national are least likely to be excluded.

Chart 9

**English-domiciled part-time students' highest entry qualification by qualification aim, 2007/08**



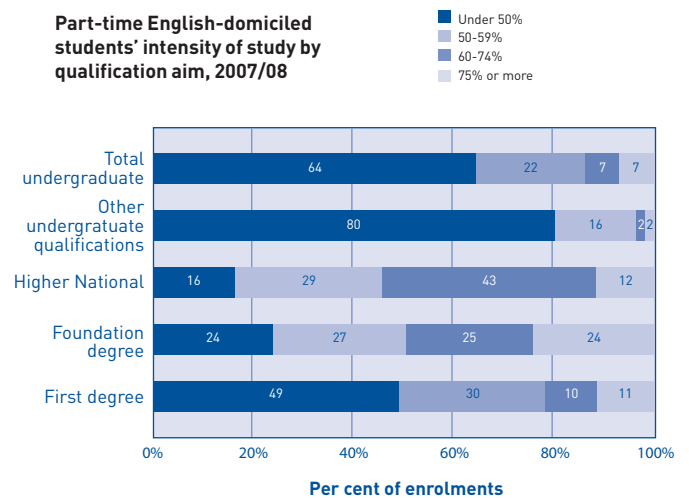
Source: Authors' calculations from HESA Student Record, 2007/08

Chart 10 shows that 64 per cent of all part-time undergraduates are automatically ineligible for government financial support because they did not study for enough hours. This proportion increases to 80 per cent of students studying 'other undergraduate qualifications' but falls to 16 per cent for students taking higher nationals.

Table 15 (see Chapter 4) combines these two sets of data, showing the proportion of all part-time undergraduates with an entry qualification above Level 4 studying by their intensity of study. There are some marked contrasts between undergraduate qualification aims in terms of both the entry qualifications held by part-time students and their intensity of study. The part-time students most likely to be excluded from grants – both because of their existing qualification and their intensity of study – are taking 'other undergraduate' qualifications.

Chart 10

**Part-time English-domiciled students' intensity of study by qualification aim, 2007/08**



Source: Authors' calculations from HESA Student Record, 2007/08

A part-time student's household income is the third criterion for receiving government financial support but there are no national data on the distribution of the household income of part-time students.<sup>63</sup> However, our recent survey suggests that approximately two-thirds of part-time undergraduates have annual household incomes of £25,000 and above.<sup>64</sup> Most would be ineligible for student financial support.

According to government figures, the combined effect of these three eligibility criteria meant that in 2008/09 only 10 per cent of part-time students received a fee and a course grant.<sup>65</sup>

## Government fee grants

The national survey, discussed above, revealed that in 2007/08 15 per cent of part-time undergraduate students studying at English higher education institutions received a government fee grant.<sup>66</sup>

Multivariate analysis that controlled for a range of student characteristics shows those factors affecting the likelihood of a student receiving a fee grant (Table 22). Those most likely to get such a grant were in their first year of study, female, lone parents, employed part-time or not employed at all, came from households with incomes of under £25,000 a year, had a Level 3 qualification or lower on entry to their course, were aiming for a first degree, studying education, and attending the Open University or a further education college.

**Table 22**

**Factors associated with students who receive a government fee grant**

Factors associated with receiving fee waiver or financial assistance	Factors associated with not receiving fee waiver or financial assistance
First year of study	Final year of study
Female	Male
Lone parents	Part of couple with no children
Employed part-time or not employed	Employed full-time
Students from low income household	Students from high and medium income household
Students with Level 3 qualification or lower	Students with Level 4 or 5 qualification
First degree students	Higher national students
Students studying education	Students studying engineering or technology
Studying at the Open University or a further education college	Not studying at the Open University or a further education college

Source: Futuretrack Part-time, 2008

### Government course grant

The survey data also revealed that one in five part-time students studying at a higher education institution in England received a government course grant in 2008. The multivariate analysis shows that the types of students more likely to receive a government course grant were similar to those who got a government fee grant, although age was a factor in course grant receipt. Differences by students' year of study – whether they were in their first year – a starter – or in their final year – a completer – were not evident (Table 23).

**Table 23**

**Factors associated with students who receive help via a government course grant**

Factors associated with receiving fee waiver or financial assistance	Factors associated with not receiving fee waiver or financial assistance
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Lone parents	Part of couple or single with no children
Employed part-time or not employed	Employed full-time
Students from low-income household	Students from high and medium income household
Students with Level 3 qualification or lower	Students with Level 4 or 5 qualification
No family member with a higher education qualification	Family member with a higher education qualification
First degree students	Higher national and foundation degree students
Students studying education	Students not studying education
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Source: Futuretrack Part-time, 2008

### Adequacy of government support

Students receiving a government fee grant were paying an average tuition fee of £1,038. The average government fee grant was £793 (Table 22). Around 43 per cent of students receiving a government fee grant had tuition fees higher than the fee grant they received; the average shortfall was £576, with a median value of £400, meaning that half of the students who received a government fee grant needed to pay at least £400 in fee costs from other sources.

