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Issues paper

This report is for information

This report describes key characteristics of foundation degree programmes and students. It covers the trends in student numbers, the characteristics of programmes, attributes of students, students' feedback, progression and qualification rates, progression to further study and employment outcomes, and support from employers.

Foundation degrees

Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07

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Foundation degrees: key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07

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Summary

Purpose

1. This document describes the characteristics of foundation degree programmes. The attributes, progression, achievement, attitudes and post-qualification outcomes of students on those programmes, and the support they received from their employers, are also presented.

Key points

2. In the academic year 2001-02 the first students entered programmes leading to a new qualification – the foundation degree. In 2006-07 over 60,000 students were estimated to have registered, or to be registered, on these programmes. This report describes this provision with statistics derived from the data sets collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and through the National Student Survey.

3. Apart from tracing the growth in numbers of students and entrants, we have not attempted to create any time series. For each statistic we have presented the most recent set of data that can be described. For example, employment outcomes can only be derived for those students who started their foundation degree programmes in 2003-04 or earlier. This means that some of the results are based on relatively small numbers, and they relate to early foundation degree provision. Future reports will update this analysis and, over time, reveal any trends in the characteristics of the students and their programmes of study.

Selected results

4. Here we set out a small selection of this report's results. Further details can be found in the main sections of the report. In addition, Annex C provides a context for these statistics, with versions of the main report tables for students on Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes, and undergraduate study in general.

Characteristics of foundation degree programmes

5. For home entrants to programmes in the academic year 2004-05 we found:

- 62 per cent studied full-time
- 46 per cent were taught wholly or partly at higher education institutions (HEIs) and 54 per cent wholly at further education colleges (FECs)
- almost half were studying the three most common subjects: education, business and art and design
- 95 per cent of full-time students were on programmes of two years or shorter
- 72 per cent of part-time students were on programmes of three years or shorter
- distance learning was the main means of study for 15 per cent of part-time students.

Student attributes

6. For home entrants to programmes in the academic year 2004-05 we found:

- 57 per cent were female
- 64 per cent were aged 21 or over when they started their course
- the proportion of entrants from low participation neighbourhoods was higher than generally found in undergraduate programmes.

Highest qualification on entry

7. The data on entry qualifications are limited. We can only estimate the proportion of foundation degree students with A-levels at between 10 and 33 per cent, with the upper end of the range being the more likely. Sixteen per cent had higher education qualifications on entry.

8. There was no evidence of entry through advanced apprenticeships. Entry through National Vocational Qualifications could not be identified because of limitations in the data collection. Seven per cent of entrants in 2004-05 were recorded as entering through accreditation of prior experiential learning and these were likely to be following a vocational work-based route. This may also be true for students whose highest qualification on entry was recorded as a Level 2 qualification, or 'other' or 'unknown', or having no qualification; these together account for 31 per cent of the 2004-05 entrants.

Student feedback on the quality of programmes

9. Seventy-six per cent of students in their final year, or a significant way through their course, and who responded to the 2006 National Student Survey, agreed with the statement, 'overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course'.

10. Just over half (52 per cent) agreed with the statement, 'the course is well organised and is running smoothly'. Further analysis of the responses, and comments made by students, suggest that there were organisational problems with some programmes in the year of their introduction.

Progression through foundation degree programmes

11. Our analysis of students' progression through their foundation degree courses was based on students who studied programmes following a standard academic year and were of specific expected length, and who were registered at HEIs. (The data on students registered at FECs was not sufficient to estimate qualification rates. We did establish that the rates of continuation from the year of entry were somewhat lower for students registered at FECs than those registered at HEIs.)

12. For entrants in 2003-04 following a full-time, two-year programme, 50 per cent received a higher education (HE) award by 2004-05. Almost all of these were foundation degree awards. A further 27 per cent were still studying at HE level, mostly for a foundation degree. For part-time students on three-year courses who entered in 2002-03, slightly lower proportions of students had received an HE qualification (48 per cent), or were still studying at HE level (30 per cent) by 2004-05.

13. More than one in five part-time entrants were on two-year programmes. However, only 29 per cent of these students actually qualified with an HE qualification within two years. The two-year, part-time option seems a very ambitious timescale, and prospective students should be aware of this. After a further third year the qualification rate for these students was similar to that for full-time, two-year students after two years.

14. Most entrants in 2003-04 who continued studying towards a foundation degree in 2004-05 were registered at the same institution. Of the few students that did change institution, most did not have to start again at the standard entry point for their programme.

Progression from foundation to honours degree programmes

15. Over half (54 per cent) of the students registered at an HEI who qualified with a foundation degree in 2003-04 went on to study an honours degree in 2004-05.

16. Most students continued their studies registered at the same HEI, and of these only 3 per cent were effectively 'starting again' by entering at the beginning of the programme. Eighty-one per cent of students going on to honours courses were credited with the equivalent of full-time study for two years on an honours degree programme. For the minority of qualifiers who changed institution, 11 per cent entered at the beginning of the new programme, while 70 per cent were credited with the full two years study or more.

17. Of those foundation degree qualifiers registered at an HEI who went into the final year of an honours programme in 2004-05, 71 per cent were reported as graduating in that year.

After qualifying: employment outcomes

18. Information on employment outcomes is based on all the students who qualified with foundation degrees at HEIs in 2004-05 and responded to the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. In interpreting these results it is important to note that the DLHE survey takes place six months after qualifying. It is likely that the character of the respondents' employment will change over the first two or three years after qualifying. We found:

- a. Nearly half of the foundation degree qualifiers in employment were in graduate jobs, with about 90 per cent stating 'positive' reasons for taking the job.
- b. Apart from male qualifiers from part-time study, salary levels were low. The median pro rata salary was typically £14,000 to £15,000 per year for full-time male and both full- and part-time female qualifiers.

19. However, the scenario 'finish studying, start working' does not apply to most foundation degree qualifiers. Most foundation degree qualifiers have the same employer as before and/or during their period of study. Many foundation degree programmes are designed for associate professionals such as health and social carers, nursery supervisors and teaching assistants, who are often in low paid occupations.

Employer support

20. From the DLHE survey we found that most 2004-05 qualifiers from part-time study (77 per cent) had some support from their employers, such as study leave, but only 28 per cent received any financial support.

21. From the student records we can estimate the proportion of part-time students at HEIs that have their fee paid by their employers at 23-26 per cent (depending on various assumptions). The proportion of students at FECs whose employers pay the fees is about half this. Employer fee payment is much less common for full-time students.

Conclusions and policy implications

22. This report provides a context for those developing future policy for foundation degree provision. It may also shed light on the wider issues of encouraging and developing employer engagement. In general the evidence does not lead directly to recommendations on what should be done. However, we have drawn some tentative conclusions and highlighted some policy implications.

Growth of foundation degree provision

23. There is no clear trend from which to extrapolate future student numbers. However, even if there were no further increases in the numbers of entrants, we would expect total student numbers to rise to nearly 80,000.

24. It was envisaged that the bulk of the expansion to increase participation in higher education to 50 per cent would come through new types of qualification, in particular foundation degrees. The growth of foundation degrees contributed 1.3 percentage points to the higher education participation rate in 2004-05. We have estimated that to achieve the 50 per cent participation target solely through foundation degree expansion we would need student numbers to increase to over 300,000. To reach this figure in the medium term would entail a marked acceleration of growth from the increases achieved so far.

Widening participation

25. The evidence suggests that foundation degrees will both attract people from a 'broader range of backgrounds' and provide alternative routes into higher education for those who are not the 'traditional A-level school leaver', as envisaged in the original government consultation.

Organisation of courses

26. There are indications that, in some cases, the rapid growth in foundation degree provision may have had an adverse impact on student experience, with teething problems affecting the organisation and smooth running of courses. Institutional planners, and national and regional policy makers should bear this in mind when considering further growth.

Balancing study with work and other responsibilities - flexible provision

27. It was envisaged that foundation degrees would be flexible. This entailed making it possible to combine study with full-time work, through part-time provision and credit schemes which would facilitate transfers between courses.

28. In 2006-07, there was a marked growth in part-time provision, though most (58 per cent) entrants were still full-time. Fourteen per cent of students who start full-time study change to part-time in their second year, though over half of these are repeating part or all of the first year programme. Six per cent of students who start full-time study change to part-time study and progress through the programme.

29. Few students transfer from one institution to another, but when they do, they usually progress, so some sort of recognition of previous study, through a credit scheme or otherwise, must be operating.

30. Comments made by students through the National Student Survey suggest that flexibility may not be the only, or even most important, feature to help them juggle work, study and other responsibilities. They point to the need for stability, for a timetable which is known well in advance and not subject to change.

Progression and achievement

31. We need further sets of data to get a full picture of students' progression and achievement, but the initial results are promising. The one possible cause for concern is the results for students on highly intensive two-year, part-time courses. However, as long as there are ways to extend study time, and evidence suggests there usually are, there is no harm in aiming to complete in two years. Prospective students should be aware though that they are likely to need more time to complete.

32. The aim to provide smooth progression to honours degrees seems to have been achieved in large measure. There is some evidence that a minority of students may have difficulty with the transition, but the picture is unclear and we require further analysis from later data collections.

Support from employers

33. Most full-time, and even part-time, students do not get their tuition fees paid by their employer, or any other financial support. This suggests that the recent government proposal (Leitch 2006), for employers to contribute significantly more money than the fee, would entail a dramatic change in employers' attitudes to their employees on foundation degree courses.

Action required

34. No action is required in response to this document.

Introduction

35. In February 2000 the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment launched a consultation on proposals for a new higher education (HE) qualification, 'foundation degrees' (DfEE 2000). At the same time an expert group was established to develop these proposals, taking into account the responses to the consultation. By July of that year, the details were worked out sufficiently for HEFCE to publish a prospectus (HEFCE 2000a).

36. The new qualification was to be at a level below honours degrees¹, and would normally be awarded after two years of full-time study, or an equivalent longer period for part-time students. Foundation degrees were to be awarded by, and only by, higher education institutions (HEIs). Initially, foundation degree students needed to register with HEIs, although they could be taught at a further education college (FEC) under a franchise arrangement. Later, provision for students registered with an FEC on foundation degrees was also recognised and funded.

37. It was appreciated that there already existed a range of HE qualifications below honours degree level. The intention was that, over time, foundation degrees would become the main qualification at this level.

38. The development of foundation degrees followed from a number of policy concerns. Firstly, a shortfall was identified in the numbers of people with intermediate higher technical and associate professional level skills, while provision that might be expected to meet this shortfall, such as programmes leading to Higher National Diplomas and Certificates (HNDs and HNCs), was in decline. Then there was a need to better align the content and organisation of programmes with what employers required. Finally the proposal was intended to increase and widen participation by providing a new, more accessible route into higher education. Foundation degrees were to have the following features²:

- employer involvement in the design and review of programmes
- the development of skills relevant to a particular employment sector alongside academic learning
- workplace experience sufficient to develop an understanding in the relevant area
- credit accumulation to facilitate accreditation of prior learning, flexible study and transfers between courses
- a smooth progression route to an honours degree programme.

¹ Foundation degrees are generally equivalent to Level 5 within the National Qualifications Framework. This follows from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) benchmark (QAA 2004).

² The defining characteristics of foundation degrees have been further developed by the QAA (QAA 2004), though they follow the key points first set out in the HEFCE prospectus.

39. While all foundation degrees were expected to have these characteristics, curriculum design and teaching methods were to be matters for the institutions validating and delivering the qualifications.

40. Institutions were invited to come forward with proposals to deliver programmes with the features outlined in the prospectus. In 2001-02 the first cohort of over 4,000 students was enrolled, less than two years after the Government issued its consultation paper on the new qualification.

41. The main sources of data for this report were the general annual collections by, or on behalf of, HEFCE and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), rather than a bespoke survey. It should be appreciated that the evidence derived from these data is insufficient to make a complete assessment of foundation degree provision. For example, we do not have information from these sources on the extent and quality of workplace experience, or the nature of the credit accumulation procedures. However, we can look at the outcomes we might expect these features to affect, such as the nature of employment after qualifying, and the extent of transfers between courses without repeating stages of study.

42. Even with data covering six years, we still only have information on employment outcomes and progression to honours programmes for the early foundation degree cohorts, and even for these early cohorts the outcomes are not yet known for students who take longer, studying part-time, or perhaps taking a break in study.

