
***An analysis of higher
education students who
study in Northern Ireland
compared to those who leave
to study in GB***

***2002/03
Academic Year***

November 2004

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¹ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

² Regional preference is the term used to describe whether a student obtained their preferred or reserve choice of region in which to study – see para 5.1 for definition.

1. Objective

Using data from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) for the 2002/03 academic year, this paper compares the key characteristics of NI domiciled higher education (HE) students who leave to study in Great Britain (GB) with those who remain in Northern Ireland (NI). It also examines whether those students who left NI to study in GB would have preferred to have taken a place at a NI institution had that option been available to them.

Section 2 comprises an executive summary and Section 3 sets the context for the analysis.

Section 4 provides a descriptive statistical analysis of the key characteristics of NI domiciled students who were accepted for a HE place at NI institutions compared to those accepted to GB institutions. For example, the analysis considers the age, gender, subject of study, tariff³ score and socio-economic classification (SEC) of accepted applicants.

Section 5 provides an analysis of whether NI domiciled applicants accepted for a HE place in the 2002/03 year obtained their preferred or reserve choice of region. It does this by classifying accepted applicants using information from students' UCAS application forms in terms of their firm, insurance and clearing decisions. The methodology that has been adopted for categorising students on the basis of whether they obtained their preferred or reserve choice of region is detailed in this section. A further analysis has been carried out on the characteristics of accepted applicants using these classifications.

³ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

2. **Executive Summary**

The key points arising from the analysis of the 2002/03 UCAS data in respect of NI domiciled accepted applicants are:

Characteristics of accepted applicants

- Of the 11,954 NI domiciled students who were accepted through UCAS to full-time undergraduate courses in the UK, 68% were accepted to NI institutions and 32% were accepted to GB institutions (para. 4.1);
- Just under ninety per cent of NI domiciled students accepted for a HE place at UK institutions were aged under 21 (para 4.2);
- 57% of NI domiciled of applicants accepted at UK institutions were female, with similar proportions of females accepted to NI (57%) and GB (55%) institutions (para 4.3);
- On average, NI domiciled females accepted to HE courses had higher tariff⁴ scores than males (para 4.4);
- The average tariff score of NI domiciled students accepted to NI institutions was 280 points, while the average score for those accepted to GB institutions was 286 (para 4.4);
- The average tariff score of NI domiciled students accepted to Scottish institutions was higher than those accepted to institutions in any other UK region (para 4.4);
- When compared with GB, a higher proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted to NI institutions had “mid” range tariff scores (para 4.5);
- A comparison of NI domiciled accepted applicants who remained in NI with those that went to GB shows that a higher proportion of those that stayed in NI studied subjects such as social studies, subjects allied to medicine and mathematics. In contrast, a higher proportion of those students who went to GB chose to study subjects such as medicine & dentistry, education and law (para 4.7);
- Of those NI domiciled applicants accepted to NI institutions, 26% were from the lower socio-economic classifications (SECs)⁵ compared to 19.5% accepted to GB institutions (para 4.8);

⁴ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

- A higher proportion of NI domiciled applicants from the lower and middle SEC groups held lower tariff scores than those from the upper SEC group (para 4.10);

Locational choices of accepted applicants

- Of those NI domiciled applicants whose firm choice was for an NI institution, 96% were accepted at a NI institution (para 5.2); and
- Of those NI domiciled applicants whose firm choice was for a GB institution, 96% were accepted at a GB institution (para 5.2);
- The proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants whose preferred choice of region was NI increased by 6.5 percentage points since a similar analysis of 1998/99 UCAS data, rising from 60.6% to 67.1% (para 5.10);
- The proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants whose preferred choice of region was GB decreased by 5.6 percentage points since a similar analysis of 1998/99 UCAS data, dropping from 34.3% to 28.7% (para 5.10); and
- The proportion of those NI domiciled accepted applicants who left to study in GB and whose preference was to have stayed in NI has decreased since 1998/99 from 11.5% to 9.2% in 2002/03.

⁵ To assist with analysis, the SEC groups have been split, in some cases, into three categories: upper, middle and lower. This approach can be assumed to involve some type of hierarchy, which cannot be assumed with the 7 category approach - see section 4.8

3. Context

In the 1996/97 academic year, 38% of NI domiciled students⁶ migrated from NI for their HE experience. By 2002/03 the percentage had declined to just over 30%⁷, however, NI still has a higher proportion of leavers when compared with England and Scotland - see table 1

Domicile of student by country of institution studying 2002/03

Table 1

		Country of institution studying			
		NI	England	Scotland	Wales
Domicile of student	NI	69%	16%	14%	1%
	England	0%	95%	2%	3%
	Scotland	0%	6%	94%	0%
	Wales	0%	38%	1%	61%

Source: HESA – total enrolment on full-time undergraduate courses 2002/03

Previous research⁸ has demonstrated that those who leave NI for HE are different in many respects from those who stay. For example, on average, those who left NI tended to be better qualified in terms of A level scores, were more likely to be from the Protestant community, their parents were more likely to have had a professional background and they tended to have had a grammar school education. These previous studies relied heavily on a survey of students who entered HE in 1991 and clearly this evidence is now significantly dated. Where possible, Section 4 & 5 of this paper updates the position and extends the evidence base using the 2002/03 UCAS data.

Many students that leave NI to undertake an HE course in GB do not return after graduation. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Destinations of Leavers from HE Survey 2002/03, which surveyed students six months after graduation, shows (see table 2) that of those NI domiciled students who graduated from full-time undergraduate courses at GB HE institutions and whose destinations were known, just over one third returned to NI after graduation. This is in contrast to those who graduated from a NI HE institution where ninety per cent remained in

⁶ New entrants to full-time undergraduate courses.

⁷ Source: HESA and FESR

⁸ Osborne R et al (2000) *Skill Development and Enhancement: A study of Northern Ireland Graduates*; McGregor P et al (2002) *Home and Away: Graduate experience from a regional perspective*; Harmon C and Walker I (2000) *Education and Earnings in Northern Ireland*.

NI. Further analysis⁹ also shows that those students that did return to NI after graduation from a GB institution had achieved lower average A level scores when first entering university.

Location of first destination after graduating of NI domiciled full-time undergraduate students at NI and GB institutions 2001/02

Table 2

		NI domiciled at NI HE Institutions	NI domiciled at GB HE Institutions
Location of first destination after graduating	NI	90%	38%
	GB	5%	54%
	ROI	3%	4%
	Other EU	1%	1%
	Other Overseas	1%	2%
	Total	100%	100%

Source: HESA First Destinations Survey 2001/02

This paper adopts a methodology which considers the differences in the locational preferences of students, as revealed on their UCAS application forms, to determine the proportion of accepted applicants who are considered to have selected their location of study on the basis of either their preferred or reserve choice of region (see section 5). It also compares the 2002/03 UCAS analysis with a similar analysis carried out on the 1998/99 UCAS data.