The average course costs for students receiving a course grant were £242. Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of them found that their course grant did not meet all of their course costs; the average shortfall was £729, with a median value of £465, meaning that half of the students had course costs at least £465 higher than their grant.

Government help towards both fee and course costs clearly fails to meet the needs of a sizeable proportion of part-time students.

**Table 24****Shortfalls in government financial support for part-time students**

	Mean £	Median £	N
Value of government fee grant received	793	700	452
Total fee costs	1038	820	452
Percentage of students reporting fee grant less than fee costs	43		
Value of fee grant shortfall	576	400	193
Value of government course grant received	242	250	337
Total course costs	709	400	337
Percentage of students reporting course grant less than course costs	68		
Value of course grant shortfall	729	465	230

Base: All students in receipt of a fees or course grant

Source: Futuretrack Part-time, 2008

This chapter focuses on the universities' legacy and discusses the funding of universities and credit-based learning. It considers aspects of the local context, including employer-related provision and highlights the specific elements of risk experienced by institutions providing part-time higher education. Finally, it discusses the effectiveness of financial support for students.

### Universities' legacy and mission

The nature of a university's legacy and mission is a good indication of the probable levels of its part-time undergraduate provision and any prospects for future expansion. This does not mean that 'old' or 'new' university is a handy predictor for a university's involvement in part-time higher education. 'Old' universities tend to have less part-time provision than 'new' universities, especially employer-related vocational courses. Among our case studies several 'old' universities and even an 'ancient' institution have high levels of non-vocational liberal arts provision: some 'new' universities that we looked at have very little part-time undergraduate provision.

Several universities believed that to encourage part-time provision and its growth the university had to ensure a supportive environment that valued part-time undergraduate study and students. The creation and nurturing of such an environment was within the control of institutions but was largely dictated by a university's legacy and mission and the way in which these were integrated in the university's strategy, and embedded in its structures and operational arrangements. Potentially, however, levels of provision could be influenced substantially by funding policies towards higher education for part-timers.

### HEFCE's funding methodology and additional student numbers

Funding models influence what universities provide. The current model favours full-time undergraduates and provision at the expense of part-time students and part-time study. It is largely inappropriate for providing flexible part-time provision that can respond to the needs of employees and employers.

The only way to expand part-time undergraduate provision among institutions with a full complement of full-time undergraduates and little provision for part-time students is a strong steer from government about the importance of part-time study, backed up by additional HEFCE funding to incentivise undergraduate part-time study alongside earmarked additional student numbers. That is a very clear message from this research.

In our case studies we encountered universities – 'old' and 'new' – none of whom had any intention of changing their preference for full-time undergraduate (and postgraduate) provision, without clear financial incentives, and additional student numbers ring-fenced for part-time undergraduates. They had no desire to use any of their full-time places for part-time provision, given that the former were far more lucrative and less risky, and contributed to their priorities. Research-intensive universities with low part-time provision tended to see part-time study as associated with less research-intensive subject areas or as a distraction from other research-related activities.

Universities committed to part-time provision were also affected by a lack of additional student numbers and by the way that part-time undergraduate provision is funded. For most of these institutions, part-time provision was an important additional income stream, especially where demand for full-time places was low. Many of these universities believed that the part-time higher education market had potential for growth and were increasing their provision of non-HEFCE funded continuing professional development courses in so far as they were financially viable. With HEFCE-funded places in subjects where employers are reluctant to subsidise students (see below), such programmes had the potential for expansion.

These universities firmly believed that the current higher education funding and the HEFCE funding regime constrained their provision and their opportunities to expand. With greater resources they could:

- provide a more supportive infrastructure to facilitate the expansion of flexible part-time study, especially 'after hours' provision
- improve their ICT for delivering more flexible and distance learning
- devote more resources to student support to help raise student completion rates.

To assist such developments, universities argued for changes in the HEFCE funding methodology and teaching grant. They wanted a system that:

- recognised the 'true' additional direct and indirect costs of teaching part-time students and providing part-time study, especially the risks it entailed
- was based on their actual fee income rather than an assumed income
- recognised all student achievement.

They particularly favoured the introduction of a more flexible modular or credit-based funding system. Such a system would offer opportunities for the more efficient use of their resources and would help blur the distinction between full-time and part-time study, which is called for in *Higher Ambitions*.<sup>67</sup>

Funding changes were also required to ensure the survival of particular types of part-time provision, especially non-vocational continuing education. Such provision, typically, but not exclusively, found in 'old' pre-1992 universities with a long history of delivering such courses, was already at serious risk. Several universities had cut back such provision, or were in the process of ending it altogether. Policies such as ELQ, had, according to one respondent, 'been a killer'.

Universities with high part-time provision, especially those providing employer-related learning and with less of a research focus, had fully engaged with the lifelong learning networks. They recognised the importance of these opportunities to augment their income and had taken advantage of the additional student numbers associated with these networks.

They regarded the additional student numbers as inadequate. Most had struggled to obtain the additional students associated with employer co-funding. The only way they could expand their provision for part-timers was with additional student numbers.

Changes to the current funding model could:

- incentivise universities with low provision
- safeguard the survival of some current provision
- expand existing provision.