43. Nevertheless, we expect that the results presented here will provide enough evidence to begin assessing the extent to which foundation degrees are meeting the expectations of policy makers, course providers and students, and we hope this will contribute to the further development and enhancement of foundation degree programmes.

44. We plan to update this analysis as more data become available. We welcome suggestions as to what should be included.

Sources and definitions

Data sources

Aggregate student data

45. The HEFCE aggregate Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES) and Higher Education in Further Education: Student Survey (HEIFES) returns (HEFCE 2006a, 2006b) provide only limited information, and the registrations after 1 December are predictions. However, these data are the most recent available (up to 2006-07) and are therefore used for the time series of numbers of students and entrants.

Individualised student data

46. Data are drawn from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student records and the LSC Individualised Learner Records (ILRs). Individual students were linked within and through each annual student dataset using 'fuzzy matching'³. This enables duplicate records to be removed, where for example, a student has been returned on both HESA and ILR records. It also provides the basis for the progression and completion statistics.

47. In addition data from the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey are used, though these data are only collected for students registered at HEIs.

Reconciliation of aggregate and individual data

48. The totals reported from the aggregate and individual returns do not exactly align. We explain this difference at Annex A.

Definitions for analysis and comparisons

Population definitions

49. The statistics reported here refer to students studying or qualifying from FECs and HEIs in England⁴. The tables on overall trends, and the breakdown of total numbers by domicile, include home, EU and overseas students. All the other tables refer to home students only. We provide full definitions of the populations at Annex D.

50. Wherever possible we present statistics relating to students registered at HEIs and FECs. However, as noted above, the NSS and DLHE survey are only collected for students registered at HEIs. Further, some data items on the HESA student record are not available, at least with usable accuracy, for data collected from FECs.

³ The matching process is described at Annex B of HEFCE 2006/16 available at: www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06_16/

⁴ The statistics relating to the progression from foundation degree study or qualification includes progression to HE at HEIs throughout the UK.

Cohorts

51. We have aimed to present the most complete and up-to-date information available. This means that different sections refer to different cohorts of students. The statistics are presented as follows:

- some or all students active in a given academic year are referred to as 'students'
- a cohort of students that started in a given year are referred to as 'entrants'
- a cohort qualifying in a given year are referred to as 'qualifiers'.

52. Table 1 below shows the most recent entry cohort relating to different statistics.

Table 1 **Most recent entry cohorts**

Statistic	Most recent entry cohort (two year programmes)
Counts of students and entrants	2006-07
Programme characteristics	2004-05
Attributes of entrants	2004-05
Student feedback	2004-05
Progression from year of entry, qualification rates	2003-04
Progression to honours programme	2002-03
Employment outcomes	2003-04

Comparison groups

53. We have used two comparison groups to help us interpret the profiles of students, their feedback, achievements and outcomes. These comparators are students on programmes leading to HE undergraduate qualifications in general; and students on undergraduate programmes where the normal expected course length for full-time study is two years, that is on HND programmes. (Full details of the groups are at Annex C.)

Presentation of statistics

54. Throughout this report we have rounded student numbers to the nearest five. Where no source is cited, the data sources are the HESA student record for students registered at HEIs, and the LSC ILR for students registered at FECs.

55. Where students are simply identified as being 'at' an HEI or FEC, this refers to the institution where the students are registered, not necessarily where they are taught.

56. All the figures in the tables refer to headcounts, as do those in the text, apart from where it is explicitly stated the reference is to full-time equivalents.

Growth in foundation degree provision

57. In November 2000 and February 2001 HEFCE allocated funding for development of 68 prototype foundation degree programmes (HEFCE 2001). Recruitment to these programmes, and some others developed by institutions from their own resources, led to over 4,000 students being enrolled on foundation degree programmes in 2001-02, the first year of foundation degree provision⁵. Table 2 shows how the numbers of students and entrants have grown from 2001-02 through to 2006-07.

Table 2 **Number of foundation degree students and entrants by year and mode of study**
(Home, EU and overseas students and entrants at HEIs and FECs in England)

Students				
Academic year	Full-time	Part-time	Total	% full-time
2001-02	2,530	1,795	4,320	59%
2002-03	6,295	6,015	12,310	51%
2003-04	12,240	11,710	23,945	51%
2004-05	19,780	18,040	37,820	52%
2005-06	26,910	19,870	46,780	58%
2006-07	33,895	27,025	60,925	56%

Entrants				
Academic year	Full-time	Part-time	Total	% full-time
2001-02	2,260	1,740	3,995	57%
2002-03	4,805	4,095	8,900	54%
2003-04	8,250	6,695	14,945	55%
2004-05	12,890	9,220	22,110	58%
2005-06	16,810	9,850	26,665	63%
2006-07	19,840	14,095	33,930	58%

Table 2 notes

- Data source: Columns 1 + 2 of HESES and HEIFES (2006-07 values are provisional).
- The numbers of overseas entrants for 2001-02, 2005-06 and 2006-07 are estimated by assuming they represent the same proportion as for the other years, that is 4.7 per cent for full-time and 0.5 per cent for part-time.
- 2001-02 student numbers include some continuing students from 2000-01. (See footnote 5.)

⁵ There were courses already in existence which had at least some of the attributes described in the HEFCE foundation degree prospectus. In 2000-01 about 800 students were reported through the HEFCE HESES survey (HEFCE 2000b) as having been 'marketed by the institution' as a foundation degree. We view these programmes in 2000-01 as precursors to foundation degrees.

58. Over this period the proportions of HEIs and FECs involved with foundation degrees has also increased. Table 3 shows the numbers and proportions of institutions with either students registered at the institution, or students taught at the institution and registered at another⁶.

Table 3 HEIs and FECs in England involved with foundation degree provision

Academic year	Pre-92 HEIs		Post-92 HEIs		FECS	
	Number	% of institutions	Number	% of institutions	Number	% of colleges
2001-02	13	26%	37	46%	47	12%
2002-03	13	25%	46	57%	88	22%
2003-04	11	22%	57	71%	160	41%
2004-05	19	38%	64	80%	255	65%

Table 3 note

The data sources are: registrations - Columns 1 and 2 of HESES and HEIFES; tuition and registered with other institution – ILR and HESA; and numbers of FECs provided by the LSC.

59. The further education (FE) sector includes sixth form colleges which do not normally provide HE tuition. In 2004-05, for example, there were 100 sixth form colleges, only one of which was involved with foundation degrees. Of the remaining colleges, that is specialist, tertiary and general further education colleges, 88 per cent were involved with foundation degree tuition.

60. For the period up to 2004-05 we also have the individual student records, which enable us to better understand the growth in foundation degree numbers. Behind the figures for overall growth up to 2004-05 we can identify three strands. First, there are programmes which have developed from HND provision. The QAA reported that, by 2003-04, 122 foundation degree programmes had been converted from HNDs (QAA 2005a). We estimate that 46 per cent of the entrants in 2004-05 (see Table 2) were on programmes that were probably developed from HNDs⁷. Second, provision also arose out of nationwide initiatives to raise the standing and skills of groups of associate professionals. Most prominent among these initiatives have been programmes for those working with pre-school children, as

⁶ For 2004-05, data provided by Foundation Degree Forward showed that no institutions provided validation without also providing tuition either directly or through a franchise arrangement. For other years there may be some institutions with this involvement with foundation degrees, but the numbers will be small.

⁷ This estimate was calculated by taking all those entrants to foundation degrees with a combination of subjects at an institution where the same combination of subjects was offered through an HND programme at the same institution contemporaneously or prior to the foundation degree provision. Only programmes with a maximum of two years between the last HND and the first foundation degree were included. If we also include HNC courses in this estimate, the proportion of 'conversions' increases to 51 per cent.

teaching assistants, and in social care. Together we estimate that students studying these subjects on courses with no previous HND provision accounted for about quarter of the entrants in 2004-05⁸. Finally, a wide range of diverse courses have been developed to meet the needs of many and varied professions, often in new and developing industries.

Change in sub-degree provision overall

61. The number of students on foundation degrees programmes now exceeds the number of students studying for HNDs (see Annex C). However, this growth has taken place against a background of declining numbers of students studying towards HNDs and HNCs. This decline predates the introduction of foundation degrees. According to a study by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), even when foundation degrees were first introduced, this was not the main reason for institutions discontinuing HND and HNC provision (LSDA 2002). Since then the decline in HND and HNCs has accelerated, at least in part due to the growth in foundation degrees.

62. This means that the total provision for skills at 'higher technician and associate professional level' has not increased at the rate suggested by the foundation degree figures alone, though the total numbers of students studying for a foundation degree or HND increased by 19,000 between 2001-02 and 2006-07. This reverses the trend of decreasing numbers of students studying for HNDs before the introduction of foundation degrees⁹.

Future growth in foundation degree provision

63. Total numbers should continue to grow, as the impact of past increases in the numbers of entrants works through, with the entrant numbers for 2006-07 implying an equilibrium 'steady state' figure of nearly 80,000¹⁰. The entrant numbers in Table 2 show that the year-on-year increases have not followed a smooth pattern. Apart from the fact that numbers have increased year-on-year, there is no clear trend from which to extrapolate future numbers.

64. In so far as we can discern any trends, it seems that the trends in full-time and part-time numbers are different. Part-time entrant numbers in 2005-06 were only slightly higher than those in 2004-05, and then for 2006-07 we saw a very large increase.

⁸ These estimates were based on the numbers of students studying subjects allied to medicine, education and social work (see Tables 6 and 7) which account for about a third of the entrants, with the removal the entrants studying these subjects at institutions where there had been an HND course (see footnote 7).

⁹ The HND plus foundation degree figure is based on figures from Table 2 and from Annex C. These figures do not take into account HNC numbers, which have also been in decline. HNC numbers cannot be identified in the HESES or HEIFES returns, but figures from HESA and ILR data from earlier years suggest that the overall numbers of HNDs, HNCs and foundation degrees would still show an increase.

¹⁰ Assuming full-time students average two years of study and part-time students three years we would have $2 \times 19,895 + 3 \times 14,120 = 82,150$. Not all students will complete their programme of study, but some will repeat years, so this provides a reasonable if rough estimate of the equilibrium number implied by the 2006-07 entrant numbers.

65. For full-time students it seems that the rate of growth peaked with the increase of over 4,000 entrants between 2002-03 and 2003-04, though, as with the part-time numbers, it is quite possible that in future there could be accelerating increases. In 2006-07 the new fee and student support arrangements were introduced. Forty-two per cent of full-time foundation degree programmes at English HEIs set fees below the £3,000 maximum, compared to just 7 per cent of honours degree programmes¹¹. The lower fees for foundation degree programmes may have made them more attractive, though the fact that institutions have often set the fees at a lower rate implies that they believe that demand is weak compared to that for honours programmes.

66. Some of the sources of past growth are now limited. For example, only 12,750 HND entrants were returned for 2006-07, so the potential for developing foundation degrees from HND programmes is now limited. Less clear is the extent to which some provision, such as that designed for teaching assistants, is based on a one-off level of demand as the stock of unqualified practitioners are recruited.

67. Notwithstanding these uncertainties, future growth in entrant numbers is planned. For example, Foundation Degree Forward reports that there are currently over 700 foundation degree courses under development¹², and for 2007-08 additional funding has been agreed for over 13,000 full-time equivalents specifically for foundation degree programmes¹³. However, for the reasons outlined, it is very difficult to estimate the likely scale of future growth in the longer term. Much may depend on institutions' ability to further stimulate demand through innovative provision in new areas.

¹¹ Figures extracted from the UCAS web-site.

¹² As of December 2006, Foundation Degree Forward reported 741 programmes in development. This can be compared to 2,152 programmes up and running at that time. If we assume that the programmes in development come to fruition, and attract, on average, the same number of students per programme as those currently running, this would correspond to 34 per cent growth, or an equilibrium total of over 100,000 students.

¹³ As of January 2007 13,204 full-time equivalent (FTE) additional funded places had been allocated for 2007-08. The methods of allocating these funds included the new methods described in HEFCE 2005/14 and the previous method also described in that paper (available at www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2005/05_14/). Note that other funded growth, not specifically directed at foundation degrees, may also include foundation degree provision.

Programme characteristics

Introduction

68. In this section we present the characteristics of foundation programmes. All the statistics relate to the academic year 2004-05 and are based on HESA and LSC individualised student records. The statistics relate to home entrants to foundation degree programmes at HEIs and FECs in that year. The characteristics described are:

- type of foundation degree provider
- region of foundation degree provision
- subject of study
- expected course length
- distance learning and distance to study.