⁹ 2001/02 HESA DLHE data

4. Characteristics of NI domiciled Accepted Applicants to HE courses in NI and GB¹⁰

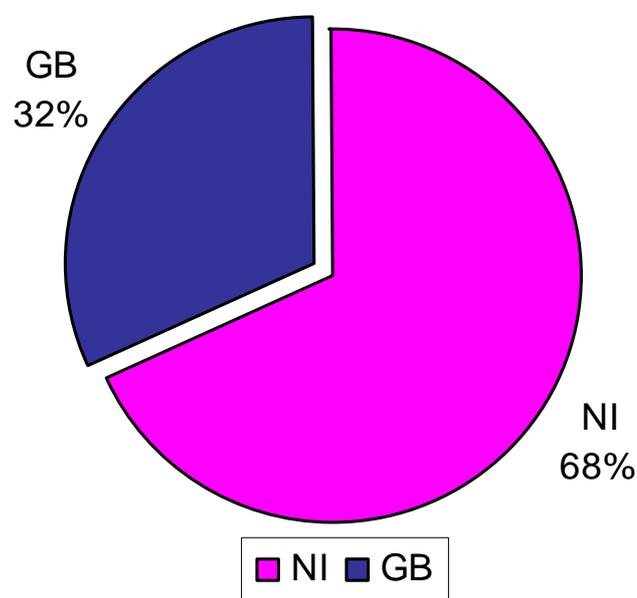
The following section uses data supplied by UCAS to provide a descriptive analysis of the key characteristics of full-time undergraduate NI domiciled students who were accepted for a HE place at NI and GB institutions in 2002/03. When considering this analysis, it should be noted that there are a number of limitations associated with using UCAS data, and these are set out in Appendix 1. In particular, it is worth noting that UCAS data does not cover all new entrants to HE courses.

4.1 Overview

In the 2002/03 academic year, 11,954 NI domiciled students were accepted through UCAS to full-time undergraduate courses at UK institutions (*figure 1*):

- 8,142 (68%) were accepted to NI institutions; and
- 3,812 (32%) were accepted to GB institutions

Figure 1: Proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to NI and GB institutions



¹⁰ UCAS coverage relates to HE institutions in NI and HE and FE institutions in GB.

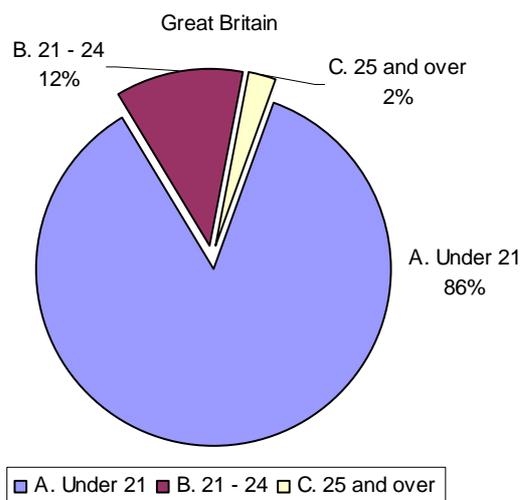
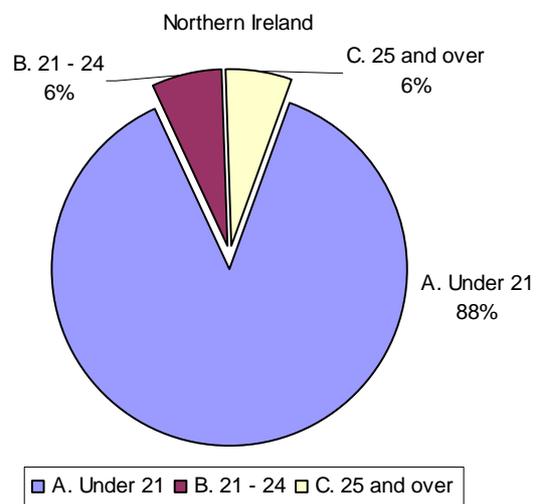
4.2 Region of study by age

An analysis of the age of NI domiciled accepted applicants by region of study shows that (figure 2):

- 88% of those accepted to NI institutions were aged under 21. The equivalent figure for those accepted to GB institutions was 86%.

Of those NI domiciled students accepted to NI institutions, 6% were aged 25 and over, while only 2% of applicants accepted to GB institutions were aged 25 and over.

Figure 2: Proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to NI and GB institutions by age

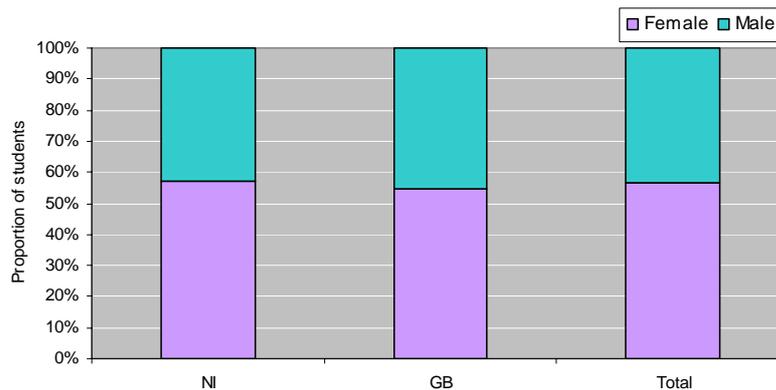


4.3 Region of study by gender

An analysis of the gender of NI domiciled accepted applicants by region of study shows that (figure 3):

- females accounted for 57% of accepted applicants to NI institutions and 55% of accepted applicants to GB institutions.

Figure 3: *Proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to NI and GB institutions by gender and region of study*

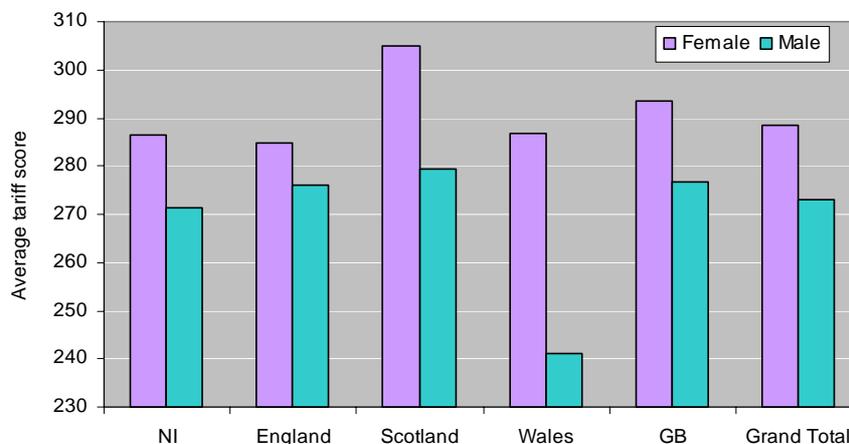


4.4 Region of study by average tariff score^{11, 12} and gender

An analysis of NI domiciled accepted applicants by average tariff score and gender shows that (figure 4):

- on average females were accepted for places at institutions in both NI and GB with higher tariff scores than males.

Figure 4: *Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by gender and region of study*



¹¹ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

¹² Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

It is also worth noting that the average tariff score of NI domiciled students accepted to NI institutions was 280 points, while the average score of those accepted to GB institutions was 286. In addition, the average tariff score of NI domiciled applicants accepted to Scottish institutions was higher (294) than held by those accepted to institutions in any other region.