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## Credit-based learning

Although a national credit framework exists, so far it has not been fully implemented and recognised nationwide. The issue of how to fund it remains central. As the King review of part-time study has argued, there is a need for, 'a system of transferable credit-based learning and credit-based funding which recognises achievement irrespective of mode, type and place of study'.<sup>68</sup> This would help students to, 'enter and re-enter higher education and gain credit for study they have undertaken [and] will reward personal commitment and aid retention'.

The King review recommended that HEFCE, in its forthcoming review of funding, should include, 'the development of appropriate funding mechanisms to facilitate the growth of flexible learning – including the benefits and disadvantages of a move towards funding by credit'.<sup>69</sup> It called on HEFCE to develop 'an appropriate CAT [credit, accumulation and transfer] system which builds on current practices for the accreditation of prior learning' and which helps promote part-time learning.<sup>70</sup>

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## Local context, employer-related provision and co-funding

A university's ability to exploit opportunities for employer-related part-time provision depended on a series of inter-connected factors, largely, but not exclusively, outside their control. First, it hinged on the composition of the local labour market and the skills base of the local population. Universities located in city-regions with a highly educated workforce and local population could expect a higher level of demand for part-time courses. Much of this demand was from 'ELQ' groups for whom government funding has been withdrawn.

Secondly, a university's opportunities to develop employer-related provision depended on its subject portfolio and the nature of its local industries, specifically, on the extent to which the subjects mirrored, or met the needs of local employers, particularly large ones. The presence or absence of local public sector organisations was also a factor.



Nationally, 60 per cent of employed part-time undergraduates work in public sector industries. The most widespread employer-related and sponsored undergraduate part-time provision was targeted at the public sector workforce, reflecting government policies for improving the skills of this workforce. Therefore, the presence of local public sector employers and other large employers, alongside the subjects that universities offered to some extent explain the scale and nature of universities' employer-related provision. Nevertheless, the presence of large local employers was no guarantee of opportunities to engage with such employers. To understand the overall patterns of employer-related provision, we must return to the universities' respective missions.

The third factor affecting universities' opportunities to develop employer-related and sponsored part-time undergraduate provision and its expansion was employers' ability and willingness to pay for it. Employers do not always see a business case for sending their staff to university-run courses and the current economic climate has put employers' education and training budgets at risk. Universities had seen employers reducing or withdrawing their funding; their confidence in employer co-funded provision was limited and they had seldom benefitted from co-funded additional student numbers.

Several universities argued that to increase employer co-funding the government would need to find greater financial incentives and more imaginative ways of encouraging employers to pay for higher education. One suggested larger tax breaks for employers to promote education and training. Another focused on reintroducing the training levy paid by employers under the Industrial Training Act (1964). This would create a fairer mechanism for spreading the costs of vocational education and training within an industry, remedy the failure of the labour market to deliver sufficient skilled workers, and end the free-rider or poaching issue.

The final factor affecting the extent and growth of part-time undergraduate provision, but especially on employer-related and sponsored courses, was a university's ability and willingness to tap latent demand. This was a reflection of their commitment to such provision, and their mission. Some universities were able to uncover latent markets by delivering courses that brought direct benefits to employees and employers. The successful universities had designed their courses in a flexible manner, tailored their curriculum, contents and mode of delivery to employees' needs, as well as the ways in which they were assessed and validated.

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## Risk

A recurring theme throughout this report is risk and the volatility of part-time provision. Entering a new market, or expanding a current one with more flexible courses, requires a level of investment of time, equipment, facilities and other resources. Arguably part-time provision is an especially risky investment for a university when markets are volatile and demand is difficult to predict. The risks include:

- no returns on that investment or delayed returns
- competition from other providers
- a lack of status or esteem involved in such provision and hence a reputational risk
- failure to attract students
- students' failure to complete their stated credit or qualification aim, resulting in the university forfeiting HEFCE funding
- employers withdrawing funding, which in turn can have a destabilising effect on universities that have invested heavily in employer-led provision.

These risks are on top of the additional costs associated with teaching part-time students and delivering part-time study. The current funding model does not cover such risks. One university suggested that a special HEFCE fund should be created to encourage universities to develop and expand part-time provision. Others suggested that the enrolment of part-time students through UCAS might help so that eventually there would be market research information equivalent to the UCAS data for full-time provision.

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## Tuition fees and financial support for students

The final, and very clear message from this study is the need to reform financial support for students. This is needed not only to encourage students to participate but also to expand part-time higher education.

Only a very few students (around 15 per cent) receive government-funded financial support, and for a sizeable proportion of them, it is not enough. Universities are aware that part-time students struggle to pay their fees and many institutions have up till now refrained from increasing fees pro-rata to full-time fees. Arguably, many part-time providers have already lost out of the increased revenue arising from the introduction of variable fees for full-time students in 2006. If tuition fees for full-time students are increased following the current review universities will be under even more pressure to raise the fees that they charge part-timers.