Type of foundation degree provider

69. Table 4 shows the numbers of entrants by the institution where they are registered and where they are taught. Forty-five per cent of entrants are wholly taught at an HEI, with a further 1 per cent partly taught at an HEI. Of those taught at FECs the majority are registered at an HEI. It might have been expected that FECs would be better placed to provide part-time study, but we find that the majority of part-time entrants are taught at HEIs.

Table 4 **Entrant numbers by institution type**

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Institution		Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
Reg.	Taught	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
HEI	HEI	4,950	39%	4,365	56%	9,315	45%	53%
HEI	HEI and FEC	145	1%	40	1%	185	1%	78%
HEI	FEC	4,365	34%	1,665	21%	6,030	29%	72%
FEC	FEC	3,295	26%	1,750	22%	5,040	25%	66%
Total		12,750	100%	7,815	100%	20,570	100%	62%

Table 4 note

Reg. — Registered.

70. Table 4 shows the type of institution where students are taught in their year of entry. Most will continue at the same type of institution for the whole programme. Of those entrants in 2003-04 who were registered at the same HEI in 2003-04 and 2004-05, only 2.8 per cent changed from being taught at an HEI in 2003-04 to an FEC in 2004-05, while 4.9 per cent changed from being taught at an FEC in 2003-04 to an HEI in 2004-05.

Region of provision

71. Table 5 below shows the region of provision, that is where the teaching takes place, not the location of the administrative centre of the institution where students are registered.

Table 5 Entrant numbers by region of provision

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Region	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time	% of population (20-29) ¹⁴
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
North East	1,535	12%	425	6%	1,960	10%	78%	5%
North West	1,800	14%	1,565	21%	3,365	17%	54%	13%
Yorkshire	1,155	9%	900	12%	2,050	10%	56%	10%
East Midlands	660	5%	490	7%	1,150	6%	57%	8%
West Midlands	760	6%	1,270	17%	2,030	10%	37%	10%
East	1,165	9%	720	10%	1,880	9%	62%	10%
London	2,260	18%	690	9%	2,945	15%	77%	20%
South East	1,085	9%	780	11%	1,865	9%	58%	15%
South West	2,335	18%	550	7%	2,885	14%	81%	9%
Total (ex. OU)	12,750	100%	7,380	100%	20,130	100%	—	100%
Open University	0	—	440	—	440	—	—	—
Total (inc. OU)	12,750	—	7,815	—	20,570	—	—	—

Table 5 notes

'Yorkshire' – full name 'Yorkshire and the Humber'.

'East' – full name 'East of England'.

72. Table 5 shows the 20 to 29 year-old populations as a guide to the relative size of the regions. The proportion of the populations who are potential entrants to foundation degree programmes will vary. London, for example, has a higher proportion of graduates than other regions due to both higher young participation and inward migration. Though some graduates do study for foundation degrees, this is somewhat unusual, so a population with a high proportion of graduates would be expected to have a lower foundation degree take-up rate, all other factors being equal. Conversely, the North East has the lowest young participation rate of any region (HEFCE 2005). This means that there will be a higher proportion of adults in their twenties without HE qualifications who are potential recruits to foundation degree programmes. It may therefore be appropriate that the North East has more entrants relative to its population than other regions.

73. The percentage of provision taken up through full-time study also varied, from 81 per cent in the South West to 37 per cent in the West Midlands.

¹⁴ Population figures are from the Office of National Statistics, see www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/ssdataset.asp?vlnk=9092 for further details.

Subject of study

74. Table 6 shows the numbers of entrants by the subject areas based on the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS)¹⁵.

Table 6 Entrant numbers by subject areas

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Subject area	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full - time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Medicine and dentistry *	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	n/a
Subjects allied to medicine	1,110	9%	725	9%	1,835	9%	60%
Biological sciences	650	5%	365	5%	1,015	5%	64%
Veterinary science	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	n/a
Agriculture and related subjects	920	7%	290	4%	1,210	6%	76%
Physical sciences	90	1%	40	0%	130	1%	70%
Mathematical sciences	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0%
Computer sciences	1,160	9%	410	5%	1,570	8%	74%
Engineering and technology	910	7%	450	6%	1,360	7%	67%
Architecture, building, planning	150	1%	255	3%	405	2%	37%
Social studies	775	6%	970	12%	1,740	8%	44%
Law	285	2%	20	0%	310	1%	93%
Business, admin studies	1,850	14%	1,035	13%	2,885	14%	64%
Mass comms, documentation	405	3%	35	0%	440	2%	92%
Languages	0	0%	15	0%	15	0%	0%
Historical, philosophical studies	80	1%	90	1%	170	1%	46%
Creative arts and design	2,640	21%	225	3%	2,865	14%	92%
Education	1,205	9%	2,705	35%	3,905	19%	31%
Combined	530	4%	185	2%	715	3%	74%
All subjects	12,750	100%	7,815	100%	20,570	100%	62%

Table 5 notes

*A small number of entrants were recorded as studying medicine and dentistry. It has been assumed that these were coding errors and they have been included within the 'other' subgroup of 'subjects allied to medicine'.

75. Three subjects – education, creative arts and business – accounted for almost half (47 per cent) of the entrants. A further six subject areas – subjects allied to medicine, social studies, computer sciences, engineering, agriculture and biological sciences – each accounted for 5 per cent or more of the entrants. Together the nine subjects accounted for 89 per cent of all entrants. The proportions of full- and part-time provision vary markedly by subject area. More than two-thirds of the entrants to education were part-time, whereas almost all, 92 per cent, of the entrants to programmes in the creative arts were full-time.

¹⁵ Details of the JACS code can be found on the HESA web-site at: www.hesa.ac.uk/jacs/jacs.htm

76. Table 7 shows more detailed breakdowns of some of the subject areas and provides further insights into some of the important subject areas. From these figures, along with even more detailed breakdowns, and the programme titles returned by institutions, we can make the following observations.

Other subjects allied to medicine

77. Most of the entrants to 'subjects allied to medicine' were included under the heading 'other'. This includes small numbers of students studying in specific subject areas such as complementary medicine (80), nutrition (110), ophthalmic dispensing (125) and medical technology, which mostly relates to radiography but also to dentistry (200). The remaining 785 entrants did not come under a more specific subject heading, but most of their course titles indicated that they are concerned with 'health and social care'.

Sports science

78. Of those students included under 'biological sciences', 86 per cent were studying sports science.

Social work

79. Two-thirds of entrants to 'social studies' were on courses in social work.

Design studies

80. Nearly half (47 per cent) of the 'creative arts and design' entrants were studying 'art and design'. Of these 1,340 'art and design' entrants, only 13 per cent were on programmes described as 'fine art'. The remaining 1,165 entrants joined programmes in design studies, many with course titles that indicate particular specialist interests, such as 'bathroom and kitchen design', 'computer modelling and animation' and 'fashion design'.

'Early Years' and 'teaching assistant' foundation degrees

81. Eighty-nine per cent of those included under 'education' were registered for 'education studies'. The course titles indicate that a large proportion of these entrants were starting 'Early Years' foundation degrees¹⁶. These programmes lead to a level of professional practice known as 'senior practitioner', for those working with pre-school children and as assistants to teachers in the first years of school. Many of the other courses are designed for teaching assistants working with older children. Together 'Early Years' and 'teaching assistant' foundation degrees accounted for most of the programmes described as 'education studies', with a small number of more specialist courses and courses in education administration completing the range of provision.

¹⁶ More information about 'Early Years' foundation degrees can be found at:
www.surestart.gov.uk/improvingquality/qualifications/earlyyearsfoundationdegree

Table 7 Entrant numbers by subject sub-group for selected subject areas
(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Subject	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Medical science and pharmacy	100	9%	45	6%	145	8%	69%
Nursing	290	26%	95	13%	385	21%	75%
Other	720	65%	585	81%	1305	71%	55%
Subjects allied to medicine	1,110	100%	725	100%	1,835	100%	60%
Biology and related sciences	95	15%	35	10%	130	13%	73%
Sports science	555	85%	320	87%	875	86%	63%
Psychology	0	0%	10	3%	10	1%	0%
Biological sciences	650	100%	365	100%	1015	100%	64%
Mechanically-based	440	48%	260	58%	700	51%	63%
Electronic and electrical	90	10%	40	9%	135	10%	67%
Civil, chemical and other	110	12%	90	20%	200	15%	55%
Technology	240	26%	30	7%	270	20%	89%
Combined engineering	25	3%	30	7%	55	4%	45%
Engineering and technology	910	100%	450	100%	1360	100%	67%
Economics	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	n/a
Politics	70	9%	50	5%	120	7%	58%
Sociology, social policy, anthropology	220	28%	240	25%	460	26%	48%
Social work	480	62%	680	70%	1160	67%	41%
Human and social geography	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	n/a
Social studies	775	100%	970	100%	1740	100%	45%
Business	840	45%	365	35%	1205	42%	70%
Management	665	36%	605	58%	1270	44%	52%
Finance and accounting	55	3%	20	2%	75	3%	73%
Tourism, transport, travel	290	16%	50	5%	335	12%	87%
Business and admin studies	1,850	100%	1,035	100%	2,885	100%	64%
Art and design	1,185	45%	155	69%	1,340	47%	88%
Performing arts	835	32%	20	9%	855	30%	98%
Other creative arts	615	23%	50	22%	660	23%	93%
Combined creative arts	10	0%	0	0%	10	0%	100%
Creative arts and design	2,640	100%	225	100%	2,865	100%	92%
Teacher training	65	5%	280	10%	345	9%	19%
Education studies	1,045	87%	2,420	89%	3,460	89%	30%
Combined education	95	8%	5	0%	100	3%	95%
Education	1,205	100%	2,705	100%	3,905	100%	31%

Expected course length

82. Table 8 shows the expected course lengths for foundation degree programmes. Note that individual students will not necessarily take this time to complete the course. Some, through prior learning, may be able to start part way through, others may need to repeat a year.

83. Ninety per cent of full-time entrants were on programmes with an expected length of two years. Of those full-time entrants expected to take longer, a third are on a programme that includes a sandwich year. Students on part-time programmes are often expected to study intensely. Three years is the most common expected course length. This may sometimes be achieved through a curriculum design that allows students to draw on their employment experiences as a starting point for learning (QAA 2005b). We also found that more than 2,000 part-time entrants are expected to complete in an even shorter time. However, the progression rates suggest that either the course length data have been incorrectly submitted, or that in practice two years is too short for most part-time students to complete the course. We found that less than a quarter of the part-time 2003-04 entrants studying on two-year programmes gained a foundation degree in two years. Of those entrants on part-time courses of indefinite length, 83 per cent were registered with the Open University.

Table 8 Entrant numbers by expected course lengths

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Course length (years)	Full-time		Part-time	
	Number	%	Number	%
1	590	5%	295	4%
2	11,440	90%	1,805	23%
3	580	5%	3,505	45%
4 or more	105	1%	1,690	22%
Indefinite	35	0%	525	7%
Total	12,750	100%	7,815	100%

Distance learning and distance to study

84. Distance learning can make an important contribution in the provision of flexible delivery. The QAA found that 11 per cent of the programmes it surveyed included an element of distance learning. Table 9 below shows the numbers of entrants whose main form of study was distance learning, accounting for 15 per cent of part-time entrants. Note that all these students are on part-time programmes; there were no entrants studying full-time by distance learning.

Table 9 Distance learning

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

	Institution type	Number	%
Distance learning	HEI (not OU)	725	9%
	Open University	440	6%
	FEC	45	1%
	All distance learning entrants	1,210	15%
Other part-time entrants		6,610	85%
Total part-time entrants		7,815	100%

85. For part-time students who do study at a campus, and for mature full-time students who are more likely to have commitments that make living away from home difficult, there is likely to be a need for the provision to be located near to the students' homes. Table 10 shows the distances to study for different modes and locations of study.

Table 10 Distance to study

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs [not OU] and FECs in England)

Mode and study location	Institution type	Distance (miles)		
		Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
Part-time (distance learning)	HEI (not OU)	65	108	181
	FEC	58	98	143
Part-time (campus learning)	HEI (not OU)	4	11	26
	FEC	3	6	13
Full-time (campus learning)	HEI (not OU)	5	14	35
	FEC	4	7	16

Table 10 notes

- Based on data with known postcodes, 96 per cent of records.
- Distances are approximate road distances.
- Institution refers to the institution that the student is registered with.
- Distances to campus where the student is actually taught, not the administrative centre.
- Numbers of part-time distance learners from FECs were insufficient to provide reliable distances.

