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Issues paper

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This report examines the rates of completion for a cohort of students attending UK higher education institutions who began a first degree, part-time programme of study in academic year 1996-97. A later starting cohort is also examined.

Part-time first degree study

Entry and completion

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Part-time first degree study: Entry and completion

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| Of interest to those responsible for | Student data, Research, Planning |
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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This report examines the rates of completion for a cohort of students attending UK higher education institutions (HEIs) who began a first degree by following a part-time programme of study in academic year 1996-97. A later starting cohort is also examined. It is intended to inform discussion about the rate of part-time degree completion.

Key points

Capturing the diversity of part-time study

2. When considering the results reported here, it is important to note that the diversity of, and flexibility found in, part-time provision make the data notoriously difficult to capture accurately and interpret.
3. Identifying the true study intentions of a part-time student is one particular difficulty: whether a student intends to complete a module or modules for institutional credit as opposed to a first degree. It is likely that a number of the cohort examined in this study never intended to complete a first degree and their presence will have a detrimental effect on rates of first degree completion. Among those entrants actually intending to gain a first degree, completion rates are likely to be higher than those reported although it is not possible to estimate the size of this effect.
4. The cohort for non-Open University institutions only includes those reported as aiming for a first degree, whereas the Open University cohort also includes those reported as studying for institutional credits. This is a result of difficulties with separating first degree and other undergraduate students within the Open University's statistical data in earlier years.

Number of entrants

5. The number of entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the Open University) has been in decline since 2002-03. Academic year 2006-07

saw the largest drop in numbers yet, around 1,600 fewer than in the previous year. In this year around 12,000 part-time students commenced a first degree course.

6. Relatively steady growth has been observed in the number of entrants to part-time institutional credit and first degree programmes at the Open University since 2002-03. This number reached a peak of almost 50,000 in 2006-07, with around half of entrants studying for a first degree and half for institutional credits.

Completion rates

7. First degree completion rates vary substantially by a student's intensity of study in the first year of their programme. Part-time students became eligible to receive financial support when they studied at or above 50 per cent of the intensity of a full-time student. It might therefore be reasonable to assume that completion rates would differ among students according to this split in intensity of study. Analysis has shown that the split actually occurs at 30 per cent of the intensity of full-time study: completion rates among entrants studying at and above this intensity are substantially higher than those among entrants studying at lower intensities.

8. Forty-four per cent of students commencing programmes at UK HEIs (other than the Open University) at 30 per cent or higher intensities go on to complete that programme within seven academic years (rising to 48 per cent within 11 academic years). For those studying at below 30 per cent intensity, 18 per cent have completed after seven academic years (rising to 22 per cent within 11 academic years).

9. The equivalent proportions for entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the Open University who complete within seven academic years (and 11 academic years) are 17 per cent (24 per cent) for those studying at the higher intensity and 10 per cent (15 per cent) for lower intensities.

10. Increasing intensity of study between the first and second years of the programme substantially increases the likelihood that a student with an intensity of 30 per cent or below in the first year goes on to complete their degree within 11 academic years. This likelihood rises from 27 per cent to 46 per cent for UK HEI (non-Open University) entrants, and from 24 per cent to 36 per cent at the Open University.

Action required

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

Introduction

12. The benefits of higher education (HE) are substantial, wide ranging and impact upon not only students themselves but employers, the economy and society in general. The retention of students in HE has therefore been a focus and a policy concern for several years.

13. For full-time students retention is measured in a number of ways, including: through the UK Higher Education Performance Indicators which report on the proportion of starters in a particular year who are found to be present in HE one year later; and the projected outcomes of that year's starters¹. Further, information regarding full-time students is readily available. The pattern of study usually has a fixed form in terms of programme structure and this helps provide a sound base for many analyses; in terms of undergraduate study particularly, full-time students are often thought to represent the 'typical' population.

14. At present the retention of part-time students is not measured in the performance indicators. Although continuation rates are calculated and published² on the UniStats web-site, this data is based on the proportion of starters continuing into their second year and, since part-time students are likely to experience more breaks in their studies, the data may provide an incomplete picture of a student's experience in higher education.