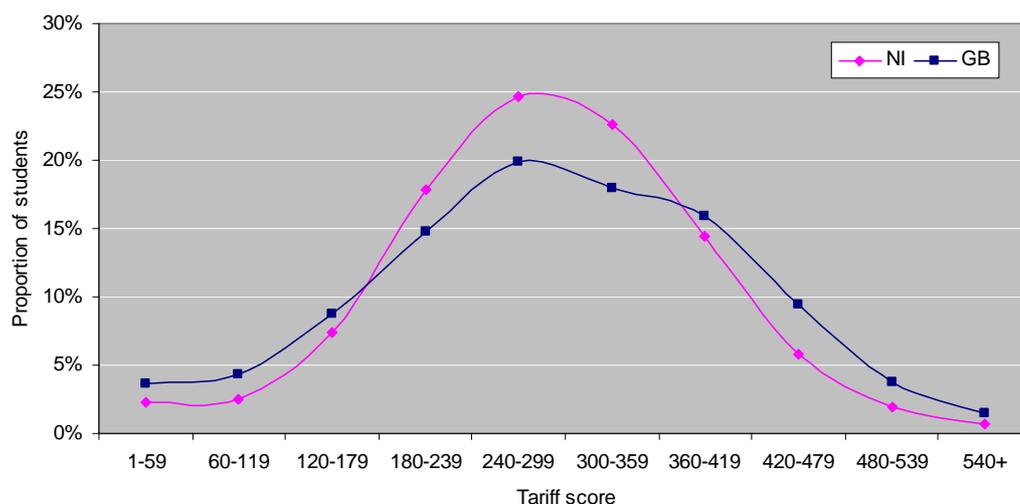
4.5 Region of study by tariff score^{13, 14}

An analysis of the tariff score of NI domiciled accepted applicants by region of study shows that (figure 5):

- a greater proportion of those accepted to GB institutions had scored either “low”¹⁵ or “high”¹⁶ tariff points compared to those that remained in NI.

Of those NI domiciled students accepted to GB institutions, 17% had achieved 179 points or less compared with 12% who had achieved similar scores and stayed in NI. Similarly, 31% of NI domiciled students accepted to GB institutions had achieved 360 points or higher compared with 23% who had achieved a similar score and studied at an NI institution. A higher proportion of those accepted to NI institutions (65%) than accepted to GB institutions (53%) had achieved “mid-range” scores¹⁷.

Figure 5: Proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to NI and GB institutions by tariff score



¹³ For example, A level tariff allocation A= 120, B=100, C=80, D=60, E=40.

¹⁴ Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

¹⁵ A “low” tariff score, in this instance, is defined as 179 points or less

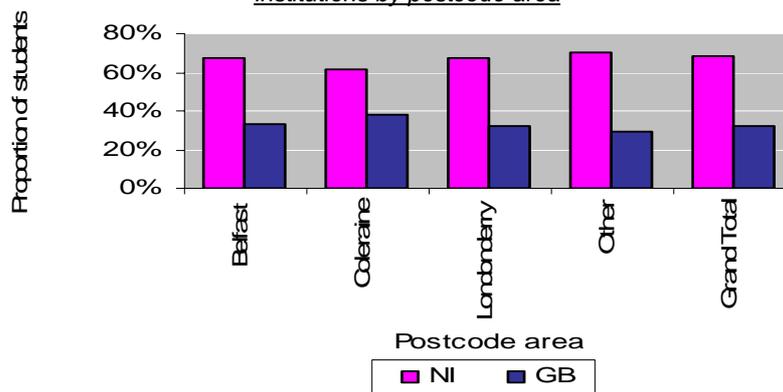
¹⁶ A “high” tariff score, in this instance, is defined as 360 points or higher

¹⁷ A “mid-range” score in this instance is defined as 180 to 359 points

4.6 Region of study by home postcode area

An analysis of the home postcode areas¹⁸ of NI domiciled accepted applicants shows (figure 6) that 68% of those from Londonderry were accepted for a place at a NI institution with the equivalent figures for Belfast and “other” NI regions being similar at 67% and 70% respectively. However, only 61% of those from the Coleraine area remained in NI to study.

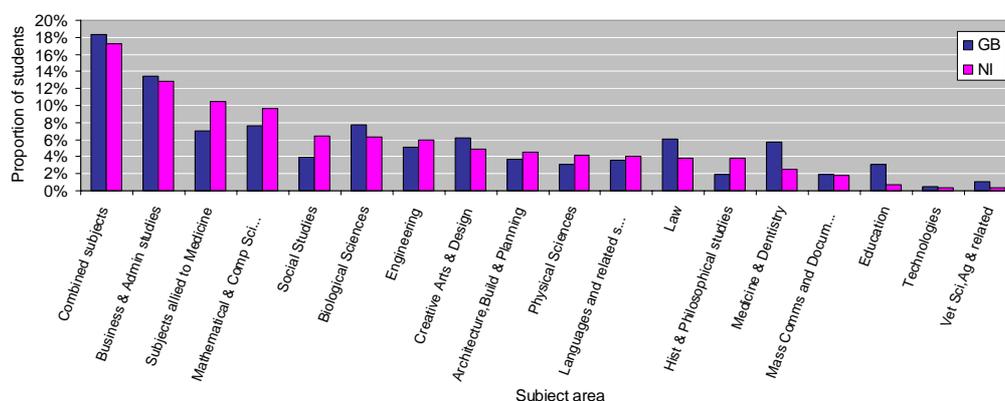
Figure 6: *Proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to NI and GB institutions by postcode area*



4.7 Region of study by subject type

An analysis of the subjects studied¹⁹ by region of study shows that (figure 7) Business and Administrative Studies and Subjects Allied to Medicine had the highest number of enrolments in both NI and GB institutions. Subject areas such as Technologies, Veterinary Sciences & Agriculture and Related Studies had the lowest number of enrolments.

Figure 7: *Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants to NI and GB institutions by subject area*



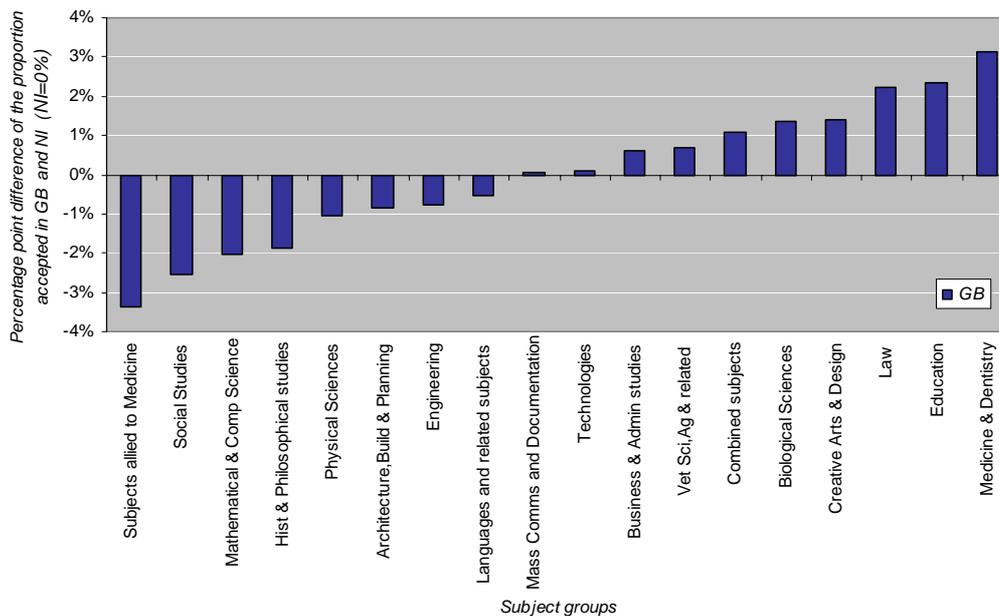
Considering further the issue of subject choice, there are some notable differences between the proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted to NI

¹⁸ Information on postcodes has been supplied by UCAS in 4 categories: Belfast, Coleraine, Londonderry & other NI.