86. Table 10 shows that, apart from those on distance learning programmes, most students live close to their campus of study. Students registered at HEIs on average travelled further than students registered at FECs, though many students were still able to study close to where they live. Many of the students registered at HEIs are taught at FECs under franchise arrangements (see Table 4), and where there are no franchise arrangements many HEIs have dispersed campuses away from the main administrative centre.

Student attributes

Introduction

87. In this section we present the attributes of students on foundation degree programmes. All the statistics in this section relate to the academic year 2004-05 and are based on HESA and LSC individualised student records. The statistics relate to all foundation degree students entering in 2004-05. The attributes described are:

- domicile
- sex, age, ethnicity and disability
- socio-economic and educational background
- prior qualifications
- previous experience of higher education.

Apart from Table 11 showing domicile, all the tables refer to home entrants.

88. Table 11 shows the numbers of entrants by domicile. Home, that is UK domiciled students, account for 95 per cent of the entrants. The proportions of overseas entrants are lower than for undergraduate provision as a whole, or for HND programmes (see Annex C). This may reflect the fact that foundation degrees are still relatively new and that it will take longer for awareness to develop overseas.

89. Ninety-eight per cent of the home entrants were from England, and the distribution of these entrants across the English regions follows the distribution in the location of study (see Table 5). Full details are provided at Annex B.

Table 11 **Entrant numbers by domicile**

(Foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Domicile	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
UK	12,750	94%	7,815	98%	20,570	95%	62%
EU (not UK)	280	2%	80	1%	365	2%	78%
Overseas (not EU)	545	4%	75	1%	620	3%	88%
Total	13,580	100%	7,975	100%	21,550	100%	63%

Sex and age

90. Table 12 below shows that 57 per cent of entrants were female. This is close to the proportion of female entrants across the whole of undergraduate provision and quite unlike entrants to HND programmes, where men account for nearly two-thirds of the entrants.

Table 12 **Entrant numbers by sex**

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

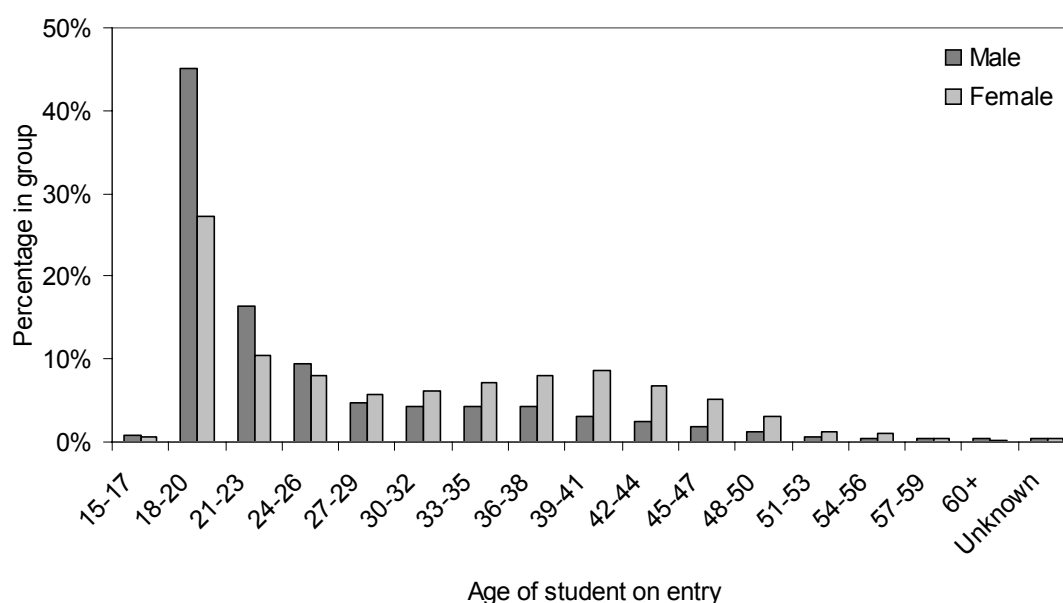
Sex	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Male	6,190	49%	2,560	33%	8,750	43%	71%
Female	6,560	51%	5,255	67%	11,815	57%	56%
Total	12,750	100%	7,815	100%	20,570	100%	62%

91. A similar number of men and women have been entering full-time programmes, unlike undergraduate programmes as a whole where women are in a clear majority. The greater proportion of men participating in foundation degrees almost certainly reflects the inheritance from the HND programmes that have been developed into foundation degree programmes¹⁷.

92. Figure 1 shows the age profile for male and female entrants.

Figure 1 **Proportions of entrants by age for men and women**

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)



93. Given that women are more highly represented in part-time foundation degree study, we might expect there to be an older age profile for women, which is what we find. We see

¹⁷ A QAA survey (QAA 2005a) found that foundation degree programmes that had been developed from HNDs had a higher proportion of male students.

that for both men and women, the young cohort (aged 18 to 20) had the highest proportion of entrants, though this is less pronounced for women than for men. However, the proportions of older entrants to foundation degree courses were higher than for undergraduate study as a whole, and for HND programmes in particular. For women on foundation degree programmes, there is a second mode for the age range 39 to 41 which makes up 8.6 per cent of the female entrants.

94. Table 13 shows the distribution of male and female, young and mature entrants across full-time and part-time study.

Table 13 Entrant numbers by sex and age at commencement of study

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Age group and sex	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Young male	3,580	28%	445	6%	4,025	20%	89%
Young female	2,960	23%	325	4%	3,285	16%	90%
Mature male	2,600	20%	2,100	27%	4,700	23%	55%
Mature female	3,585	28%	4,900	63%	8,485	41%	42%
Total (known age)	12,725	100%	7,770	100%	20,495	100%	62%
Unknown age	30	—	45	—	75	—	—
Total	12,750	—	7,815	—	20,570	—	62%

Table 13 note

'Young' students are under 21 on the date of entry to the programme.

95. From Table 13 we can see that:

- a. There are very few part-time young entrants.
- b. Mature part-time entrants are predominantly female, and 'female mature part-time' represents a large proportion, almost one in four, of all the foundation degree entrants.
- c. For full-time entrants, the age balance is different for male and female entrants, with females having a higher proportion of mature entrants, and males having a higher proportion of young entrants.

96. The differences in age profiles of the male and female entrants can be understood in terms of the different subjects that they studied. The overall differences are largely accounted for by the high proportions of women entrants in subjects such as education (93 per cent), social work (88 per cent) and subjects allied to medicine (78 per cent), all of which have high proportions of mature entrants¹⁸. (See Annex B for a detailed breakdown.)

¹⁸ The age and sex profile of students studying these subjects reflects the profiles of the occupations they are designed to serve. For example, it is estimated that 98 per cent of teaching assistant are female, and 59 per cent are in the age range 36 to 50 (Blatchford et al 2006).

Ethnicity

97. The number of entrants from different ethnic groups is shown in Table 14. The ethnic profile of full-time entrants is quite different to that of part-time entrants, with higher proportions of full-time entrants coming from minority ethnic groups. This is true for undergraduate provision as a whole as well as entrants to foundation degree programmes. Overall, the proportions of entrants from minority ethnic groups to foundation degrees are similar to those found for undergraduates as a whole. However, both White entrants and Black Caribbean entrants represented a bigger proportion of foundation degree entrants than they did for undergraduate provision as a whole. All the other ethnic groups represented a corresponding lower proportion.

Table 14 **Entrant numbers by ethnicity**

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Ethnicity	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	105	1%	35	0%	140	1%	75%
Asian/Asian British – Indian	375	3%	100	1%	475	2%	79%
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	345	3%	100	1%	440	2%	78%
Chinese	100	1%	20	0%	125	1%	83%
Other Asian background	120	1%	60	1%	185	1%	67%
Black/Black British – African	390	3%	155	2%	545	3%	71%
Black/Black British – Caribbean	325	3%	160	2%	485	2%	67%
Other Black background	60	0%	25	0%	85	0%	70%
White	10,055	82%	6,540	89%	16,590	84%	61%
Other ethnic background	445	4%	180	2%	625	3%	71%
Total known	12,320	100%	7,375	100%	19,695	100%	63%
Not known	430	—	440	—	875	—	49%
Total	12,750	—	7,815	—	20,570	—	62%

Disability

98. The proportions of students with a reported disability are shown in Table 15 below. These are similar to those found for undergraduate provision as a whole.

Table 15 **Entrant numbers with and without recorded disability**

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Disability	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
With disabled student allowance	290	2%	40	51%	330	2%	88%
With disability not with disabled student allowance	810	6%	295	375%	1,105	5%	73%
Without a recorded disability	11,650	91%	7,485	96%	19,130	93%	61%
Total	12,750	100%	7,815	100%	20,570	100%	62%

Socio-economic and educational background

99. The measures of the socio-economic and educational background of students are based on those used in the performance indicators published by HESA¹⁹. For young full-time entrants to HEIs, these are school type, social class²⁰ and neighbourhood type²¹. For mature students there are no measures of background but we can show the proportion of students coming from low participation neighbourhoods. This measure is also used for the small numbers of young part-time entrants. In addition we present the area-based measures for entrants to FECs, which are not currently published with the performance indicators.

100. Table 16 shows higher proportions of entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) entering FECs compared to HEIs. This pattern is also found for undergraduate entrants generally, and for HND entrants in particular.

101. The proportions of mature entrants from LPNs are best considered as a different statistic to those for young entrants. Not only are there minor definitional differences (see Table 16 notes) but while the address at time of application can give an indication of the background for young entrants, the same cannot be assumed for those who enter HE later. The relationship between mode of study and the proportion of entrants from low participation neighbourhoods depends on age. A higher proportion of the (very small numbers of) part-time young students came from low participation neighbourhoods compared with full-time young entrants, whereas for mature students it is the other way round. We can see a similar pattern for undergraduate entrants as a whole, while among HND entrants lower proportions from LPNs study part-time for both young and mature entrants.

¹⁹ The performance indicator publications are at: www.hesa.ac.uk/pi/home.htm

²⁰ Social class categories follow the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) based on the occupation of the highest paid parent or guardian.

²¹ Low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs) are identified when the students' postcodes are linked to a geodemographic group with young participation rates less than two-thirds the national average.

Table 16 Entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (LPNs)

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Institution type	Age group	Full-time		Part-time		Total	
		Number entrants	% from LPN	Number entrants	% from LPN	Number entrants	% from LPN
FEC	Young	1,700	27%	205	31%	1,905	27%
	Mature	1,280	26%	1,385	24%	2,665	25%
HEI	Young	4,330	16%	460	23%	4,790	17%
	Mature	4,365	18%	4,800	17%	9,165	17%
Unknowns		1,080		965		2,045	
Total		12,750		7,815		20,570	

Table 16 notes

- a. Institution type refers to the institution the student is registered with.
- b. 'Unknowns' includes those with unknown postcode or date of birth.
- c. 'Mature' refers to students 21 and over at the commencement of their course. This is consistent with the other tables in this report but differs slightly from the definition used in the performance indicators.

102. The proportions of foundation degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods are generally higher than for undergraduates as a whole, and also higher than for HND entrants, apart from young full-time entrants at HEIs. For this group the proportion of entrants from lower participation neighbourhoods was slightly lower compared with HND entrants.

103. For these young full-time foundation degree entrants at HEIs, who represent 22 per cent of all foundation degree entrants, we have two further statistics: socio-economic group and school or college type. These are shown in Tables 17 and 18.

104. The proportions of entrants from relatively disadvantaged socio-economic and education backgrounds, compared with undergraduate entrants as a whole, and HND entrants in particular, follows the pattern found in relation to low participation neighbourhoods in Table 16. Full-time young foundation degree entrants included much higher proportions of entrants from NS-SEC groups 4 to 7 and entrants from state schools and colleges than undergraduate entrants generally, but slightly lower proportions than entrants to HND courses. For both foundation degrees and HNDs there were much higher proportions of 'unknowns' than found in data for undergraduate courses generally.