15. Robust measurement of retention is prevented by numerous difficulties and complexities associated with the data relating to part-time students, which result from the need for flexibility in part-time study. In addition, these issues mean that analysis of part-time students is often challenging. As such, it is less widely undertaken, the preference being to analyse the more 'typical', and possibly more relevant, full-time students. All of this leads to an information gap in terms of part-time students.

16. In its report 'Staying the course: The retention of students in higher education'³ the National Audit Office (NAO) provided some initial analysis of part-time students with respect to the issue of retention, and identified the need for better information in this area. In addition it made the recommendation⁴ that 'the Funding Council will work with

¹ The projected outcomes of starters in a particular year are calculated by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in the UK Higher Education Performance Indicators. They are an estimation of the proportion of starters who will continue their studies until they complete the programme and obtain their qualification, with no more than one academic year's break from HE. For further information about the performance indicators and projected outcomes see www.hesa.ac.uk under Performance indicators.

² HEFCE currently publishes continuation data for part-time students on the Unistats web-site, www.unistats.com

³ 'Staying the course: The retention of students in higher education' (2007) can be read at www.nao.org.uk under Publications.

⁴ Recommendation g of the NAO report.

the sector to develop, if feasible, performance indicators with appropriate benchmarks for the retention of part-time students’.

17. Further, following consultation with the sector, HEFCE published ‘Review of performance indicators: outcomes and decisions’ (HEFCE 2007/14)⁵. With respect to the indicator describing non-continuation from the first year, several respondents asked that the coverage be extended to part-time entrants. Based on the consultation responses, the review made the recommendation that ‘an initial study to look at non-continuation and completion for part-time students should be carried out, and an indicator developed from this work if appropriate’.

18. This report aims to go some way to filling the information gap, and contributes to our response to the recommendations above. For the most part, we seek to examine the profiles and characteristics of part-time students attending UK higher education institutions (HEIs) who began a first degree programme of study in academic year 1996-97. In doing this we examine a number of student and programme attributes, as well as different pathways through part-time first degree courses. This report is intended to inform discussion about the characteristics of part-time study, and the time and rate of part-time degree completion in particular.

19. Paragraphs 22 to 25 describe the reasons for the choice of the 1996-97 cohort. However, we acknowledge that consideration of a more recent cohort may in some ways be more relevant. For this reason, and given the desire for a concise picture of completion rates, this report also considers the 2000-01 cohort of part-time entrants to first degree programmes. The completion rates observed among these students are compared to equivalent rates for the 1996-97 cohort to give an indication of any possible trends in part-time study and rates of degree completion.

20. It is expected that the greater understanding of part-time study that this document provides will facilitate wider analysis of these students. Any development of future retention measures will require an understanding of the profiles, trends and activities observed among part-time students in order to tackle the technical complexities involved in that development. If we observe an inclination for part-time students to change their intensity of study at some point during their course, for example, this may need to be accounted for.

Data sources and definition of the cohort

Data sources

21. Data are drawn from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) individualised student records from 1995-96 through to 2006-07, the most recent data collection available. Individual students were tracked within and through each annual student data set using a number of personal characteristics. For exact data definitions and further explanation of how students are tracked, see Annex A.

⁵ All HEFCE publications are available at www.hefce.ac.uk under Publications.

Definition of the cohort

22. This report separately considers two populations of UK-domiciled entrants to part-time courses:

- a. Students registered at UK higher education institutions, other than the Open University (OU).
- b. Students registered at the OU.

23. The population has been split into the two groups outlined above because of the marked differences in how study is recorded in administrative records for an OU programme of study in comparison to programmes provided by other UK HEIs.

24. For the majority of the analysis, statistics are presented on entrants in academic year 1996-97. The activity of these students has been followed for up to a maximum of 11 academic years, from their start in 1996-97 through to 2006-07, based upon the most recent data available at the time. In practice this was the longest time period we were able to take. HESA records only began in 1994-95 and the first collection had relatively weak quality assurance processes. We also need to track back at least one year to ensure that a student is a genuine starter – in other words, one who is not present on the same first degree course in the previous year. For these reasons 1996-97 was the earliest starting cohort that could be used; 2006-07 is the most recent collection available.

25. Following the progress of entrants over the maximum 11-year period ensures that we are giving the maximum possible opportunity for completion of their studies. Completion rates we are able to derive for this cohort are likely to reflect closely the final distribution of part-time first degree outcomes.