It is essential that the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, headed up by Lord Browne, considers how any changes to student finances and the levels of tuition fees for full-time students affect the part-time sector. The review must consider how a fairer and more generous system of student funding can be introduced for part-time students and flexible learning. There also needs to be a flexible system of funding that allows students to come in and out of study and promotes flexible patterns of learning. The funding model cannot assume that because part-time students work, they can afford to pay for their studies or that their employers will pay. As our analysis shows, it tends to be the more 'privileged' in the workforce who receive this help with their fees. In addition, employers' help rarely covers other costs of study such as books, travel, etc, unlike the financial support that full-time students receive. (It is important that any reform of student financial support does not discourage employers from providing help to the minority of students.)

Two main options are possible. The first tinkers with current provision for part-time students –by, for instance, changing the eligibility criteria for fee and course grants and increasing their value in line with any increase in tuition fees.<sup>71</sup>

The more radical option is a mode-free system of student financial support, or one that mirrors in whole, or in part, financial support for full-time students. This would involve extending loans for tuition fees to part-time students, and perhaps the loans and grants for maintenance on a pro-rata basis. Loans for tuition would allow universities to increase their fees to part-timers on a pro-rata basis because students would no longer solely pay for their fees upfront.

Extending loans could be a risky strategy and may have unintended consequences, especially if full-time fees rise considerably. A 2006 study for Universities UK found that part-time students had very mixed attitudes towards loans; their take-up of loans is likely to be lower than that of their full-time peers.<sup>72</sup> If take up is low but students and employers are faced with far higher tuition fees this could reduce the numbers of part-time enrolments and employer-sponsored part-time provision, and eventually mean that provision gets cut back.

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## Conclusion

The previous Labour government's policy aimed to increase flexible, part-time provision of higher education. Currently provision is uneven; many institutions cannot satisfy demand and that demand may be being held down by the deterrent effect of current funding arrangements for part-time higher education.

How universities and students are funded are the most significant factors influencing provision. The current funding models favour full-time provision and undergraduates at the expense of part-time study and part-time students. The funding of both institutions and students is largely inappropriate for delivering flexible part-time higher education that can respond to the needs of employees and employers. They have limited the scope for expansion and change in patterns of provision. Because of the ELQ funding policy, there has been a decline in part-time opportunities for those already qualified, even if their study is aimed at adapting them for a changing labour market.

Employer co-funding has had mixed success, leaving many universities in a volatile, unpredictable situation, and resulting in the exclusion of some potential student groups, particularly those working in smaller enterprises, but more recently also those working in the public sector. Continuing professional development provision has been on the increase, but only for businesses and professions that can afford to pay premium fees. As a consequence, there are now clear incentives for mixed mode institutions to grow their full-time undergraduate provision and run down their part-time undergraduate programmes. In turn, this has contributed to a reduction in opportunities to study part-time and the decline in part-time undergraduate enrolments.

We have shown how policies can have different consequences, depending on particular institutions' missions and existing pattern of provision. Whether government policies result in the growth of part-time provision depends, not only on the overall volume of funding for institutions and students, but on the extent to which such policies perpetuate current differences between universities. Success in expanding part-time higher education will also depend on the extent to which policies address the issue of what constitutes 'useful' knowledge and to whom, and how far the distinction between vocational and non-vocational learning is meaningful. Unless policies change direction, there is a danger that future part-time study may not expand.

## Appendix 1 City-region hot spots and cold spots

**Table 25**

**England: city-region hot spots by qualification aim**

Total higher education undergraduate part-time in city region	Foundation degree First degree part-time	Higher national part-time	Other undergraduate part-time	part-time
Preston	Preston	Preston	Preston	Cambridge
Cambridge	Plymouth	Plymouth	Middlesbrough/ Stockton-on-Tees	Preston
Coventry	Worcester	Luton	Worcester	Coventry
Brighton and Hove	Bournemouth/Poole	Worcester	Norwich	Brighton/Hove
Plymouth	London*	Brighton and Hove	Plymouth	Middlesbrough/ Stockton-on-Tees

Case studies **only to be conducted in England** – so excluded regions outside of England – Chester excluded because includes Bangor.

\*London – chosen Birkbeck as largest provider in London of first-degree and other undergraduate part-time

**Table 26**

**England: city-region hot spots by number of students and universities**

City-region	Total higher education undergraduate part-time in city region	First degree part-time	Foundation degree part-time	Higher national part-time	Other undergraduate part-time	Total part-time undergraduate at each institution	Name of parent institution – often but not always co-located with campus postcode
Preston	634	2,264	976	454	4,940	8,634	University of Central Lancashire: main campus
Cambridge	7,378	416	206	28	525	1,175	Anglia Ruskin University: Cambridge campus
		22	-	-	7	29	Anglia Ruskin University: Homerton School of Health Studies
		-	-	-	6,174	6,174	University of Cambridge: entire institution
Coventry	13,439	1,298	63	212	3,099	4,672	Coventry University: entire institution
		335	96	-	8,336	8,767	University of Warwick: entire institution
Brighton/Hove	5,926	740	400	25	2,483	3,648	University of Brighton: main campus
		153	44	-	2,081	2,278	University of Sussex: entire institution
Plymouth	7,317	62	-	-	39	101	University College Plymouth St Mark and St John: entire institution
		1	-	-	-	1	Dartington College of Arts: entire institution
		3,010	1,389	351	2,465	7,215	University of Plymouth: entire institution
Worcester	2,190	665	217	151	1,157	2,190	University of Worcester: entire institution
Bournemouth/Poole	4,561	1,816	397	184	2,101	4,498	Bournemouth University: entire institution
		35	26	-	2	63	The Arts Institute at Bournemouth: entire institution
Middlesbrough/Stockton	12,011	1,417	884	1,121	8,575	11,997	University of Teesside: entire institution
		9	-	-	5	14	University of Durham: Queens campus, Stockton
London		3,488	350	0	10,733	14,571	Birkbeck College: entire institution