Table 17 Entrant numbers from NS-SEC classes 4 to 7

(Home young foundation degree full-time entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs in England)

	Number entrants	% from NS-SEC classes 4 to 7
Known NS-SEC	2,170	38%
Unknown NS-SEC	2,300	—
Total	4,475	—

Table 18 Entrant numbers from state schools and colleges

(Home young foundation degree full-time entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs in England)

	Number entrants	% from state schools and colleges
Known school or college type	2,885	96%
Unknown school or college type	1,585	—
Total	4,475	—

Prior qualifications

105. Table 19 shows the highest prior qualifications of entrants to foundation degree programmes. Note that these are not necessarily the qualifications for entry.

106. The numbers of entrants with A-levels is uncertain. Under the heading 'A-levels', we have included only those entrants with a data record that enables us to identify them as having at least one A-level, AS-level or one of the Scottish equivalents. Under the heading 'A-level or equivalent' we count those student records where it is unclear whether the entrant has A-levels (or AS or Scottish equivalents) or not. For these records the data is insufficient to distinguish between these and a wide range of other qualifications, including NVQs at Level 3. Overall, therefore, between 10 per cent and 33 per cent of entrants will have an A-level 'type' highest qualification on entry. Though we cannot be certain, our view is that the higher figure of 33 per cent is probably closer to the actual percentage. Similarly, there is uncertainty about the numbers of entrants with Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) qualifications. The numbers reported as 'VCE only' represent the minimum numbers of entrants with these qualifications and without A-levels.

107. The data do not provide much direct evidence of entrants coming through the vocational work-based qualification route. The numbers of entrants recorded as having an advanced apprenticeship are negligible, and were included with 'other' qualifications in Table 19. National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 qualifications cannot be separately identified from the HESA and ILR data available. From a survey the QAA reported that 19 per cent of part-time foundation degree students entered with an NVQ of undefined level (QAA

2005b)²². If this figure, based on a sample of earlier cohorts, was also applied to the 2004-05 entrants, they could be reported under 'A-level or equivalent', but equally it is quite possible they could be included under any of the other categories.

Table 19 Entrant numbers by prior qualification

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Qualification at entry	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
HE	1,465	11%	1,855	24%	3,315	16%	44%
A-levels	1,955	15%	155	2%	2,110	10%	93%
A-level or equivalent	2,980	23%	1,680	22%	4,660	23%	64%
VCE only	290	2%	10	0%	305	1%	96%
BTEC Level 3	1,320	10%	525	7%	1,850	9%	71%
Access to HE course	265	2%	105	1%	365	2%	72%
GCSE	605	5%	590	8%	1,195	6%	51%
Other qualifications	1,020	8%	535	7%	1,555	8%	66%
APEL	620	5%	865	11%	1,485	7%	42%
No formal qualification	105	1%	115	1%	220	1%	48%
Unknown	2,120	17%	1,380	18%	3,500	17%	61%
Total	12,750	100%	7,815	100%	20,570	100%	62%

Table 19 notes

- 'HE' - all HE qualifications or HE institutional credits. Further breakdown at Table 21.
- 'A-levels' – A-level, AS level, or Scottish equivalents. A-level tariff returned.
- 'A-level or equivalent' – Level 3 qualification(s) including A-level, AS-levels, General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), VCEs, Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs), NVQs, and Scottish equivalents. Entrants may have any one or more of these qualifications in any combination. A-level tariff not returned.
- 'VCE only' – Vocational Certificate of Education – also variously referred to as AVCEs or vocational A-levels, or GNVQs which they replaced. Evidence implies entrants do not have A-levels. VCE tariff returned and no A-level tariff returned.
- 'BTEC Level 3' – BTEC National Award, Certificate or Diploma, or earlier Ordinary National Certificate or Diploma (ONC or OND) awards.
- 'Access to HE Course' – designed for mature entrants, usually one year full-time study.
- 'GCSE' – General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) also includes earlier O-levels and Scottish equivalents.
- 'APEL' – Accreditation of prior experiential learning.

108. Seven per cent of entrants are recorded as being accredited for prior learning, and it is likely that in many cases this would be work-based learning. The extent to which foundation degrees are providing 'new routes' is likely to be underestimated by this figure alone. 'New

²² The QAA data were collected for a sample of programmes that were launched in 2002 and 2003, so we would not expect the entry qualifications profile to be the exactly the same as reported here.

routes' may be involved for all the entrants without A-levels or HE qualifications, particularly for the 31 per cent of entrants with Level 2, 'other', 'unknown' or no qualifications.

109. The differences between the profiles of entry qualifications for full- and part-time entrants are largely reflected in the ages of the entrants. Ninety per cent of part-time entrants, but only half of full-time entrants, are mature. Table 20 shows the entry qualification profiles for young and mature entrants. Note that although we have included the young part-time entrant numbers in Table 20, the numbers are small and should be treated with caution.

Table 20 Entrant numbers by prior qualification group and age

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

	Entry qualifications	Full-time		Part-time	
		Number	%	Number	%
Young	HE	345	5%	60	8%
	A-levels/Highers or equivalent	3,380	52%	300	39%
	Other	1,755	27%	255	33%
	Unknown	1,060	16%	155	20%
	Total young	6,540	100%	770	100%
Mature	HE	1,115	18%	1,785	25%
	A-levels/Highers or equivalent	1,550	25%	1,525	22%
	Other	2,470	40%	2,480	35%
	Unknown	1,045	17%	1,210	17%
	Total mature	6,185	100%	7,000	100%
	Unknown age	30	—	45	—
	Total all ages	12,750	—	7,815	—

Previous experience of higher education

110. Table 19 showed that 16 per cent of entrants had an HE qualification²³. Table 21 provides a breakdown of these qualifications. In addition, we have included the entrants that previously studied on a programme leading to an HE award or institutional credit, but who did not gain the HE qualification or institutional credit, or at least it has not been recorded. Seventy-three per cent of full-time students and 60 per cent of part-time students are 'initial' entrants, that is they had no previous experience of higher education²⁴. The proportion of full-time foundation degree entrants who were new to HE is slightly lower than the proportion of undergraduates new to HE. However, the proportion of part-time foundation degree entrants new to HE, while lower than the proportion for full-time, is higher than for part-time provision in general.

²³ The QAA data collected for a sample of programmes include no entrants with HE level qualifications (QAA 2005b). As already noted, we should not expect statistics from the QAA survey to correspond exactly with the figures reported here, but such a big discrepancy was unexpected.

²⁴ The criteria for being counted as being an 'initial' entrant follow those used in the calculation of the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) (DfES 2006).

111. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) which is used to measure progress towards the 50 per cent participation rate target, only includes initial entrants aged 30 and under. This results in foundation degree programmes contributing about 1.3 percentage points to the HEIPR for 2004-05. The provisional value of the HEIPR for 2004-05 was 42.0 per cent (DfES 2006).

Table 21 Entrant numbers by previous experience of higher education

(Home foundation degree entrants in 2004-05 at HEIs and FECs in England)

Previous HE qualification or experience	Full-time		Part-time		Total		% full-time
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	
Postgraduate (ex. PGCE)	108	1%	111	1%	219	1%	49%
First degree (inc. PGCE)	233	2%	333	4%	566	3%	41%
HND /HNC	338	3%	474	6%	812	4%	42%
Professional qualification or higher NVQ	224	2%	454	6%	678	3%	33%
Institutional credits	126	1%	124	2%	250	1%	50%
Other HE qualifications	434	3%	358	5%	792	4%	55%
Some previous HE experience	1,933	15%	1,290	17%	3,223	16%	60%
New to HE	9,356	73%	4,672	60%	14,028	68%	67%
Total	12,752	100%	7,816	100%	20,568	100%	62%

Table 21 note

PGCE – Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

Student feedback on the quality of programmes

112. Here we report the feedback of students on foundation degree programmes through the National Student Survey (NSS)²⁵. The survey seeks responses to 22 questions. Twenty-one questions are grouped into five sections or scales, and the remaining final question gives an indication of overall satisfaction. The NSS survey only includes students registered at HEIs²⁶.

113. Students are surveyed in what is expected to be their final year, or, for flexible programmes, after a significant period of study. For the most recent survey, conducted in January 2006, it would typically include full-time students who started in the 2004-05 academic year and part-time students who started in 2003-04. The numbers of part-time students are consequently small, and it is difficult at this stage to draw any definite conclusions. Table 22 below provides a breakdown of the students included in, and those responding to, the 2006 survey.

Table 22 **2006 NSS response rates**

(Home foundation degree students at HEIs in England)

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Target population	7,260	1,880	9,135
Respondents	3,430	1,025	4,455
Response rate	47.3%	54.5%	48.8%

114. The responses from students on foundation courses, as for students on other programmes, were generally positive. Table 23 shows the profile of responses to the statement, 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my course'.

115. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents expressed satisfaction with their course. This response is summarised in two other ways. The 'net agreement' is the sum of those who agree and definitely agree, less the percentages of those who disagree and definitely disagree. If this statistic is positive, the average net response is positive. The 'mean response score' is calculated by assigning values of 1 to 5 from 'definitely disagree' to 'definitely agree' and taking the mean. Values greater than 3.00 indicate an average positive response.

²⁵ Information on the NSS is available at: www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss/

²⁶ Students registered at an HEI and taught at a FEC under a franchised arrangement are included in the NSS.

Table 23 Responses to 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course'

(Home foundation degree students at HEIs in England, 2006 NSS)

Response	Full-time		Part-time		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1 Definitely disagree	170	5%	40	4%	210	5%
2 Disagree	305	9%	70	7%	380	9%
3 Neither agree nor disagree	360	11%	105	10%	465	11%
4 Agree	1,660	49%	520	51%	2,180	49%
5 Definitely agree	920	27%	285	28%	1,205	27%
Total respondents to question	3,420	100%	1,025	100%	4,440	100%
'Not applicable' or no answer	15	—	0	—	15	—
All respondents	3,430	—	1,025	—	4,455	—
Agreeing or definitely agreeing	76%		79%		76%	
Net agreement	62%		68%		63%	
Mean response score	3.84		3.92		3.86	

116. Respondents also have the opportunity to make comments about their experiences. Foundation degree students frequently expressed their appreciation of their lecturers, as did respondents on other courses. There are also comments which show that the distinctive features of foundation degrees are appreciated.

What is special about foundation degrees?

Comments from foundation degree students (2006 NSS)

- 'The work experience has helped me in choosing a career. The course has helped me get my life on track and give me so many more job prospects.'
- 'With the course (TV and film productions) [we] have direct contacts with local production companies that allow us to gain personal contacts into the industry.'
- 'You can work and study at the same time, as work and studies are related.'
- '...learnt new things that have helped me in my job'.
- 'The course has offered me the opportunity to gain a degree . . . and will hopefully allow me to further my career from teaching assistant to teacher . . . indeed I am more informed than many of the teachers I work under. Not that I tell them that!'

117. In general, the responses to questions from students on foundation degree programmes are similar to those from other students, particularly those studying for HNDs.

However, there is one question, relating to the organisation of the course, where students on foundation degree programmes appear to have a less positive response profile. Table 24 shows the responses to this question.

Table 24 Responses to ‘the course is well organised and is running smoothly’
(Home foundation degree students at HEIs in England, 2006 NSS)

Response	Full-time		Part-time		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1 Definitely disagree	435	13%	105	10%	540	12%
2 Disagree	590	17%	155	15%	740	17%
3 Neither agree nor disagree	630	18%	200	20%	830	19%
4 Agree	1,295	38%	410	40%	1,705	38%
5 Definitely agree	465	14%	150	15%	620	14%
Total respondents to question	3,415	100%	1,020	100%	4,435	100%
‘Not applicable’ or no answer	15		5		20	
All respondents	3,430		1,025		4,455	
Agreeing or definitely agreeing	52%		55%		52%	
Net agreement	22%		30%		23%	
Mean response score	3.23		3.35		3.25	

118. Fifty-two per cent of the respondents agreed or definitely agreed that the course was well organised. The responses on average were therefore positive, as is also shown by the net agreement and means response score figures. However, a large minority, 29 per cent, disagreed with the statement, compared to 17 per cent for respondents at English HEIs as a whole.

119. Recent research into the NSS survey (SurrIDGE 2006) has shown that responses are associated with a range of factors, including student attributes such as sex, age and ethnicity. It would be wrong to attribute differences in responses to the programmes themselves without taking into account other factors and seeing if the differences remained. To do this, we took the model structure developed by SurrIDGE and used it to model the ‘course well organised’ question using 2006 survey data. We found that part, but only part, of the difference in responses between foundation degrees and other courses could be explained by these factors. This suggests that foundation degree programmes, on average, have students who are more demanding in terms of course organisation. In addition, if we assume that this model has allowed for all or most of the factors associated with students’ responses, then this result also suggests that foundation degree courses on average are less well organised.