26. It is important to note, however, that the 1996-97 cohort may be considered somewhat out of date. The type and attitudes of students choosing to embark upon part-time study may have changed in more recent years and behaviours observed among students commencing in 1996-97 may not be relevant to part-time students active today.

27. To address this issue, later sections of this report also consider the 2000-01 cohort of entrants to part-time first degrees. The activity of these students has been followed for up to a maximum of seven academic years, from their start in 2000-01 through to 2006-07. Analysis has shown that the profile of these students is similar to that of the 1996-97 cohort, particularly with respect to attributes such as subject area of study, age, highest qualification on entry and intensity of study. The seven-year completion rates observed among this later cohort are compared to seven-year completion rates obtained for the 1996-97 cohort and, given the similar profiles of the cohorts, this comparison may give an indication of what we might expect of more recent cohorts in terms of part-time completion rates.

28. One of the main difficulties in examining part-time study is capturing its diversity. The pattern of provision is very flexible and varies significantly across factors such as institution, qualification aim and intensity of study. Identifying the true study intentions of a part-time student is a particular difficulty: they may not be accurately recorded in the

administrative records. We are unable to identify the underlying study intentions of our cohorts and we note that there will be instances where such intentions are misidentified.

29. In all cases in this report, all counts of entrants are given in terms of headcount, rounded up or down to the nearest five⁶.

Population: Students registered at UK HEIs (other than the OU)

30. For non-OU institutions, the statistics refer to UK-domiciled entrants to part-time first degree courses registered with UK higher education institutions.

31. With analyses based on large-scale, individualised records, one of the main difficulties is to identify accurately which students are on part-time first degree courses. The approach taken here is to ensure, as far as possible, that we use records that have only a small risk of being students on courses that are not part-time first degree courses who have been misidentified as being on part-time first-degree courses, at the cost of probably missing some provision of interest.

32. It should be noted that there is the potential for this cohort to include students who were recorded as studying towards a first degree but whose actual intention was to complete a module or modules for institutional credit. These differing intentions cannot be distinguished from first degree intentions in the administrative records. It is likely that a number of the cohort examined in this study either never intended to complete a first degree or were uncertain in their longer-term intentions. Their presence will have a detrimental effect on rates of first degree completion. Among those entrants actually intending to gain a first degree, completion rates are likely to be higher than those reported although it is not possible to estimate the size of this effect.

33. To reduce the risk of misidentification, we have excluded the following:

a. **Studying on more than one undergraduate course in the starting year.**

For entrants in our cohort who are studying more than one undergraduate course at the same time, the qualification obtained by the student may not necessarily be due to the first degree course they are beginning. For simplification of interpretation, we exclude this minority of students.

b. **Studying on a first degree course in the previous year.** Students who were studying on a first degree course in the previous year may be beginning a completely new course in the year in question; or repeating a year or continuing on a course they began earlier. We cannot accurately distinguish between these two groups and therefore remove all of these students.

c. **Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student.** This report focuses on students who are studying on first degree courses at a lower intensity than the equivalent full-time courses. In the cases where a student is recorded as studying on a part-time course but at a full-time intensity, it is highly likely that these

⁶ Totals are calculated based on un-rounded values, and then rounded to the nearest five accordingly. For this reason, the sum of the values given in a table may not be equal to the total shown in that table.

students are atypical part-time students and have more similar characteristics to those on full-time courses.

d. **Course lengths of three years or less.** Traditionally, full-time first degree courses are expected to last between three and four years. For students who initially start on a part-time first degree, it is expected that the expected duration of their first degree learning should not be quicker than similar provision for a student studying full-time.

e. **On a first degree with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)/registration with the General Teaching Council.** The overwhelming majority of students who are studying for a first degree with QTS/registration with the General Teaching Council are full-time. Those recorded as beginning on a part-time course are either atypical of the population of interest or misreported in the administrative records.

f. **Not entering the first year of the course.** Students entering at a later stage of the course may expect to have an accelerated rate of completion and therefore not comparable to a student beginning in the first year.

g. **Qualify with a first degree within two years of starting.** These students have experienced a faster rate of first degree completion than would be expected for a student on a full-time course, and therefore are atypical of the part-time cohort of first degree entrants.