¹⁹ Excluding combined subject areas.

institutions and the proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted to GB institutions. The chart below (*figure 8*) sets out the percentage point difference between the proportion of students in NI and the proportion in GB by subject area. To the left of the chart are those subject areas which were more heavily represented in NI than GB, while to the right of the chart are the subject areas which were more heavily represented in GB than in NI.

Figure 8: Percentage points difference in the proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to GB institutions compared with the proportion accepted to NI institutions– by subject area



It is worth noting that there may be specific reasons for the differences in the uneven representation of courses between NI and GB. Examples include:

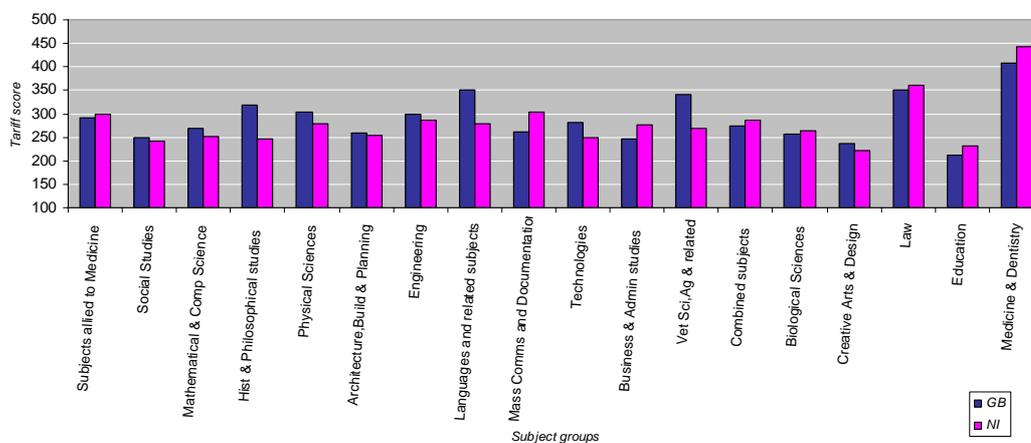
- the non-availability of veterinary science courses in NI;
- the relationship between the local health trusts and nursing courses in NI may have resulted in higher participation on nursing courses in NI; and
- the “golden hello” incentive system for recruiting teachers in England and Wales may have resulted in a higher proportion of students undertaking teaching courses in these regions.

An analysis of the average tariff score²⁰ of NI domiciled accepted applicants for the subject areas at either end of the above chart is interesting (*figure 9*). It shows that in subject areas where a region had a higher proportion of accepted applicants, that region also tended to have accepted those students with lower average tariff scores:

²⁰ For example, A level tariff allocation - A= 120, B=100, C=80, D=60, E=40.

- Out of the 6 subject areas which were most heavily represented in NI (i.e. those to the left of the chart), only in the subjects allied to medicine subject group was the average tariff score²¹ of students accepted to NI institutions higher than for those accepted to GB institutions; and
- Out of the 6 subject areas which were least heavily represented in NI (i.e. those to the right of the chart), only in the creative arts and design subject area was the average tariff score of students accepted to NI institutions lower than for those accepted to GB institutions.

Figure 9: *Average tariff score of NI domiciled accepted applicants by subject area and region*



4.8 Region of study by Socio-Economic Classification (SEC)^{22,23}

An analysis of SEC²⁴ by region of study shows that (table 3 & figure 10):

- while 24% of all NI domiciled accepted applicants were from the lower SEC groups, 26% of NI domiciled accepted applicants to NI institutions and 19.5% accepted to GB institutions were from these groups.

(Conversely, 39% of applicants accepted at NI institutions were from the upper SEC group, compared to 52% accepted to GB institutions.)

The following table and chart provides more detail on the SEC group of NI domiciled accepted applicants by region of study.

²¹ Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

²² The Socio-Economic Classification (SEC) is the revised occupationally-based socio-economic classification adopted by government in 2001 which replaces the Social Class and Socio-economic Groups categorisations.

²³ Those students declared as unknown in the SEC have been excluded from any analysis.

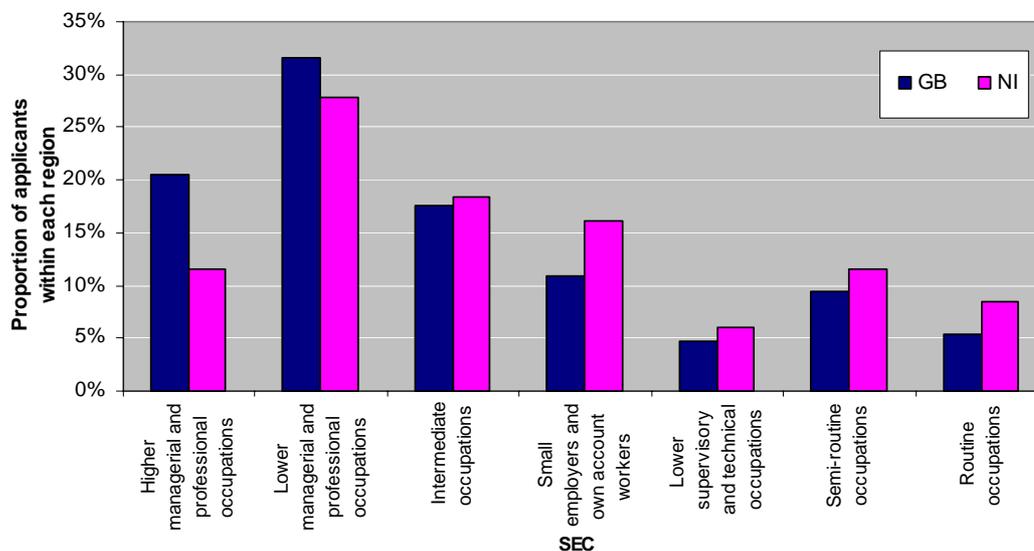
²⁴ To assist with analysis, the SEC groups have been split, in some cases, into three categories: Upper, middle and lower. This approach can be assumed to involve some type of hierarchy, which cannot be assumed with the 7 category approach (source: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/ns_sec/downloads/NS-SEC-USER-VER1-2.pdf).