120. The students’ comments give some insight into both suggested reasons. Late changes to timetables, poorly communicated lecture cancellations, or even cancellations without notice, are particularly trying to students who may have had to arrange/pay for child care and/or travel a long way to attend the lecture. Foundation degree programmes with higher proportions of mature students need to be particularly well organised if they are to satisfy their students. The students’ comments (see below) also provide evidence as to why

foundation degree courses may on average actually have been less well organised than other courses.

Teething problems

Comments from foundation degree students (2006 NSS)

- 'It's a new course and we're the first students . . . the uni had to get it together quickly . . . everything was up in the air for the first half of the first year'.
- 'I was one of the first people in the course, and I saw that it was disorganised from the beginning . . . the hospital trusts want everything to be done both ways – they want us to work full-time they also want us to be educated.'
- 'The course is an outreach course from a different college. . . it seems the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing'.
- '[It is the] first year/s it's been run so naturally teething problems have been in abundance which can be distracting.'

121. The suggestion that 'teething problems' prompted these responses seems to be borne out when we look at whether teaching in a particular subject at a particular institution started in the same year that the student started the course. Table 25 shows how the net agreement and mean response scores vary in relation to when the course was established.

122. The figures in Table 25 only refer to full-time students, as some of the part-time numbers are too small. They show that students on courses where there was no foundation degree or HND provision in the subject studied in the year prior to the students starting, were least likely to agree that the course was well organised. Overall the responses are just positive as the net agreement and mean response scores show, but less than half (45 per cent) agree that their course was well organised. Students on new foundation degree courses that had been developed from HND provision were more positive, as were students on established foundation degree courses.

Table 25 Responses to ‘the course is well organised and is running smoothly’ for new and established courses

(Home full-time foundation degree students at HEIs in England, 2006 NSS)

Cohorts	Number of respondents to the question	% agreeing or definitely agreeing	Net agreement	Mean response score
New FD course (No previous HND)	565	45%	12%	3.08
New FD course (Previously HND)	435	52%	20%	3.21
One year of prior FD provision	765	52%	22%	3.23
At least two years prior FD provision	1,655	53%	25%	3.28
All FD courses	3,415	52%	22%	3.23

Table 25 note

FD – Foundation degree.

123. The 2005 NSS survey showed a bigger difference in responses between students on foundation degrees and other courses with respect to the ‘well organised’ statement than the 2006 results presented here. However, when we looked at the 2005 respondents by cohort, the new foundation degree courses had the most positive responses, in contrast to the 2006 responses as shown in Table 25. It may be that at least part of the explanation for the pattern in Table 25 is to do with the relative effectiveness of the course management for courses introduced at different times.

124. We cannot assume, therefore, that ‘teething problems’ provide a complete explanation for the less positive responses to the question on course organisation. However, whatever the explanation, course organisation is an aspect that may need further attention for some foundation degree programmes, and certainly needs careful consideration by institutions planning new courses.

125. In its summary of reviews (QAA 2005b), the QAA encouraged providers to improve the links between awarding HEIs and FEC providers, ‘to ensure clearly defined roles and responsibilities’, and between HEIs, FECs and employers ‘to improve employer integration’. However, there are no specific references to the organisational difficulties that the NSS responses and comments alluded to in some institutions.

126. Finally, these indications that there is scope for improvement should not detract from the overwhelmingly positive responses from students on foundation degree courses. It is also clear that the benefits for many students go beyond the development of new skills and competences. For example, students report gaining new self-confidence and making friendships that they expect to continue long after the course is completed.

Progression through foundation degree programmes

Introduction

127. In this section we present the rates of progression and qualification on foundation degree programmes. The statistics are based on HESA and LSC individualised student records. Data from 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 were linked together to form a longitudinal record. Progression statistics are then derived for those entering in 2002-03 and 2003-04.

128. Two sets of statistics are presented:

- rates and nature of progression from year of entry
- rates of qualifying.

129. For the progression from the year of entry statistics we show rates for students registered at both HEIs and FECs, but because data on qualifications within the ILR are incomplete, qualification rates are only provided for students registered at HEIs.

130. In order to provide straightforward and interpretable results we have selected programmes which follow a standard academic year and have a course length of two or three years only. Details are provided at Annex D.

Rate of progression from year of entry 2003-04

131. Table 26 shows the rate of progression for those students who entered in academic year 2003-04 and whose courses follow a standard academic year. Rates for students registered at FECs and HEIs are shown separately.

132. The progression rates shown in Table 26 are broadly similar to those reported by the QAA (QAA 2005b)²⁷. The QAA also reports that most of those who discontinue do so 'for reasons other than academic failure'²⁸.

133. For those students continuing with foundation degree studies, Table 26 shows whether they are progressing, typically from year of programme one to two, or repeating, and whether they have changed institution. There is little movement between institutions, especially for students registered at an HEI, but when students do move they usually progress. Whether the low rate of movement between institutions simply reflects low demand, or difficulty in arranging a move, is unclear, but the fact that students who do move usually progress provides evidence that credit accumulation or the equivalent is working at least in these cases.

²⁷ The QAA statistics (paragraphs 87 and 88 of QAA 2005) relate to cohorts starting at different times, for programmes of different lengths, and are therefore not exactly comparable with those reported here.

²⁸ Students tend to discontinue for a mixture of reasons and it is difficult to identify a main single cause (Yorke 1999). It therefore seems likely that academic reasons will be a contributory factor for a wider group of foundation degree students.

Table 26 **Progression from year of entry**

(Home foundation degree students on standard academic years at FECs and HEIs in England who entered in 2003-04)

Institution type	Study towards (or award) in 2004-05	Full-time		Part-time	
		No.	%	No.	%
FECs	FD progress – same institution	570	51%	320	39%
	FD repeat – same institution	105	10%	145	18%
	FD progress – new institution	40	4%	20	2%
	FD repeat – new institution	5	1%	5	1%
	Any FD study	725	65%	490	60%
	Change to honours or higher	70	6%	45	5%
	Change to other HE course	15	1%	10	1%
	Any HE study	805	72%	545	66%
	Change to FE level course	40	4%	30	4%
	Not studying	265	24%	245	30%
All FEC entrants		1,115	100%	820	100%
HEIs	FD progress – same institution	3,745	65%	2,450	63%
	FD repeat – same institution	710	12%	495	13%
	FD progress – new institution	75	1%	45	1%
	FD repeat – new institution	25	0%	45	1%
	Any FD study	4,555	79%	3,035	79%
	Change to honours or higher	295	5%	95	2%
	Change to other HE course	75	1%	55	1%
	Any HE study	4,925	85%	3,185	82%
	Change to FE level course	115	2%	120	3%
	Not studying	745	13%	560	14%
All HEI entrants		5,780	100%	3,875	100%

Table 26 notes

- Institution type refers to the institution the student is registered with.
- 'Progress' means that the year of programme of study has increased, or a foundation degree or higher qualification has been awarded, or both.
- 'Repeat' means the students studied the same year of programme in 2004-05 as in 2003-04.
- Study at foundation degree level in 2003-04 refers to students registered at HEIs and FECs in England. Study in the following year (2004-05) includes students registered for any FE or HE study in HEIs in the UK, and students registered for any HE or FE study in FECs in England. Any study outside this coverage is not included and the students will be categorised as 'not studying'.
- 'Standard academic year' refers to students starting between 1 August 2003 and 31 December 2003, and shown as completing their year of study before 31 July 2004.

134. The percentages of students repeating years or discontinuing their studies for similar undergraduate provision are given in Annex C.

135. In addition to those students progressing on foundation degree programmes there are smaller numbers of students changing to an honours degree or other HE programme. This is more likely (6 per cent of students) for full-time students at HEIs than for those studying part-time (4 per cent of students).

136. The percentage of students who were not studying at HE level at all in the following year was higher for part-time students and for students registered at FECs. Some of these students will resume their studies. Looking at the cohort that started in 2002-03 but were not studying in 2003-04, we find that about 1 per cent were studying on some HE programme, and 5 per cent on FE level programmes in 2004-05. For foundation degree provision it is difficult to go back further, but from our analysis of other undergraduate provision we find that rates of returning to study decrease steeply as the time of inactivity increases. Our expectation must therefore be that most foundation degree students who become inactive will not resume their studies at HE level.

Changing mode of study

137. Students will not necessarily follow the same mode of study throughout the whole programme. Table 27 shows, for those students who continued studying on a foundation degree programme through 2003-04 and 2004-05, the numbers who changed from full- to part-time study and vice versa.

Table 27 **Changing mode of study**

(Home foundation degree students on standard academic years at FECs and HEIs in England studying at the same institution in 2003-04 and 2004-05)

Mode in year of entry (2003-04)	Mode in second year of study (2004-05)	No.	%
FT	PT progress	290	6%
FT	PT repeat	420	8%
FT	PT progress or repeat	705	14%
FT	FT or PT	5,130	100%
PT	FT progress	80	2%
PT	FT repeat	25	1%
PT	FT progress or repeat	105	3%
PT	FT or PT	3,415	100%

Table 27 note

The students included in this table are the same as those included in Table 26 and shown as studying for a foundation degree in the same institution in 2004-05 as in their year of entry, 2003-04.

138. The proportion of students changing from full- to part-time study (14 per cent) is much greater than the proportion changing from part-time to full-time (3 per cent). However, more than half of those changing to part-time are repeating their year of study, perhaps retaking

some of the modules from the first year, and if they follow the pattern seen for other undergraduate study, they are likely to return to full-time study in the following year. If we look at the change of mode with progression, we see that the rates from full- to part-time and vice versa are 6 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

139. We cannot know from these figures whether these proportions of students changing mode (with progression) matches the demand for such change, or whether some demand is restricted by course provision. More detailed analysis is planned to explore this further.

Rate of qualifying

140. Table 28 shows the qualification rates for students completing two- and three-year programmes within the expected course length.

141. We have only been able to calculate qualification rates for students registered at HEIs. In order to calculate rates for students on two-year programmes we have to go back to at least the cohort that entered in 2003-04, and for three-year programmes we have to go back to 2002-03. (The progression rates for the 2002-03 entrants are similar to those for the 2003-04 entrants shown in Table 26 and are tabulated at Annex B.)

142. Given the short time period available, we have had to focus on the 'HE qualification rate within the expected course length'. This is a very exacting measure since students who repeat a year or take a year out will not be included. The statistics in Table 28 should not be compared with the completion rates published as part of the UK HE performance indicators, which are based on projections of what the qualification rate would be after 15 years.

143. For full-time two-year programmes and full- and part-time three-year programmes, this 'qualification within expected course length' rate was about 50 per cent or higher for the students that qualified up to 2004-05. (The value for three-year full-time courses is based on small numbers and is therefore less reliable.) For these mode and course length combinations, 20 to 30 per cent of students are still studying, so we may expect the eventual qualification rate to be significantly higher.

144. The results for part-time two-year courses look anomalous. The qualification rate was only 27 per cent, and nearly half the students are still studying. This suggests that either the course length was wrongly recorded in some cases, or the original expectation that students would complete in two years has often proved to be too demanding.

Table 28 **Qualification rates within expected course length**

(Home foundation degree students who were expected to qualify in 2004-05 on standard academic year two- and three-year programmes at HEIs in England)

Two-year expected course length				
Outcome by 2004-05	Full-time		Part-time	
	No.	% in 2 years	No.	% in 2 years
FD awarded – same institution	2,255	48%	320	23%
FD awarded – new institution	15	0%	0	0%
FD qualification rate	2,270	48%	320	23%
Honours degree or higher awarded	10	0%	0	0%
Other HE award	110	2%	55	4%
HE qualification rate	2,390	50%	375	27%
Studying – FD or higher	1,170	25%	645	47%
Studying – other HE	70	1%	20	1%
Not studying at HE level	1,110	23%	325	24%
All 2003-04 two-year entrants	4,740	100%	1,360	100%

Three-year expected course length				
Outcome by 2004-05	Full-time		Part-time	
	No.	% in 3 years	No.	% in 3 years
FD awarded – same institution	115	64%	390	40%
FD awarded – new institution	0	0%	5	1%
FD qualification rate	115	64%	395	41%
Honours degree or higher awarded	0	1%	5	0%
Other HE award	0	1%	60	6%
HE qualification rate	120	66%	460	48%
Studying – FD or higher	30	18%	270	28%
Studying – other HE	5	2%	20	2%
Not studying at HE level	25	14%	215	22%
All 2002-03 three year entrants	180	100%	960	100%

145. Given that foundation degree courses have only been recently introduced, we are not yet able to track students for long enough to determine their eventual outcomes. For the earliest years of foundation degree provision the numbers were small. In any case, it would be unwise to assume that the outcomes of those first programmes are a good guide to subsequent development. We can, however, look at students who started a two-year programme, after three years from the start of their programme.