**Table 27**

**England: city-region cold spots  
by qualification aim – entire  
institutions**

Total higher education undergraduate part-time in city region	First degree part-time	Foundation degree part-time	Higher national part-time	Other undergraduate part-time
Other South West	Other South West	Exeter = 0	Exeter = 0	Other South West = 0
Other Eastern	Other Eastern	Other South West = 0	Luton = 0	Colchester
Colchester	Reading	Other Eastern (0.1 per cent)	Other Eastern = 0	Other Eastern
Gloucester/Cheltenham	Exeter	Gloucester/Cheltenham	York = 0	Manchester/Salford
Manchester/Salford	Other North West	Reading	Kingston upon Hull = 0	Gloucester/Cheltenham
Colchester	Stoke on Trent		Exeter	

**Table 28**

**England: city-region cold spots  
by number of students and  
universities**

City-region	Total higher education undergraduate part-time in city region	First degree part-time	Foundation degree part-time	Higher national part-time	Other undergraduate part-time	Total part-time undergraduate at each institution	Name of parent institution – often but not always co-located with campus postcode	
Other South West	78	57				57	University College Falmouth: entire institution	
		3				3	University of Exeter: Cornwall campus	
		18				18	Royal Agricultural College: entire institution	
Other Eastern	624						Cranfield University: main campus	
							Cranfield University: Silsoe	
		41			2	391	434	University of Bedfordshire: Polhill Campus, Bedford
				2			2	University of Essex: Writtle College
		94	5	1	88	188	188	Writtle College: Main campus
Colchester	626	9			155	164	University of Essex: Main campus	
		246	22	53	141	462	University of Essex: Colchester Institute	
		265	61		35	361	University of Chester: Warrington campus	
Manchester/Salford/Trafford	10,269		36			36	Royal Northern College of Music: entire institution	
		931			377	1,037	2,345	University of Bolton: entire institution
		32	240	1	10	283	University of Derby: Devonshire campus	
		105	65	78	95	343	University of Huddersfield: University Centre Oldham	
		1,047	73	72	1,390	2,582	Manchester Metropolitan University: main campus	
		1,714	202	337	380	2,633	University of Salford: entire institution	
		820	188		714	1,722	University of Manchester: entire institution	

City-region	Total higher education undergraduate part-time in city region	First degree part-time	Foundation degree part-time	Higher national part-time	Other undergraduate part-time	Total part-time undergraduate at each institution	Name of parent institution – often but not always co-located with campus postcode
Reading	2,729	23			155 540	718	Thames Valley University: Reading campus
		139	23		1,849	2,011	University of Reading: entire institution
Exeter	1,461	170	13	-	1,278	1,461	University of Exeter: main campus
Stoke on Trent	4,725	598	11	64	899	1,572	Staffordshire University: main campus
		517	51	35	369	972	Staffordshire University: Stafford campus
		375	0	0	1,806	2,181	University of Keele: entire institution
Luton	2018	902	532	5	1,479	2,918	University of Bedfordshire: main campus
Kingston upon Hull	7957	122	0	0	203	325	University of Lincoln: Hull campus
		885	107	0	6,640	7,632	University of Hull: main campus
Colchester	687	9	22	0	155	186	University of Essex: main campus
		246	61	53	141	501	University of Essex: Colchester Institute
Other North West	14,114	735	513	0	3,333	4,581	Edge Hill University: Entire institution
		375	125	0	2,737	3,237	Cumbria University [St Martin's College]: Main campus
		399	25	59	188	671	Manchester Metropolitan University: Crewe campus
		24	23	0	5,578	5,625	University of Lancaster: entire institution
Gloucester/Cheltenham	1,028	516	25	45	442	1,028	University of Gloucestershire: main campus

**HOT SPOTS – See Tables 25 and 26; Charts 2, 3 and 4**

**Preston [map ref 32 in Charts 2, 3, and 4]**

University of Central Lancashire is a hot spot for students taking all qualification aims. It has mixed subjects provision.

**Plymouth [map ref 30]**

University of Plymouth is a hot spot for total undergraduate provision: part-time students taking a first degree, foundation degree, HNC. Its first degree courses are dominated by subjects allied to medicine

**Worcester [map ref 37]**

University of Worcester is a hot spot for first degree; foundation degree; HNC. First degree courses are dominated by subjects allied to medicine and education.

Coventry [map ref 9] – hot spot for total undergraduates and ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications.