Table 3: *Number (proportion) of NI domiciled accepted applicants to NI and GB institutions by SEC*

SEC		Region of study		Grand Total
		NI	GB	
Higher managerial and professional occupations	Nos	812	662	1,474
	%age	11.58%	20.48%	14.39%
Lower managerial and professional occupations	Nos	1,954	1,022	2,976
	%age	27.87%	31.61%	29.05%
UPPER SEC group	Nos	2,766	1,684	4,450
	%age	39.46%	52.09%	43.44%
Intermediate occupations	Nos	1,287	567	1,854
	%age	18.36%	17.54%	18.10%
Small employers and own account workers	Nos	1,130	353	1,483
	%age	16.12%	10.92%	14.48%
MIDDLE SEC group	Nos	2,417	920	3,337
	%age	34.48%	28.46%	32.58%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	Nos	426	150	576
	%age	6.08%	4.64%	5.62%
Routine occupations	Nos	589	172	761
	%age	8.40%	5.32%	7.43%
Semi-routine occupations	Nos	812	307	1,119
	%age	11.58%	9.50%	10.92%
LOWER SEC group	Nos	1,827	629	2,456
	%age	26.06%	19.46%	23.98%
GRAND TOTAL	Nos	7,010	3,233	10,243
	%age	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Excludes 1711 students whose SEC classification is unknown

Figure 10: *Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants to NI and GB institutions by SEC*



4.9 Region of study by SEC and average tariff^{25,26} score

An analysis of SEC by average tariff score and region of study shows that (figure 11):

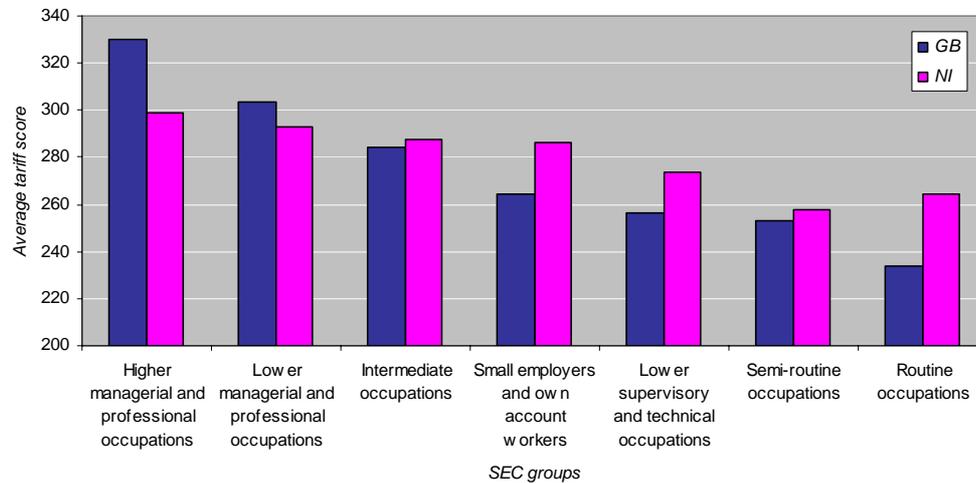
- the average tariff score of those NI domiciled accepted applicants in the upper two SEC groups was higher for those accepted to GB

²⁵ For example, A level tariff allocation - A= 120, B=100, C=80, D=60, E=40.

²⁶ Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

institutions than NI institutions, while in the remaining SEC groups the average tariff score was higher for those accepted to NI institutions.

Figure 11: Average tariff score of NI domiciled accepted applicants by SEC and region of study

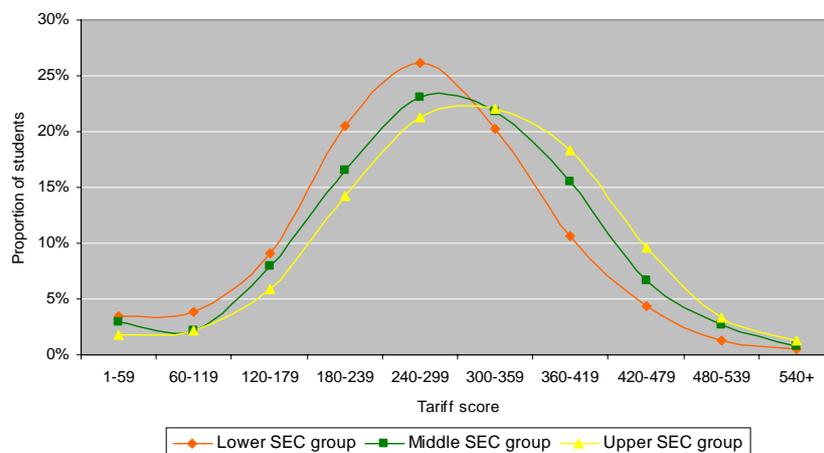


4.10 SEC by tariff score²⁷

An analysis of the grouped SEC of NI domiciled accepted applicants by tariff scores shows that (figure 12):

- a higher proportion of those applicants from the lower and middle SEC groups²⁸ held 299 or less points than the upper SEC group²⁴. Conversely, a higher proportion of those applicants from the upper SEC group held 360 or more points than the middle and lower SEC groups.

Figure 12: Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by SEC by tariff score



²⁷ Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

²⁸ See para 4.8 for detail on lower, middle and upper SEC groups

5. Locational choices of accepted applicants

5.1 Introduction

Using data about accepted applicants' firm, insurance and clearing choices, as revealed on their UCAS form, this section considers applicants' choices and examines whether students were accepted for an HE place in their "preferred region" or "reserve region". These terms are used throughout the rest of this paper and are defined as:

Accepted Preferred Region - *a student successful in attaining an HE place in their 1st [firm] choice region of study (whether that be in NI or GB).*

Accepted Reserve Region - *a student whose accepted region of study was different from their 1st [firm] choice region of study.*

The terms preferred or reserve should not be interpreted as necessarily meaning that a student did or did not wish to study in a particular region as there are influences and factors that affect students' decisions which could not be incorporated into the analysis. Some of these influences and factors are identified below and any analysis undertaken in this section should be viewed in this context. The actual methodology adopted for assigning whether a student obtained their preferred or reserve choice of region is identified in Appendix 2.

Limitations of methodology

There are some limitations associated with the methodology adopted for categorising students as obtaining their preferred or reserve region of study.

In some cases students did not make either a firm or insurance choice but obtained a HE place via the UCAS clearing system. These applicants, which account for around 4% of students, have been excluded from the detailed analysis.

A limitation arises from the possibility that students might not secure any offers from HE institutions in the region where they wanted to study. For example, during the UCAS application process, a student can normally make up to six choices for university courses but subsequently can only choose one

firm and one insurance offer. If a student was interested in a particular course which was offered at both NI and GB institutions, but primarily wished to study in NI, to keep their options open, the student may have applied for the course in both regions. However, if only GB institutions made offers, which the student subsequently selected as their firm and insurance choices, the methodology adopted in this analysis would only recognise GB as the preferred choice of region. To address this issue, the Department is currently exploring whether UCAS data can be used to estimate the magnitude of this potential categorisation bias.

It is also not possible to take into consideration influences upon students prior to them choosing where and what to study. Examples of these include finance, attitude to NI, peer pressure, family traditions, perception that it is easier to get accepted on a course in a particular region or that the perceived prestige of some HE institutions in a particular region is higher. By way of illustration, an applicant may wish to leave NI to study at a GB institution but may feel that they could not afford financially to do so and, as a result, may apply only to NI institutions. In this analysis, if that student was accepted on a course at a NI institution, they would be categorised as obtaining their preferred region of study, when in fact NI was their reserve region. Alternatively, a student who would have preferred to stay in NI but felt that they were unlikely to attain the tariff²⁹ score required by a NI institution, may only apply to GB institutions. If they were subsequently accepted at a GB institution, the analysis here would categorise them as obtaining their preferred region, when in fact they obtained their reserve region.

Unfortunately, the UCAS data cannot be used to determine the level of error that unrevealed or hidden preferences could introduce to the analysis. This places a limitation on the robustness of the results.