146. Table 29 shows the qualification rates for 2002-03 entrants after two and three years. We see that the anomaly for part-time two-year programmes disappears. So, it does seem that in some cases the two-year course length was mistakenly reported or was too ambitious.

147. For full-time students we also see more students qualifying in the third year, though the increase compared to two years is much less dramatic than seen for part-time students. For full-time students we see a marked increase in the percentage of students returned as qualifying at honours level. This may be because some institutions do not return the foundation degree for those students progressing on to honours.

148. At this stage it is difficult to estimate what the long-term qualification rate will be. After three years of study, there were still large numbers studying on foundation degree courses. If half of those still studying at HE level qualify, the eventual qualification rates would be 70 per cent and 64 per cent for full-time and part-time students respectively.

Table 29 **Qualification rates within one year after expected course length**

(Home foundation degree students who entered in 2002-03 on standard academic year two-year programmes at HEIs in England)

Outcome by 2004-05	Full-time			Part-time		
	No.	% in 2 years	% in 3 years	No.	% in 2 years	% in 3 years
FD awarded – same institution	1,535	48%	53%	275	28%	50%
FD awarded – new institution	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
FD qualification rate	1,535	48%	53%	275	28%	50%
Honours degree or higher awarded	110	1%	4%	0	0%	0%
Other HE award	70	2%	2%	5	1%	1%
HE qualification rate	1,715	51%	59%	280	29%	51%
Studying – FD or higher	620	23%	21%	140	43%	26%
Studying – other HE	25	1%	1%	10	1%	1%
Not studying at HE level	540	25%	19%	115	27%	21%
All 2002-03 two year entrants	2,900	100%	100%	550	100%	100%

Progression from foundation to honours degree programmes

149. Foundation degrees are intended to provide 'smooth progression' to honours degree programmes, sometimes involving participation in a summer school, and then one year of further full-time study, or the part-time equivalent.²⁹ In this section the analysis is based on all those students who qualified with foundation degrees at HEIs in 2003-04, whenever they started. Note that, as we have seen in the analysis of progression through foundation degree programmes, some students qualify with an honours degree without being reported as gaining a foundation degree. These qualifiers are excluded from the analysis presented here. As with the qualification rate statistics, this analysis is limited to students registered at HEIs.

150. Table 30 shows the numbers of students who graduated in 2003-04 who went on to honours programmes in 2004-05. We can see that about half of the foundation degree qualifiers immediately progressed to an honours programme.

Table 30 **Progression to honours programmes**

(2003-04 foundation degree home qualifiers registered at English HEIs)

Honours degree study in 2004-05	No. of FD qualifiers	%
Honours programme registered at same institution	1,140	47%
Honours programme registered at different institution	160	7%
Total on honours programmes	1,305	54%
Not on honours programme	1,110	46%
Total overall	2,410	100%

151. We interpret the 'one year of further study' to mean one year of extra study on a typical three-year full-time honours programme. To generalise this we could say that the foundation degree programme was credited with the equivalence of about two years of full-time study on an honours programme, ignoring the summer school provision. In Table 31 below we show the number of full-time years effectively credited to the foundation degree for those studying towards an honours degree.

²⁹ Smooth progression was a key objective in the original foundation degree consultation (DfEE 2000). However the concern was in part due to a belief that of the HND qualifiers who progressed to honours programmes 50 per cent started in the first year and 29 per cent in the second year. These figures exaggerated the extent to which HND students had to 'start again' (see LSDA 2002).

Table 31 Number of years credited to honours degree programmes

(2003-04 foundation degree home qualifiers registered at English HEIs who progressed to honours degree programmes in 2004-05)

Number of years credited	Same institution		Different institution	
	No. of FD qualifiers	%	No. of FD qualifiers	%
2 or more	925	81%	115	70%
1	160	14%	20	12%
0	40	3%	20	11%
Undetermined	15	1%	10	7%
Total	1,140	100%	165	100%

152. In a small number of cases the honours degree programme did not have a formal year of programme structure and therefore it was not possible to determine the credit that had been assigned to the foundation degree award.

153. For students continuing to register with the same institution, 81 per cent were credited with the full two years equivalent honours level study as originally envisaged, and only 3 per cent were in effect 'starting again'. It is quite likely that a small proportion of students would decide to embark on a completely different area of study, so, even with perfect articulation arrangements, we would expect to find some students starting a new programme of study from the beginning.

154. The proportions of students starting again was somewhat higher (11 per cent) for foundation degree qualifiers who change institutions, but most students were given due credit for their foundation degree studies. This is further evidence of the recognition of credit accumulated at different institutions.

155. Not all the students credited with two years of study will be expected to graduate within a year. Some, for example, will be on the third year of a four-year honours programme. If we just look at the foundation degree students who progressed to the final year of the honours programme, we can see whether and how they graduated. Table 32 shows the degree outcomes for these students.

156. Twenty-nine per cent of the students who progressed to the final year of an honours programme were not reported as graduating. There are a number of possible explanations for this. They may have discontinued or failed to qualify, they may have had to take longer to graduate, or it may be they have qualified in all respects apart from some formality. We will need to track the students for longer to determine how many eventually graduate with an honours degree.

157. Overall, we have a mixed picture. The overwhelming majority of foundation degree qualifiers who progress to honours programmes are credited with at least one year of study, and four out of five are credited with two or more. However, of those progressing into the final year of an honours programme, only 71 per cent are reported as graduating in that year.

158. In summarising the lessons from the reviews of foundation degrees, the QAA concluded as follows³⁰.

‘Areas for development in student progression and articulation are identified in around one-third of [QAA review] reports. In the majority of cases, these issues relate to students’ progression to articulated honours programmes.’

It is unclear whether, and how, these implied concerns have manifested themselves in the statistics reported here. It may be, for example, that potentially more students could, and would like to, progress to honours programmes than have been able to do so. It may also be that the low graduation rate for those progressing to the final year of an honours programme reflects the need for development in articulation between foundation degree and honours programmes.

Table 32 Honours degree achievement

(2003-04 foundation degree home qualifiers registered at English HEIs who progressed to the final year of an honours degree programme in 2004-05)

Degree classification	No.	%
First	60	6%
Upper second	285	31%
Lower second	240	26%
Third	45	5%
Other	25	3%
No award	275	29%
Total	930	100%

³⁰ Page 33, paragraph 90 of QAA 2005.

After qualifying: employment outcomes

Introduction and context

159. This section looks at all those students who qualified with foundation degrees at HEIs in 2004-05, whenever they started. The DLHE survey is the data source. Like the NSS survey, it is not complete. Not all qualifiers respond to the survey. Table 33 shows the response rates for full- and part-time qualifiers.

Table 33 **Response rates to DLHE survey**

(Foundation degree home qualifiers registered at English HEIs, 2004-05 DLHE survey)

Response	Full-time		Part-time	
	No.	%	No.	%
Written or online response	520	16%	400	28%
Telephone and other responses	2,000	63%	690	48%
Total responses	2,520	80%	1,090	75%
No response	640	20%	355	25%
All FD 2004-05 qualifiers	3,160	100%	1,450	100%

160. Those who do not complete a paper or web questionnaire are contacted by telephone. In the telephone follow-up, some institutions do not ask some of the questions which are of interest to us. Though the numbers of responses to some questions are low, we are not as concerned about response bias as we would be if the respondents were choosing not to answer these questions. Details of response rates by mode of response are provided in Annex B.

161. In interpreting these results it is important to appreciate that the DLHE survey takes place six months after qualifying. It has been shown that for undergraduate qualifiers in general, the character of the jobs they get changes over the first two or three years after qualifying, with increasing proportions of qualifiers gaining a 'graduate' job (Purcell and Elias 2005). The same pattern is likely to be the case for foundation degree qualifiers, particularly qualifiers from full-time study.

Destinations after qualifying

162. Table 34 provides a summary of the destinations reported by the respondents. Overall, for full- and part-time qualifiers, 59 per cent were still studying. This is broadly consistent with the figure of 54 per cent of the 2003-04 qualifiers progressing to honours degrees, based on the student record data (see Table 30).

Table 34 **Destinations after qualifying**

(Foundation degree home qualifiers registered at English HEIs, 2004-05 DLHE survey)

Destination	Full-time		Part-time	
	No.	%	No.	%
Studying	1,100	44%	105	10%
Studying and employed	475	19%	455	42%
Employed	770	31%	505	46%
Total employed	1,245	49%	960	88%
Unemployed	85	3%	10	1%
Other	90	4%	15	1%
Total DLHE respondents	2,520	100%	1,090	100%

163. Qualifiers from full- and part-time study continued to study to a similar extent, at 63 per cent and 51 per cent respectively, but in other respects the destinations are quite different. As might be expected, former part-time students usually combine study with employment. Most qualifiers from part-time study are in employment. Unemployment levels are generally low, particularly for part-time qualifiers.

Previous work for current employer

164. Table 35 shows the relationship between current and earlier employment for both full- and part-time qualifiers.

Table 35 **Working for current employer before or during foundation degree course**

(Foundation degree home qualifiers in employment registered at English HEIs, 2004-05 DLHE survey)

Previous work for current employer	Full-time		Part-time	
	No.	%	No.	%
Before studying only	110	12%	155	20%
During studying only	270	29%	170	22%
Before and during studying	240	26%	370	46%
Total previously employed	620	67%	700	88%
Not previously employed	305	33%	100	12%
Total answering question	930	100%	800	100%
Non response to question	315	—	165	—
Total respondents in employment	1,245	—	960	—

165. As we might expect, the qualifiers from part-time study worked for their current employer both prior and during their study. Perhaps surprisingly, we can see that most full-time students had also worked for their current employer before. Almost all of those who worked for their current employer previously, either full- or part-time, worked throughout the year or during term time. Very few were employed on holiday jobs or placements.

166. In interpreting the evidence about the quality of the jobs after qualifying it is important to appreciate that for most foundation degree qualifiers this is continuing employment. For some, especially full-time students, this may be casual work which continues while they search for a job, but for many others the scenario 'finish studying, start working' may not be accurate. The study for a foundation degree is often part of their career development.

Job quality – non-salary measures

167. A summary of three non-salary measures of job quality is presented in Table 36.

Table 36 **Job quality**

(Foundation degree home qualifiers in employment registered at English HEIs, 2004-05 DLHE survey)

Type of 'good' job	Full-time		Part-time	
	Number responses	% 'good' jobs	Number responses	% 'good' jobs
'Graduate' job	1,245	43%	960	48%
Qualification required, expected or an advantage	1,035	47%	805	34%
Positive reasons for taking the job	285	89%	325	91%

Table 36 notes

a. 'Graduate' job.

The categorisation of 'graduate' follows the algorithm devised by Elias and Purcell (2004).

b. Qualification required.

With respect to whether it would be possible to get the job without the foundation degree the following answers were counted:

- no: the qualification was a formal requirement
- no: successful applicants were expected to have the qualification
- possibly: but the qualification did give me an advantage.

c. Positive reasons for taking a job.

The following were counted as positive reasons:

- it fitted into my career plan/it was exactly the type of work I wanted
- it was an opportunity to progress in the organisation
- to gain experience in order to get the type of job I really want
- to see if I would like the type of work it involved
- to broaden my experience/to develop general skills.

d. Respondents without a positive reason would have only given one or more of the following responses:

- it was the best job offer I received/only job offer I received
- in order to pay off debts
- in order to earn a living.

168. All those who responded to the survey answered the question used to give the classification 'graduate or non-graduate' job (1,245 full-time, 960 part-time). However not all survey respondents answered the other questions. To a large extent this was because the questions were not asked in the telephone interviews.

169. The results show that just under half the qualifiers were in 'graduate' jobs for both full- and part-time qualifiers. A similar proportion of full-time qualifiers indicated that the foundation degree at the very least gave them an advantage in getting the position. For part-time qualifiers only about a third of respondents reported that the foundation degree was an advantage. Despite these figures, most qualifiers cited positive reasons for taking their current jobs. It may be that these jobs have the potential to develop into, or lead to, jobs which would be classified as 'graduate' and appropriate for a person with a foundation degree. A survey which will see what qualifiers are doing three and a half years after graduation is being developed by HESA, and this may reveal if this is the case, but we will not know for some years.