University of Warwick is a pre-1992 university with a very large number of part-time students taking ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications but very few part-timers taking a first degree.

Coventry University has a large number of students taking a first-degree and ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications. It has mixed subject provision

**Cambridge [map ref 5]**

University of Cambridge is a pre-1992 university and a hot spot for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications.

PLUS

Two specialist providers:

London/Birkbeck

Open University

**COLD SPOTS– See Tables 27 and 28; Charts 2, 3 and 4**

**Other South West**

University College Falmouth – Specialist Arts College

**Exeter [map ref 10]**

University of Exeter – is a cold spot for part-time students taking a first degree; foundation Degree; HNC, ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications. It has mixed subject provision and is located adjacent to Plymouth which is a hot spot. Exeter also has satellite campuses in other cold spots i.e. ‘other South West’.

**Reading [map ref 32]**

University of Reading is a cold spot for students aiming for a first degree; foundation Degree. Its courses are dominated by liberal arts subjects. Reading is located adjacent to some regions which are hot spots.

**Gloucester/Cheltenham [map ref 12]**

University of Gloucester – is a cold spot for total undergrads; and students aiming for a foundation degree; ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications. It has mixed subject provision, is a post-1992 university, and is located adjacent to hot spots

**Colchester [map ref 12]**

University of Essex is a cold spot for total undergraduates, for students taking a first degree; ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications. It also has satellite campus in another cold spots ie. ‘Other Eastern’

**Other North West** – region is cold spot for part-time first degrees

Edge Hill University

University of Cumbria [St Martin’s College]

**Table 29**

**Proportion of students studying part-time by qualification aim at case study universities**

	<b>All undergraduates: percentage part-time</b>	<b>First degrees: percentage part-time</b>	<b>Foundation degrees: percentage part-time</b>	<b>Higher Nationals: percentage part-time</b>	<b>Other undergraduates – percentage part-time</b>
Open University	100	100	100		100
Birkbeck	99	99	85	-	99
<b>Universities in hot spots</b>					
University of Warwick	48	3	100	-	100
Coventry University	35	12	40	47	96
University of Central Lancashire	33	12	36	97	71
University of Plymouth	32	21	23	63	70
University of Worcester	32	15	45	36	64
Cambridge University	28	-	-	-	98
<b>Universities in cold spots</b>					
University College Falmouth	3	3	-	-	-
University of Exeter	6	2	3	-	99
University of Reading	19	2	9	-	100
University of Gloucestershire	17	9	12	26	97
University of Essex	17	4	32	75	84
University of Cumbria / St Martins College	46	12	60	100	85
Edge Hill University	50	10	71	-	85
All universities	33	16	48	52	82