²⁹ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

Analysis of regional preferences

5.2 Applicant choices by region of study

In the 2002/03 academic year, there were 11,954 NI domiciled accepted applicants to HE courses in the UK, of which:

- 77% had their firm choice accepted;
- 13% had their insurance choice accepted; and
- 10% found a place through clearing

These proportions were broadly similar irrespective of whether the student was accepted to a GB or NI institution.

Table 4: *Accepted choices of NI domiciled students by region of study*

	GB	%age	NI	%age	Grand Total	%age
Firm	2,968	78%	6,238	77%	9,206	77%
Insurance	388	10%	1,128	14%	1,516	13%
Clearing	456	12%	776	10%	1,232	10%
Grand Total	3,812	100%	8,142	100%	11,954	100%

Appendix 3 provides a brief overview of the UCAS application process.

An analysis of only the firm choice of region of NI domiciled accepted applicants' compared against their accepted choice of region shows that:

- of the 8,012 applicants whose firm choice was NI in 2002/03, **96%** were accepted at a NI institution; and
- of the 3,427 applicants whose firm choice was a GB institution in 2002/03, **96%** were accepted at a GB institution.

Table 5: *Region of firm choice by region of accepted choice*

		Firm region of choice		Grand Total
		GB	NI	
Accepted region of choice	GB	3,277	334	3,611
	%age	96%	4%	32%
	NI	150	7,678	7,828
	%age	4%	96%	68%
	Total	3,427	8,012	11,439
	%age	100%	100%	100%

Table excludes 515 students who did not make a firm choice

5.3 Categorisation of accepted applicants

On the basis of the categorisation used in paragraph 5.1, of the 11,439 NI domiciled accepted applicants to UK institutions³⁰ (figure 13):

- 95.8% obtained a place in their preferred region (67.1% in NI and 28.6% in GB); and
- 4.2% obtained their reserve region (1.3% in NI and 2.9% in GB).

This analysis suggests that 2.9% of applicants had a preference to study at a NI institution but accepted a place at a GB institution instead. On the other hand 1.3% of applicants had a preference to study at a GB institution but accepted a place at a NI institution instead.

Figure 13: *Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by regional preference*

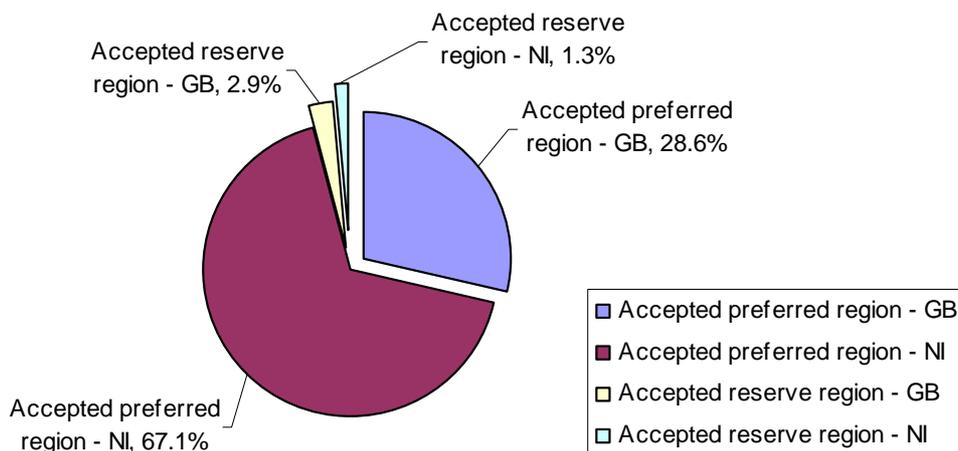


Table 6: *Proportion and numbers of NI domiciled accepted applicants by regional preference*

Accepted Region		Accepted preferred Region - NI	Accepted preferred Region - GB	Accepted reserve Region - NI	Accepted reserve Region - GB	Grand Total
NI	nos.	7,678		150		7,828
	%age	67.1%		1.3%		68.4%
GB	nos.		3,277		334	3,611
	%age		28.6%		2.9%	31.6%
Total	nos.	7,678	3,277	150	334	11,439
	%age	67.1%	28.6%	1.3%	2.9%	100.0%

Table excludes 515 students whose preference was unknown³¹

³⁰ Proportions are based on 11,439 students whose preference could be determined.

³¹ The unknown category comprises accepted applicants who did not make any firm or insurance choices but were accepted via the UCAS clearing system. It was therefore not possible to determine their preferences.

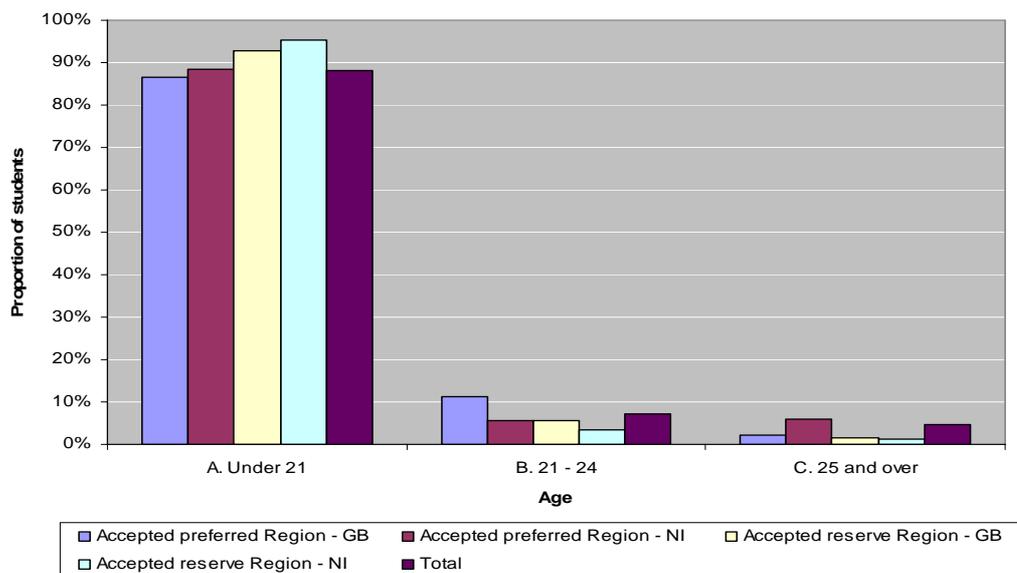
Of those accepted applicants who left NI, 9% were assessed to have taken up a place in their reserve choice of region.

5.4 Regional preference and age

NI domiciled accepted applicants aged under 21 accounted for 88% of all NI domiciled accepted applicants, but they accounted for 93% and 95% of NI domiciled applicants who accepted their reserve choice of region in GB and NI respectively. (figure 14). In other words, those accepted applicants aged under 21 accounted for a proportionately higher share of students who took a place in their reserve region than those who a place in their preferred region.

Those aged 21 to 24 accounted for a proportionately higher share of those whose preferred region was GB and those aged 25 and over accounted for a proportionately higher share of those whose preferred region was NI.