Salary

170. Table 37 shows the quartile salaries for male and female, full- and part-time qualifiers. It shows that many of the respondents to the survey did not provide salary information. Again, to some extent this was because the question was not asked in the telephone interviews.

Table 37 **Salary**

(Foundation degree home qualifiers in employment registered at English HEIs, 2004-05 DLHE survey)

Mode of foundation degree study	Sex	Response		Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile
		Number providing salary	Number DLHE responses			
Full-time	Male	130	430	10,000	15,000	18,000
	Female	315	810	10,000	14,000	16,000
	All	445	1,245	10,000	14,000	17,000
Part-time	Male	105	185	25,000	32,000	37,000
	Female	360	780	12,000	15,000	19,000
	All	470	960	13,000	16,000	25,000
All	Male	235	615	13,000	20,000	32,000
	Female	680	1,590	12,000	15,000	18,000
	All	915	2,205	12,000	15,000	20,000

171. The salaries for men and women are similar for qualifiers from full-time study; for qualifiers from part-time study, men's salaries are materially higher. The numbers are too small to provide meaningful tables at a finer level of detail, but an exploration of the data suggested the following:

- a. There is a salary premium for 'graduate' jobs of around £5,000.
- b. There are no large differences in salary by subject for full-time qualifiers.
- c. For part-time students, those studying education have a median salary of £14,000, while the median for all other subjects taken together is about £24,000.
- d. The difference in salary between men and women part-time qualifiers is due to two effects. Firstly, 60 per cent of part-time female qualifiers studied education, while a negligible number of male students studied this subject, and qualifiers studying education have low salaries. Secondly, for subjects where we have sufficient numbers of men and women qualifiers (business, social studies and subjects allied to medicine) we find that on average men earn about £15,000 more than women.

172. It is clear that, apart from male qualifiers from part-time study, salaries are generally low. It should be appreciated that a large number of foundation degree programmes are designed for associate professionals such as health and social carers, nursery supervisors and teaching assistants. Therefore, the students recruited to these programmes, usually women, will be in low paid occupations. Although completion of a foundation degree may lead to an immediate increase in salary, this is not automatic, and even if the award is recognised, the increase in salary is likely to be modest³¹. For qualifiers in many of these occupations, significant advancement in salary would only be possible after qualifying to honours level, which makes the articulation to honours programmes particularly important³².

³¹ For example, the average salaries for teaching assistants are reported to be £8.66 per hour, with 75 per cent of staff earning £10.00 per hour or less. These convert to about £15,000 and £17,000 per annum respectively for a whole year full-time equivalent, though most teaching assistants do not work full-time (Blanchford et al 2006).

³² The QAA report on its reviews of foundation degrees (QAA 2005) noted that the students progressing through foundation degrees in education would create additional demands for places for honours degrees.

Support from employers

173. This section considers the financial and other support provided by employers for students on foundation degree programmes. The DLHE survey provides information as well as the HESA and ILR student records.

174. For part-time qualifiers the DLHE survey includes questions about the support they received from their employer, if they were employed during or immediately before their study. (Note that this will not necessarily be their current employer.)

Table 38 Employer support during study

(Foundation degree part-time home qualifiers registered at English HEIs, 2004-05 DLHE survey)

Source of tuition fee	Number	%
Financial support only	40	17%
Financial and other support	30	11%
Total with financial support	70	28%
Other support only	125	50%
Total with any support	190	77%
No support	45	19%
Without employment during study	10	4%
Total responding to question	250	100%
Question not answered	845	—
Total DLHE part-time respondents	1,090	—

175. Financial support involves the employer paying the fee and, in some cases, giving other financial support such as living expenses. Non-financial support includes study leave and any other help. Twenty-eight per cent of the qualifiers reported that their employers gave financial support at least to the extent of paying the fee.

176. Again we have to rely on relatively small numbers of respondents to the relevant questions. We can cross-check the proportion of students who have their fee paid by using the HESA student record. This showed that 29 per cent of the 2004-05 part-time foundation degree qualifiers had their fee paid by their employer³³. This looks like confirmation of the 28 per cent figure derived from the DLHE survey. However, when we compare the information provided by the DLHE survey and HESA student record at the level of individual students, we find a poor level of agreement. We cannot be sure which source, if any, is right and therefore there is uncertainty about what the true figure is.

³³ These estimates include those students whose fees were reported as being paid by the Department of Health or the NHS, as well as explicitly by the student's employer.

177. With this caveat we conclude that less than one in three part-time foundation degree qualifiers had their fee paid by their employer, though the majority, 77 per cent, had some support from their employer.

178. The student records also enable us to report more up-to-date information on fee payment by employers, by looking at the most recent entrants. We are also able to report for both full- and part-time students, registered at both HEIs and FECs. Table 39 provides summary information on sources of fee payment from the HESA and ILR student records.

Table 39 Tuition fee payment

(2004-05 foundation degree home entrants registered at English HEIs and FECs)

Source of tuition fee	Full-time		Part-time	
	Number	%	Number	%
No support	5,140	40%	3,965	51%
Statutory student support (part or whole)	5,035	39%	660	8%
Department of Health and related bodies	390	3%	65	1%
Other payment by public bodies or charities	100	1%	110	1%
Employer	495	4%	1,650	21%
Other	305	2%	495	6%
No fee or fee waived	490	4%	375	5%
Unknown	795	6%	495	6%
Total	12,750	100%	7,815	100%

Table 39 note

Data sources: ILR and HESA student records

179. Being based on entrants rather than qualifiers, Table 39 is not directly comparable with the figures in Table 38, or the statistics for qualifiers derived from the student record.

180. Given the differences at the individual level between statistics based on these data and the DLHE survey, we need to treat these results for entrants with caution. We also need to decide whether those tuition fees returned as being paid by the Department of Health, and even other public bodies, are actually payments by the employer. However, even if we include both of these sources we only get estimates of 8 and 23 per cent of full-time and part-time entrants respectively having their fees paid by employers.

Conclusions and policy implications

181. This report provides a statistical digest for those developing future policy for foundation degree provision. It may also be useful for those involved in the wider issues of encouraging and developing employer engagement. Being based on administrative returns, the evidence provides a context for the discussion around these policy questions, rather than leading directly to recommendations on what should be done. However, there are some tentative conclusions and policy implications that can be drawn.

Growth of foundation degree provision

182. The growth of foundation degree provision over the first five years since their introduction has been dramatic, with over 60,000 students registered for the 2006-07 academic year. Part of this growth has come from the development of existing provision of HND programmes, but most has been completely new.

183. Future growth will depend critically on the demand for foundation degrees from potential students, which in turn will depend on institutions identifying courses which will attract such demand. Evidence from the fees that HEIs charge for full-time students suggests that institutions may believe that demand for foundation degrees is weaker than for honours degrees. Having stalled between 2004-05 and 2005-06, the numbers of part-time entrants increased by over 4,000 students in 2006-07.

184. There is no clear trend from which to extrapolate student numbers for the future. However, even if there were no further increases in the numbers of entrants, we would expect total student numbers to rise to nearly 80,000.

185. It was envisaged that the bulk of the expansion to increase participation in higher education to 50 per cent would come through new types of qualification, in particular foundation degrees³⁴. However, the growth of foundation degree provision was only sufficient to contribute 1.3 percentage points to the participation rate in 2004-05. To achieve the 50 per cent target solely through foundation degree expansion with the 2004-05 profile of entrants, we would need numbers to increase to over 300,000 students³⁵. To achieve these sorts of numbers in the medium term would require marked acceleration in expansion from current levels.

³⁴ The intention to increase participation towards this target through foundation degrees and similar provision was set out in the higher education White Paper (DfES 2003) and was endorsed by the Leitch Review (Leitch 2006).

³⁵ Ignoring changes in the population sizes, assuming that the proportion of English domiciled entrants remains constant and that full-time students average two years of study and part-time students three years, and taking the provisional HEIPR figure for 2004-05 of 42.0 per cent and the foundation degree entrant numbers from Table 2, we have:

$$(2 \times 12,890 + 3 \times 9,220) \times (50.0 - 42.0)/1.3 = 329,000$$

Widening participation

186. It was expected that foundation degrees would attract people from a 'broader range of backgrounds', and provide alternative routes into HE for those students who are not the 'traditional A-level school leaver' (DfEE 2000).

187. The evidence suggests that foundation degrees have achieved both objectives to some extent. The young foundation degree entrants included relatively high proportions of students from socio-economic backgrounds where participation in higher education is low. For mature entrants, we do not know the students' backgrounds, but for this group many are entering with non-traditional qualifications and it seems likely that many of them would not have entered higher education at all without the development of foundation degrees.

Organisation of courses

188. There are indications from the NSS that, in some cases, the rapid growth in foundation degree provision may have had an adverse impact on the student experience, with teething problems affecting the organisation and smooth running of courses. Institutional course planners and national and regional policy makers should bear this in mind. It is especially important given that weak organisation can be particularly disruptive for mature students, who may have to fit their studies in around other commitments.

Balancing study with work and other responsibilities – flexible provision

189. It was envisaged that foundation degrees would be flexible. This entailed making it possible to combine study with full-time work, through part-time provision and through credit schemes which would facilitate transfers between courses.

190. In 2006-07, there has been a marked growth in part-time provision, though most (58 per cent) entrants were still full-time. Fourteen per cent of students who start full-time study change to part-time in their second year, though over half of these are repeating part or all of the first year programme. Six per cent of students who start full-time change to part-time study and progress through the programme.

191. Few students transfer from one institution to another, but when they do they usually progress, so some sort of recognition of previous study must be operating, through a credit scheme or otherwise.

192. The comments from students made in the NSS remind us that mature students will often have to juggle their time not only between study and work, but with other caring responsibilities. To achieve this, some students point to the need for stability, for a timetable which is known well in advance and not subject to change. This may be just as important as the flexibility to change the place or pace of study.

Progression and achievement

193. The results relating to progression and achievement should be treated as provisional. They only relate to relatively early cohorts of students, and even for these students we will not know for some years how many eventually qualify.

194. These initial results are promising. For example, of the students starting on two-year full-time courses, 59 per cent have gained an HE qualification within three years, and a further 21 per cent are still studying towards a foundation degree or higher qualification. The results for students on highly intensive two-year part-time courses are a possible cause for concern. Only 27 per cent are reported to have qualified within two years. Institutions that provide these intensive part-time courses should look carefully at their results. As long as there are ways of extending the study time, and the evidence suggests there usually are, there is no harm in aiming to complete in two years. However, prospective students should be aware of the fact that they will probably need longer.

195. The aim of ensuring smooth progression to honours degrees seems to have been achieved in most cases. Almost all students progressing to honours programmes are credited with at least the equivalent of one year of full-time study at honours level, and 80 per cent are credited with two or more. The first results relating to completion of these honours programmes suggest that some students may have difficulty with the transition, but the picture will not be clear until we have data for further years.

Support from employers

196. There are some uncertainties with the data relating to student support, and some of it is limited to part-time students. The evidence suggests that about four out of five qualifiers from part-time study had some sort of support from their employer. To this extent support from employers seems to have been achieved for most part-time students.

197. The evidence for financial support is less promising. Most full-time, and even part-time, students do not get their fee paid by their employer. This suggests that the recent proposal for employers to make a financial contribution significantly greater than the tuition fee (Leitch 2006) would entail a dramatic change in the attitudes of employers to their employees on foundation degree courses.

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List of abbreviations

BTEC	Formerly 'Business and Technology Education Council'. This body merged with London Examinations in 1996 to form Edexcel. The term is now used for a group of Edexcel qualifications
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment, predecessor to DfES
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
FE	Further education
FEC	Further education college
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council For England
HEI	Higher education institution
HEIFES	Higher Education in Further Education Students Survey
HEIPR	Higher Education Initial Participation Rate
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HESES	Higher Education Students Early Statistics
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
JACS	Joint Academic Coding System
LPN	Low participation neighbourhood
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LSDA	Learning and Skills Development Agency
NSS	National Student Survey
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
UCAS	Previously 'Universities and Colleges Admissions Service', now treated as a name rather than an acronym.
VCE	Vocational Certificate of Education