34. Table 1 shows the number of entrants excluded from our initial population of starters for each of the reasons described above. It shows that, in 1996-97, we have a cohort of 16,585 students commencing part-time first degree courses at non-OU higher education institutions in the UK.

Table 1 Count of non-OU entrants in 1996-97: Exclusions

| Original non-OU population | 38,325 | % removed |
|---|---------------|------------------|
| More than one course in current year | 365 | 1% |
| On a degree course in the previous year | 5,705 | 15% |
| Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student | 995 | 3% |
| Course length shorter than four years | 6,990 | 18% |
| First degree with QTS | 435 | 1% |
| Not entering the first year of course | 6,465 | 17% |
| Qualifying within two years | 785 | 2% |
| Final non-OU population | 16,585 | 57% |

Note: The exclusions are hierarchical in nature so that a student who is both on more than one course in the current year and on a degree course in the previous year would be included in the numbers relating to the first of these exclusions.

35. Table B1 in Annex B shows the effect of these exclusions for entrants to each academic year in the period from 1996-97 to 2006-07.

Population: Students registered at the Open University

36. For students registered at the OU, the statistics refer to UK-domiciled entrants to part-time first degree and institutional credit courses.

37. We note the inclusion of students registered with a qualification aim of 'institutional credit' in this population. This is because before 2003-04 the OU recorded all students as registering for modules, or institutional credits. It was not possible therefore to distinguish between those intending to gain a first degree and those studying purely for a module credit. For this reason, and to ensure consistency after 2003-04 when the two groups are separately recorded, we are unable to exclude the institutional credit students from our population of interest.

38. As with the non-OU population, we have made the following exclusions to ensure the validity of our analysis and to reduce the risk of misidentification of suitable students in our population. The reasons for these exclusions are as given for the non-OU population (see paragraph 33) unless otherwise stated:

- a. **Studying on more than one undergraduate course in the starting year.**
- b. **Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student.**
- c. **Studying on an OU course in a previous year.** Students who have previously studied on an OU course (whether or not it was in the previous academic year) may be beginning a completely new course in the year in question; or repeating a year or continuing on a course they began earlier. Given the nature of institutional credits it is plausible that an OU student may study towards a qualification over a number of years, not necessarily concurrently. We cannot accurately distinguish between these two groups and therefore remove all of these students.
- d. **Qualify with a first degree within two years of starting.**

39. The breakdown of the initial OU population is shown in Table 2, split by the exclusions detailed in paragraph 38. In 1996-97, the final population of part-time entrants to OU courses is 46,195.

Table 2 Count of OU entrants in 1996-97: Exclusions

| Original OU population | 122,900 | % removed |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| More than one course in current year | 720 | 1% |
| Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student | 3,880 | 3% |
| Not the first year at OU | 71,260 | 58% |
| Qualifying within two years | 850 | 1% |
| Final non-OU population | 46,195 | 62% |

Note: As with Table 1, the exclusions are hierarchical.

40. Table B2 in Annex B shows the effect of these exclusions for entrants to each academic year in the period from 1996-97 to 2006-07.

Structure of the report

41. This report adopts the following structure in documenting the analysis of part-time completion rates:

- a. Trends in student numbers. A time series shows the number of entrants to part-time courses in each academic year from 1996-97 through to 2006-07.
- b. First degree completion rates.
 - i. Analysis of the intensity of study and the time taken to complete provides an overview of patterns or trends in the first degree completion rates of part-time students within our 1996-97 cohorts.
 - ii. The 1996-97 cohorts are examined in terms of how students progress through their first degree programmes.
 - iii. Analysis of first degree completion rates by student and programme attributes for the 1996-97 cohorts gives further details of first degree completion by part-time starters.
 - iv. The completion rates of first degree and institutional credit students are compared to provide context for the inclusion of credit students within the OU cohort.
- c. Comparison of cohorts. Seven-year completion rates are examined for both the 1996-97 and the more recent 2000-01 cohorts to identify changing behaviours and completion rates.

42. In each section detailed in paragraph 41 we look first at the UK HEI (non-OU) population of entrants, followed by analysis of the OU population. Key differences or similarities between the two populations are discussed.