Figure 14: *Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by regional preference and age*

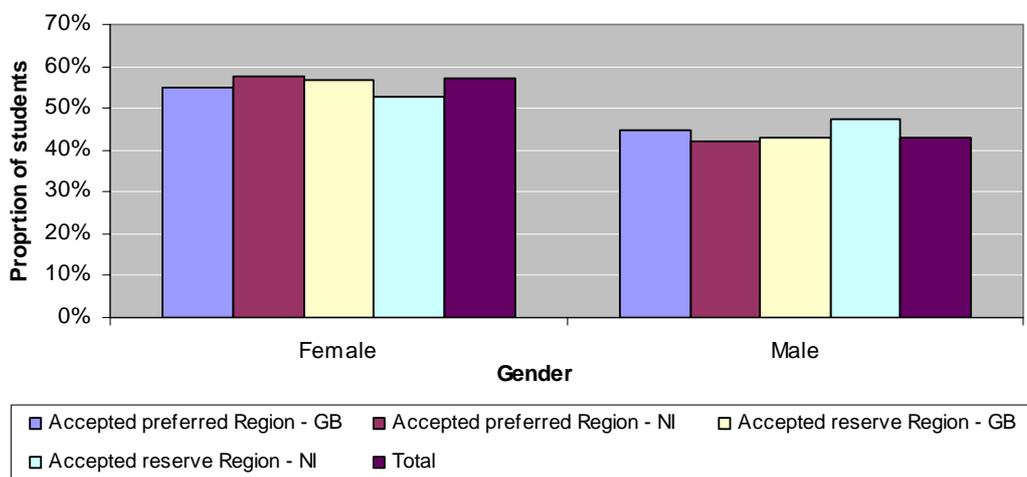


5.5 Regional preference and gender

As previously highlighted, 57% of NI domiciled accepted applicants are female. However, females accounted for a proportionately greater share of those that obtained their preferred choice of region in NI (58%).

Whereas males accounted for 43% of all NI domiciled accepted applicants, they accounted for a proportionately greater share of those that obtained their preferred choice of region in GB (45%) and their reserve choice of region in NI (47%) (i.e. those whose preference was to go to GB but instead took up a place in NI) (*figure 15*).

Figure 15: Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by gender and regional preference



5.6 Regional preference by average tariff score^{32 33 34} and gender

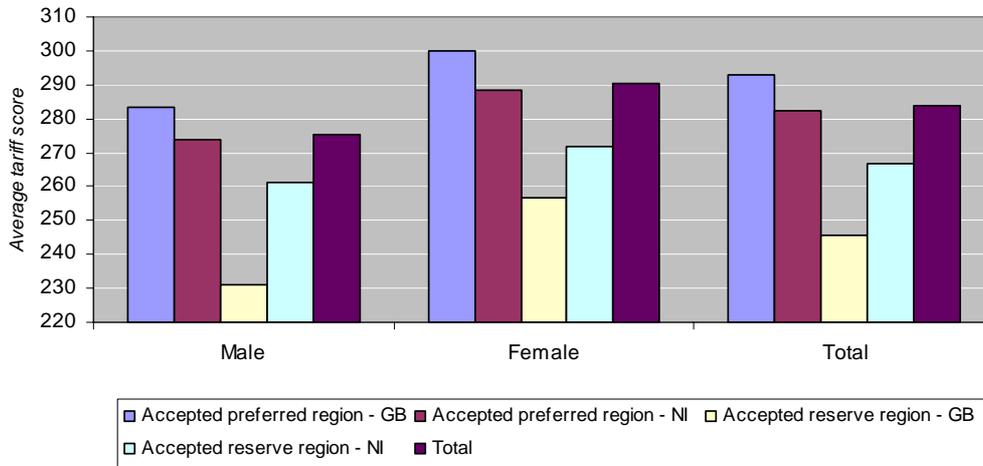
In terms of average tariff scores, those NI domiciled applicants accepted to GB institutions on the basis of their preferred choice were the best qualified, irrespective of gender (*figure 16*). Conversely, those accepted applicants who obtained their reserve choice of region in GB (i.e. their preference was to stay in NI) had the lowest average tariff score by some margin. Overall, female accepted applicants possessed higher average tariff scores than males, across all preferences.

³² The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

³³ Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

³⁴ For example, A level tariff allocation - A= 120, B=100, C=80, D=60, E=40.

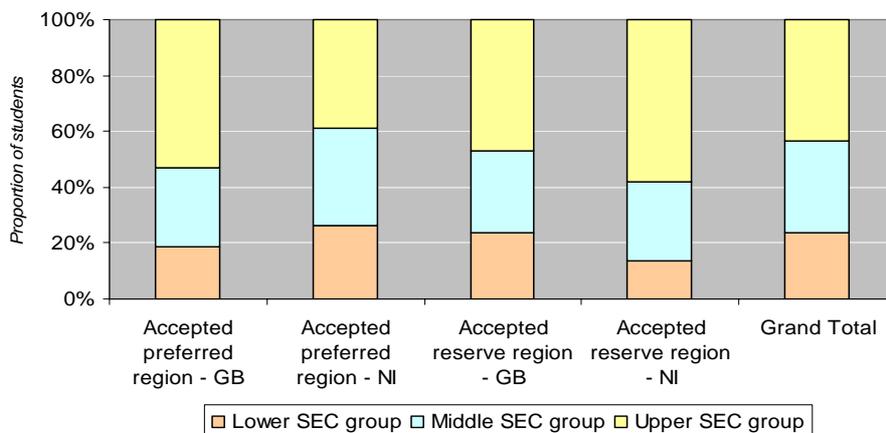
Figure 16: NI domiciled accepted applicants by gender, average tariff score and regional preference



5.7 Regional preference and Socio-Economic Classification (SEC)³⁵

An analysis of the SEC groups shows (figure 17) that 24% of NI domiciled accepted applicants were from the lower SEC group. However, this group accounted for 26% of those applicants accepted for a place in NI on the basis of their preferred choice of region (i.e. their revealed preference was to study at a NI institution). Conversely, a lower proportionate share of NI domiciled accepted applicants from the lower SEC group accepted a place in GB irrespective of whether it was on the basis of their preferred (19%) or reserve (24%) choice of region. A lower proportionate share also accepted a place in NI on the basis of their reserve (14%) choice.

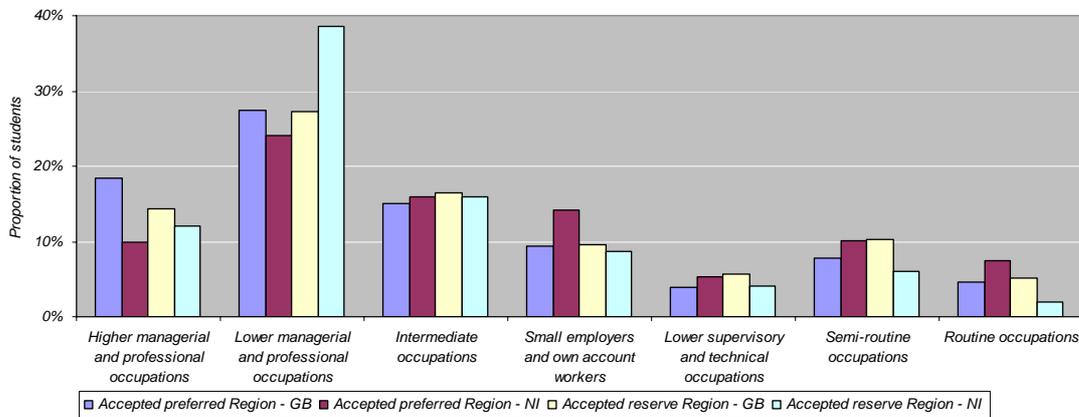
Figure 17: Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by grouped SEC and regional preference



³⁵ To assist with analysis, the SEC groups have been split, in some cases, into three categories: upper, middle and lower. This approach can be assumed to involve some type of hierarchy, which cannot be assumed with the 7 SEC category approach (source: http://www.statistics.gov.uk/methods_quality/ns_sec/downloads/NS-SEC-USER-VER1-2.pdf).