- 1 H M Treasury (2006) *Prosperity for all in the global economy: World class skills* [Leitch Review of skills] London: HMSO
- 2 B Ramsden and N Brown (2008) *The future size and shape of the higher education sector in the UK: demographic projections*, London: Universities UK
- 3 National Audit Office (2008) *Widening participation in higher education* London: Stationery Office
- 4 E Pollard, P Bates, W Hunt, and A Bellis, (2008) *University is not just for young people: Working adults' perceptions of and orientation to higher education*, Research report, 08 06 London: DIUS
- 5 Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2009) *Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy*, London: Stationery Office
- 6 *Ibid*
- 7 C Callender, D Wilkinson, and K Mackinon (2006) *Part-time students and part-time study in higher education in the UK: A survey of students' attitudes and experiences of part-time study and its costs 2005/06* London: Universities UK/Guild HE
- 8 Universities UK (2006) *Part-time students in higher education – supporting higher-level skills and lifelong learning* Policy Briefing, London: Universities UK
- 9 Our assessment of the extent of part-time higher education provision at regional level is solely based on data about higher education institutions. It does not take account of higher education courses provided by further education colleges.
- 10 Some of the most significant differences relate to the funding methodology and student financial support, and other policies introduced by HEFCE, for example, ELQs
- 11 For further details of this study see [http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/hecsu.rd/futuretrack\\_196.htm](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/hecsu.rd/futuretrack_196.htm) and for the first report see C Callender, R Hopkin, and D Wilkinson, (2010) *Futuretrack: Part-time students – career decision-making and career development of part-time higher education students* Manchester: HECSU
- 12 The HESA definition of full-time students is those who are normally required to attend a higher education institution for at least 21 hours per week over at least 24 weeks per year of study, or who are on thick or thin sandwich courses, or are on a study-related year away from their institution
- 13 Universities UK (2006) *op cit*
- 14 Students classified to other EU and other overseas domiciles have been aggregated together in Table 1 to avoid the complications caused by the accession of ten new EU countries in 2004 and two more new EU countries in 2007–08
- 15 Note that the further education student numbers shown in Chart 1 refer to higher education courses which are provided directly by further education institutions. Higher education students on courses franchised out by higher education institutions to further education institutions are included in the HESA data shown in Tables 1 and 2. The data underlying Chart 1 should be interpreted with caution due to potential inconsistencies over time in the underlying data obtained from higher education institutions and further education colleges.
- 16 This compares with as many as 78 per cent of full-time students on first-degree courses in the same year who held A levels or equivalent as their highest qualification on entering higher education.
- 17 Notes to Table 15:  
Classification of entry qualifications:  
**Above or equal to NVQ4:**  
Higher degree of UK institution  
Postgraduate diploma or certificate, excluding PGCE  
PGCE with QTS/GTC registration  
PGCE without QTS/GTC registration  
Postgraduate equivalent qualification not elsewhere specified  
Undergraduate qualifications with QTS  
First degree of UK institution  
Graduate of EU institution  
Graduate of other overseas institution  
GNVQ/GSVQ Level 5  
NVQ/SVQ Level 5  
Graduate equivalent qualification not elsewhere specified  
Foundation degree  
HNC or HND (including BTEC and SQA equivalents)  
Dip HE  
GNVQ/GSVQ Level 4  
NVQ/SVQ Level 4  
Foundation course at higher education level  
Other higher education qualification of less than degree standard  
**Below NVQ4:**  
A level equivalent qualification not elsewhere specified  
Any combinations of GCE A/SQA Higher/SQA Advanced Higher & G  
GNVQ/GSVQ Level 3  
NVQ/SVQ Level 3  
ONC or OND (including BTEC and SQA equivalents)  
Foundation course at further education level  
Access course (QAA recognised)  
Access course (not QAA recognised)  
Baccalaureate  
GCSE/O level qualifications only; SQA O grades and standard grades  
Other non-advanced qualification  
NVQ/SVQ Level 2  
Diploma in Foundation Studies (Art & Design)  
Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (APEL/APL)  
Mature student admitted on basis of previous experience  
Advanced Modern Apprenticeships  
Other non-UK qualification, level not known  
Student has no formal qualification  
**Not classified:**  
Open University credit(s)  
Other credits from UK higher education institution  
Certificate or diploma of education  
Professional qualifications  
Not known
- 18 Note that this estimate of the extent of higher education provision by further education colleges refer to students from all domiciles, not just UK domicile.
- 19 See Table 4 in HEFCE (2008), *Foundation degrees: Key statistics 2001-02 to 2007-08*, Issues Paper 2008/16, Higher Education Funding Council for England.
- 20 See Table 5 in LSC (2008), *Further education and the delivery of higher-level qualifications*, Learning and Skills Council, 2008
- 21 Note that the Government Office classifies Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as regions but they are countries.
- 22 C Callender, D Wilkinson, and K Mackinon (2006) *op cit*
- 23 An analogy can be made with UK 'travel-to-work areas' which are defined on the basis of estimates that at least 75 per cent of the resident economically active population works in the area and at least 75 per cent of everyone working in the area actually lives in the area. These travel-to-work areas tend to be dominated by the commuting journeys of relatively low- and medium-skilled members of the workforce, unlike the city-regions defined by Robson et al (2006), which overlap with the commuting patterns of most managers and professionals.