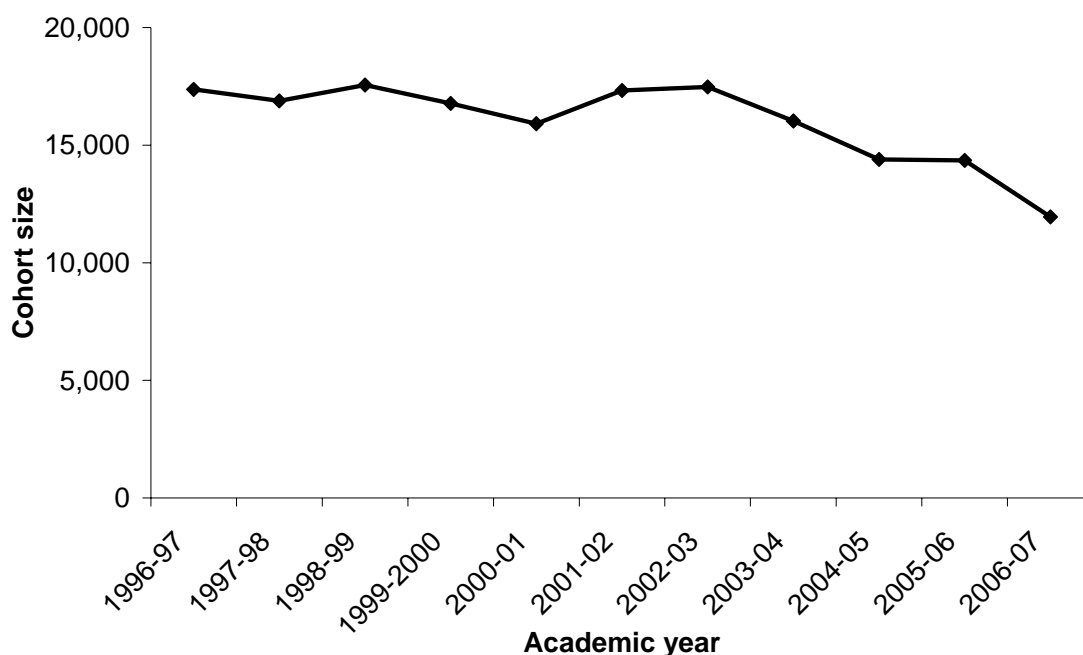
Trends in student numbers

UK higher education institutions (non-Open University)

43. Difficulties in identifying true entrants to new part-time first degree courses mean that it is hard to produce an accurate time series of this type of student. The time series given in Figure 1 provides an impression of the trend in entrants to part-time first degree courses at UK HEIs (other than the OU) for entrants between academic years 1996-97 and 2006-07. The time series is based upon the final population given in Table 1 but without excluding those students who qualified with a first degree within two years of starting on the course⁷.

⁷ It is important that the students removed from our final population as a result of this exclusion criterion are retained in the population when generating the time series. In the final year of the time series (2006-07) we have not had the opportunity to identify (and hence exclude) students who qualify with a first degree in 2007-08, and a bias would be introduced if such students were removed from earlier cohorts but not this one.

Figure 1 Time series for part-time first degree entrants at UK HEIs (excluding the Open University), 1996-97 to 2006-07