The chart in *figure 18* breaks the analysis down further and presents data at the SEC 7-classification level.

Figure 18: Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants by SEC and regional preference

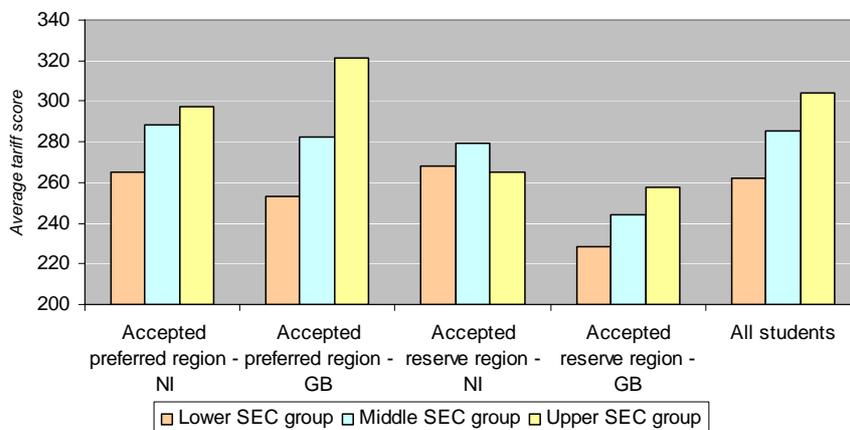


5.8 Regional preference by average tariff score³⁶ and SEC

An analysis of the SEC of NI domiciled accepted applicants by average tariff score shows that (*figure 19*) those from the lower SEC groups tend to possess lower average tariff scores than those from the middle and upper SEC groups and this holds for all regional preference groups except the “accepted reserve region – NI” category (i.e. those whose preference was to go to a GB institution but accepted a place at a NI institution) where the average tariff scores for the lower SEC group were higher than for the upper SEC group.

The average tariff scores of those NI domiciled students whose preference was to stay at an NI institution but who accepted a place in GB was lower than any other preference group.

Figure 19: Proportion of accepted applicants by SEC, average tariff score and regional preference



³⁶ Those students recorded as having zero tariff are excluded from this calculation.

5.9 Comparison with analysis of 1998/99 accepted applicants

Comparing the 2002/03 analysis of NI domiciled accepted applicants with a similar analysis of 1998/99 data shows that:

- In 1998/99, 90% (5,785) of accepted applicants whose firm choice was NI were accepted at a NI institution, whereas in 2002/03 this **proportion increased to 96%** (7,678); and
- In 1998/99, 97% (3,301) of accepted applicants whose firm choice was GB were accepted at a GB institution, however in 2002/03 this **proportion decreased slightly to 96%** (3,277).

A comparison of regional preferences of NI domiciled accepted applicants in 1998/99 with the 2002/03 data shows that:

- the proportion of applicants who obtained their preferred choice of region in NI **increased** by 6.5 percentage points, rising from 60.6% in 1998/99 to 67.1% in 2002/03.

In contrast:

- the proportion of NI domiciled applicants who obtained their preferred choice of region in GB **has decreased** by 5.6 percentage points, dropping from 34.3% in 1998/99 to 28.7% in 2002/03.

With regards to those NI domiciled applicants who accepted a place at a GB institution but whose preference would have been a place at a NI institution:

- **in 1998/99 11.5% or 407 of accepted applicants left for GB when their preference would have been a place at a NI institution, compared to 9.2% or 334 accepted applicants in 2002/03.**

Limitations of UCAS data 2002/03

UCAS data relates to students who were;

- new entrants;
- applying for an undergraduate course;
- applying for a full-time course;
- applying for a HE course at mainly UK Higher Education institutions³⁷; and
- those using UCAS to enrol (According to data from HESA³⁸, these accounted for approximately 77%³⁹ of NI domiciled new entrants to HE institutions in the UK in 2002/03).

UCAS data does not include students who were:

- full-time undergraduate students who have progressed beyond first year
- applying for St Mary's University College (not included until 2003/04 year);
- part-time undergraduate students;
- postgraduate students;
- undertaking a HE course at an NI FE college;
- undertaking a HE course at an institution in the Republic of Ireland; and
- part of the 23%⁴⁰ of students who bypass the UCAS process and enrol directly on a HE course at a UK HE institution.

³⁷ HE courses at NI FE colleges are not part of the UCAS process.

³⁸ Higher Education Statistics Agency.

³⁹ This coverage relates to HE institutions in NI and FE & HE institutions in GB.

⁴⁰ An analysis of the 23% of students not using the UCAS process to enrol shows that a large number of these students were required by an institute to enrol on courses directly. Of those students not using UCAS and not enrolling directly at a institution's request, analysis shows that no common student characteristics could be found.

Methodology adopted for determining whether a student accepted their preferred or reserve choice of region in which to study

For this analysis, a firm choice is assumed to be the best representation of where a student wants to study. Where a student is accepted on the basis of their insurance choice, it is assumed that this is their second choice, having not satisfied the requirements of their firm choice option. Comparing the firm and insurance choices of students with their accepted choice, it can be determined whether a student accepted their preferred or reserve choice of region in which to study.

Accepted choice	Firm choice	Insurance choice	Preference of region of study
NI	NI	NI	Accepted preferred Region - NI
NI	NI	GB	Accepted preferred Region - NI
NI	NI	No insurance choice	Accepted preferred Region - NI
GB	GB	GB	Accepted preferred Region - GB
GB	GB	NI	Accepted preferred Region - GB
GB	GB	No insurance choice	Accepted preferred Region - GB
NI	GB	NI	Accepted reserve Region - NI
GB	NI	GB	Accepted reserve Region - GB
GB	NI	No insurance choice	Accepted reserve Region - GB
NI	GB	No insurance choice	Accepted reserve Region - NI
NI	No firm choice	No insurance choice	Not known
GB	No firm choice	No insurance choice	Not known
NI	GB	GB	Accepted reserve Region - NI
GB	NI	NI	Accepted reserve Region - GB

Accepted Preferred Region - a student successful in attaining an HE place in their 1st [firm] choice region of study (whether that be in NI or GB).

Accepted Reserve Region - a student whose accepted region of study was different from their firm choice region of study.

Overview of UCAS application process

1. A student can normally make up to 6 choices for university courses.
2. These choices are submitted to UCAS in the academic year prior to study, which forwards them to the institutions concerned.
3. The institutions may then make offers.
4. From the offers received by a student, the student must choose a firm and if desired an insurance choice – the firm choice being their 1st choice and insurance choice being their 2nd choice
5. If no offers are made or if a student, for whatever reason, does not take up the firm or insurance choice, the student can apply via clearing. Clearing is the mechanism through which those places that have not been taken by firm and insurance choices are made available.