- 24 A Scott, (2005) *City-regions: economic motors and political actors on the global stage*, UCLA: Department of Public Policy and Department of Geography.
- 25 B Robson, R Barr, M Coombes, K Lymporopoulou and J Rees, (2006) *A Framework for city-regions: Working Paper 1, Mapping City-Regions*, London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)
- 26 Combining Derby with Nottingham
- 27 Note that Table 19 also includes regions defined as 'Other South East', 'Other West Midlands', etc. These categories comprise local authority districts that do not belong to any of the city-regions. As such, they do not have any meaning in terms of potential travel-to-study areas, and are included here solely for completeness. Note also that very little weight should be attached to the zero scores shown for Milton Keynes since this reflects our decision to exclude Open University students from the analysis.
- 28 A Crosland (1965) Lecture at Woolwich Polytechnic, 27 April Quoted in R Bell, G Fowler and K Little (eds) (1973) *Education in Great Britain and Ireland* Routledge & Keegan Paul/Open University Press p 241
- 29 P Scott, (1984) *The crisis of the university* London: Croom Helm
- 30 Callender et al (2006) *op cit*
- 31 HEFCE (2009) *Part-time first degree study: Entry and completion* Issues paper 2008/18 Bristol: HEFCE
- 32 HESA Performance indicators [http://www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/performanceIndicators/0708/t5\\_0708.xls](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/performanceIndicators/0708/t5_0708.xls) Accessed 27/11/2009
- 33 Callender et al (2006) *op cit*
- 34 Nationally only about a 20 per cent of young full-time first degree entrants live at home, although there are some regional differences, with a higher proportion of students studying at institutions in Greater London living at home and those who before they started their degree lived in the North East. See HEFCE (2009) *Patterns in higher education: living at home*, Issue paper 2009/20 Bristol: HEFCE
- 35 K Bishop and G Mason, (2010) *Adult training, upskilling and reskilling*, London: Centre for Learning and Life-Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies.
- 36 Derived from Table 7
- 37 F Green, and S McIntosh, (2006) *Non-certified learning and skills: Variation across sectors and countries and links to productivity*, DTI Research Report 06/1670
- 38 For a more comprehensive analysis of employers' attitudes to part-time undergraduate study, see Mason G (2009, forthcoming) *Employer perspectives on part-time students in UK higher education* Manchester: HECSU
- 39 Mason G (2009) *Employer perspectives on part-time students in UK higher education* Manchester: HECSU
- 40 Green and McIntosh (2006) *op cit*
- 41 For a more detailed study specifically on employer engagement see M Wedgewood (2008) *Higher Education for the Workforce: Barriers and facilitators to employer engagement* DIUS Research Report 08-04; K. Bishop and G Mason, (2009) *What is happening to employer-provided training in the recession?*, London: Centre for Learning and Life-Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies
- 42 According to the LLNs website <http://www.lifelonglearningnetworks.org.uk/> Accessed 03/12/09 LLNs' focus on progression into and through vocational education. They aim to create new learning opportunities; forge agreement across institutions on how qualifications are valued; and produce publicity to help people understand how they can progress through the system. Networks will clarify existing progression opportunities and engage in collaborative curriculum development in order to meet the needs of the vocational learner. For details of an initial evaluate see B Little and R Williams (2008) *Interim evaluation of lifelong learning networks*, Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England
- 43 HEFCE launched a workforce development initiative with two related goals – the design and delivery of higher education courses in partnership with employers, and to increase the number of learners in the workplace supported by their employers. The programme will run from 2008–2011. One element of the programme is co-funded ASNs, which are additional student numbers (ASNs) allocated at a lower rate of funding than 'full funded' ASNs, normally at between 50-75 per cent of a full-time-equivalent (FTE) student. HEFCE require the higher education institution or further education college to secure from an employer the remaining percentage. Employers can make in-kind contributions towards the costs of higher education
- 44 Department for Education and Skills (2003a) *The future of higher education*. Cm 5735, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office; BIS (2009) *op cit*.
- 45 BIS (2009) *op cit* p 40
- 46 HEFCE (1993) Continuing Education Circular 18/93 p 4.
- 47 Letter from John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 7 September 2007
- 48 House of Commons (2008) *Withdrawal of funding for equivalent or lower level qualifications (ELQ)* Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee, Third Report of Session 2007-08, Volume 1, HC 187-1, Stationery Office, London
- 49 HEFCE (2008) *Funding higher education in England*, Bristol: HEFCE p 18. The premium was first announced in June 2004.
- 50 JM Consulting Ltd (2003) *The costs of alternative modes of delivery* [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2003/rd14\\_03/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rdreports/2003/rd14_03/) Accessed 12/6/2009
- 51 In 2008/09 this was £1,255 for full-time undergraduates and for part-time students on courses without regulated fees: HEFCE (2008) *op cit*.
- 52 In 2009/10 all but a handful of higher education institutions charged the maximum tuition fee of £3,225 for their first degree courses although there was greater variation for foundation degrees and higher education delivered by further education colleges.
- 53 See footnote above
- 54 Universities UK (2009) *Variable tuition fees in England: assessing their impact on students and higher education institutions* A fourth Report, London UUK
- 55 C King (2008) *Part-time study in higher education* A report commissioned on 28 May 2008 by John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, as a contribution to his review of the future of the higher education sector. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/HE-part-time-studies.pdf> Access 06/12/2009
- 56 According to HEFCE, the tolerance band gives higher education institutions flexibility and helps to minimise the accountability burden. Specifically, 'this flexibility is both in the nature of the provision institutions offer to students within broad subject areas (for example, in terms of course content, staffing structures and methods of delivery) and in allowing them to make some changes in the mix and volume of student numbers without financial implications.' HEFCE (2008) *op cit* p 10
- 57 Universities UK, (2007) *Variable tuition fees in England: Assessing their impact on students and higher education institutions*. London: Universities UK
- 58 For the full report see C Callender, et al, *op cit*
- 59 Johnson C, Pollard E, Hunt W, Munro M and Hillage J (2009) *Student Income and Expenditure Survey 2007/08 English Domiciled Students* DIUS Research Report 09 05 Nottingham: DIUS
- 60 The 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Survey, which only includes students studying 50 per cent of an FTE and with an entry qualification below Level 4, found that a third of students received employer contributions towards their tuition fees

- 62 Woodley A (2004) *Earning, learning and paying: the results from a national survey of the costs of financing of part-time students in higher education*, DfES Research Report RR600, Nottingham; Callender et al (2006) *op cit*; Johnson et al (2009) *op cit*
- 63 Data are available on their earnings from, for instance, HEFCE's destinations surveys.
- 64 Callender, et al *op cit*
- 65 Hansard (2010) Written answer - Higher Education: Part-time Education, Column 844W, 16 Mar 2010  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100316/text/100316w0028.htm> Accessed 20/03/10
- 66 Callender et al *op cit*
- 67 BIS (2009) *op cit*
- 68 C King 2008 *op cit* para 37
- 69 *Op cit* Recommendation 9
- 70 *Op cit* Recommendation 10
- 71 For such a discussion see A Fazackerley, C Callender, J Chant, and D Wilkinson, (2009) *Educating Rita? A model to address inadequate state support for part-time students* Research Note, London: Policy Exchange
- 72 C Callender, D Wilkinson, and K Mackinon (2006) *op cit*



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