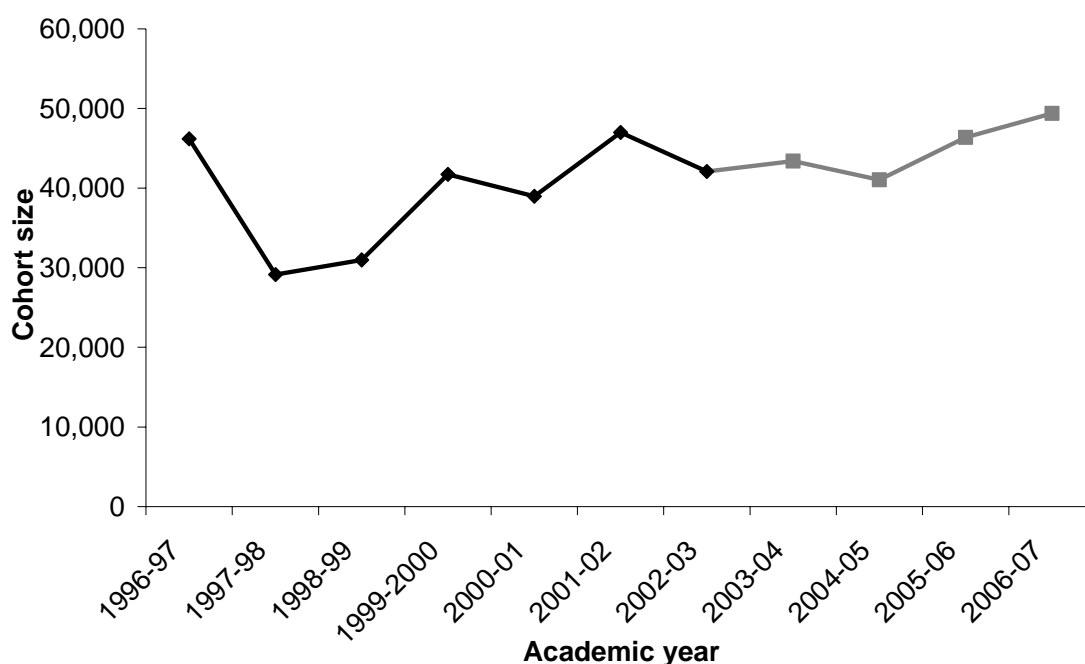


44. The time series given in Figure 1 shows that, apart from a slight decline in 2000-01, the number of entrants to part-time first degree programmes is relatively steady at around 17,000 throughout the period from 1996-97 to 2002-03. In the following years up to 2006-07, this number falls consistently, with the exception of 2005-06 where the number remains similar to that observed in 2004-05. The most substantial drop is seen in the latest phase of the time series, from 2005-06 to 2006-07, where the number fell to around 12,000 entrants.

Open University

45. Figure 2 gives the trend in entrants to part-time first degree and credit courses at the OU between academic years 1996-97 and 2006-07. As with the non-OU population, the time series is based upon the final population given in Table 2 but without excluding those students who qualified within two years of starting on the course.

Figure 2 Time series for part-time first degree and credit entrants at the Open University, 1996-97 to 2006-07



46. We see from Figure 2 that, while the number of entrants to the OU increased over the period 1996-97 to 2006-07, it did so inconsistently, with substantial year-on-year variation in the number of entrants, particularly in the early years. In contrast to the non-OU population, Figure 2 shows relatively steady growth in the number of part-time entrants to OU courses in the later years of the time series, approaching 50,000 in 2006-07.

47. Paragraph 37 explains that institutional credit students are included in our OU population of interest because it is only in 2003-04 and later returns that the OU separately identifies those studying for a first degree and those studying for institutional credit. In earlier returns all students were returned as registered for institutional credits and we are unable to distinguish between the two groups within our population. To highlight this difference, Figure 2 shows the 1996-97 to 2002-03 period with a black line and 2003-04 to 2006-07 with a grey line. Entrants in the later period are then shown split by qualification aim in Table 3.

Table 3: OU population entrants by qualification aim, 2003-04 to 2006-07

| Qualification aim | 2003-04 | | 2004-05 | | 2005-06 | | 2006-07 | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Credit | 20,595 | 47% | 20,635 | 50% | 23,375 | 50% | 24,935 | 51% |
| First degree | 22,800 | 53% | 20,415 | 50% | 22,995 | 50% | 24,435 | 49% |
| Total | 43,390 | 100% | 41,050 | 100% | 46,370 | 100% | 49,375 | 100% |

48. It can be seen from Table 3 that around half of part-time entrants in the years 2003-04 to 2006-07 in this OU population begin first degree courses, and half begin modules for institutional credits.

49. It is important to note this 50/50 split when considering earlier cohorts and, in particular, the results reported throughout this report with regard to entrants to the OU in 1996-97. If it is assumed that a similar split between first degree and institutional credits occurs in the earlier years of the OU time series, and that a large proportion of those embarking only on institutional credits do not intend to and do not gain a first degree, the true underlying rates of first degree completion for OU entrants are likely to be double the results reported in the following sections of this report.

First degree completion rates

Introduction

50. A student is defined as having completed when they have been awarded a first degree and the 'qualification obtained' has been returned through the individualised HESA student record. We classify the outcomes of the students in our cohort in one of the following three ways:

- a. Completed their first degree within the 11-year period from the start of the course in 1996-97 to 2006-07.
- b. No first degree completed but still active on a first degree programme at the end of the period.
- c. No first degree completed and not active on a first degree programme at the end of the period.

51. We cannot be sure whether groups b and c will eventually complete a first degree. The longer the time period we take, the closer our figures will be to the final distribution of outcomes.

52. Table 4 shows the outcomes of the UK HEI (non-OU) and the OU cohorts respectively. It shows that the majority of students in both cohorts are no longer active after 11 academic years, having failed to gain a first degree award or to be still active on a first degree programme.

53. As noted in paragraphs 47 to 49, for entrants to the OU in 1996-97 we are unable to determine whether the entrant's final qualification intention is a first degree or an institutional credit. Based on data from later cohorts, we estimate that around half of the cohort intends to gain a first degree at the end of their studies.

Table 4 Outcomes of part-time first degree entrants in 1996-97 after 11 academic years

| Cohort | First degree awarded | | Still active on degree course | | No longer active | |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| UK HEIs (non-OU) | 6,490 | 39% | 350 | 2% | 9,745 | 59% |
| Open University | 10,025 | 22% | 1,745 | 4% | 34,420 | 75% |
| Total | 16,515 | 26% | 2,100 | 3% | 44,165 | 70% |

54. Examination of completion rates may often consider members of the cohort who remain active. These students still have the opportunity to complete their programmes and hence contribute to a final completion rate. Table 4 shows that the number and

proportion of entrants who fail to gain a degree award, but are still active on a degree programme, at the end of the period examined are both small. Such entrants account for only 2 per cent and 4 per cent of the UK HEI (non-OU) and OU cohorts respectively, and it is unlikely that they will materially affect final completion rates. For this reason our analysis considers only the proportion of our cohorts that are awarded a first degree by 2006-07 (and fall into the group defined in paragraph 50a). We refer to this proportion as ‘% degree’ throughout the remainder of this report.

55. Table 4 shows that 39 per cent of part-time students who began a first degree programme at a UK HEI (other than the OU) completed their degree within 11 academic years. The equivalent proportion for starters at the OU is 22 per cent. However, it is likely that half of this OU cohort were aiming for undergraduate credits only, so the implied completion rate for those beginning on first degree programmes at the OU is likely to be around double the reported rate (44 per cent) and broadly equivalent to the rate seen at non-OU UK HEIs.

56. In this section we aim to give an overview of part-time first degree completion for students commencing a first degree programme in academic year 1996-97. In particular, we examine completion by the intensity of study on the course, and the time it takes for part-time students to complete their first degree.

Completion by intensity of study

57. In the following figures and tables we examine the students in our 1996-97 cohorts by the intensity of study in their first year of the course. The intensity of study is given as a percentage and expresses the amount of study undertaken by a part-time student relative to that undertaken by a full-time student (a full-time student has a 100 per cent intensity of study).

58. Among each cohort there are a number of entrants for whom we are unable to define intensity of study⁸. Analysis has shown that one of the main reasons for an ‘unknown’ intensity of study is that the student made an early departure from their studies: within a few weeks of their commencement. The relatively small number of students returned with an exceptionally low intensity of study (less than 1 per cent of a full-time student) also fall within this classification.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

59. For those students who completed their degree within the period (group a of paragraph 50) we can further classify their completion as:

- i. The first degree was completed within the 11-year period at any UK higher education institution. We refer to this type of completion as ‘Any HEI’.

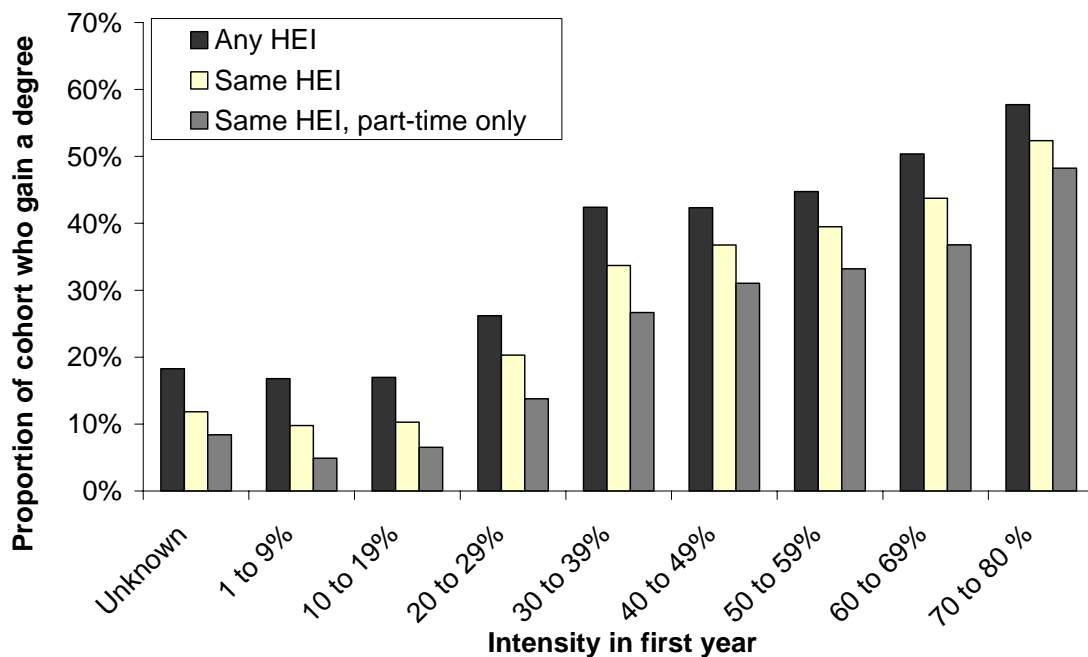
⁸ The number of part-time entrants returned by UK HEIs (other than the OU) with an unknown intensity of study has fallen in more recent data collections. In each year between 1996-97 and 2002-03 the number was around 3,500 entrants. It fell to around 2,500 between 2003-04 and 2006-07, and to 1,840 in 2007-08. The OU returned between five and 115 such entrants in each year between 1996-97 and 2003-04, and closer to 400 over the period from 2004-05 to 2007-08.

ii. The first degree was completed within the 11-year period at the same UK higher education institution at which it was started. This is a subset of students in i above and is referred to as 'Same HEI'.

iii. The first degree was completed at the same higher education institution at which it was started, and the entrant studied on a part-time basis throughout the course. This is a subset of ii above and we refer to this type of completion as 'Same HEI, part-time only'.

60. The completion rates of part-time entrants to first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the OU) are shown in Figure 3, by the intensity of their first year of study. It is shown split by the three types of completion identified in paragraph 59 (i, ii, and iii) to show any difference in the behaviour of students in each of these subsets.

Figure 3 First degree completion rates, by intensity of study



61. Figure 3 shows that the proportion of part-time students who complete their first degree programme at any UK HEI (other than the OU) ranges from around 20 per cent for those studying at the lowest intensities to almost 60 per cent for those studying at the higher intensities. For those completing their degree at the same institution, having remained part-time throughout, the proportion is around 10 percentage points lower in each instance.

62. In addition, Figure 3 shows that students who study at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher are more likely to have completed their first degree course after 11 academic years than those who study at an intensity of below 30 per cent. It can be seen that this is true of each of the three subsets; whether or not a student changes HEI or mode of study has little effect on the trend in the proportion completing their degree programme. Further analysis of the break in completion rates at 30 per cent intensity of study is provided at Annex C.

63. Table 5 confirms that the proportion completing their first degree is substantially higher among those who study at a higher intensity compared to those who study at lower or unknown intensities. It shows that 22 per cent of part-time entrants studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent complete their degree within 11 academic years while, for those studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher, the proportion completing more than doubles to 48 per cent.

Table 5 First degree completion rates, by grouped intensity of study in the first year

| Intensity in first year | Number of entrants | % degree |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Unknown | 3,585 | 18% |
| Below 30% | 1,650 | 22% |
| 30% or higher | 11,350 | 48% |
| Total | 16,585 | 39% |

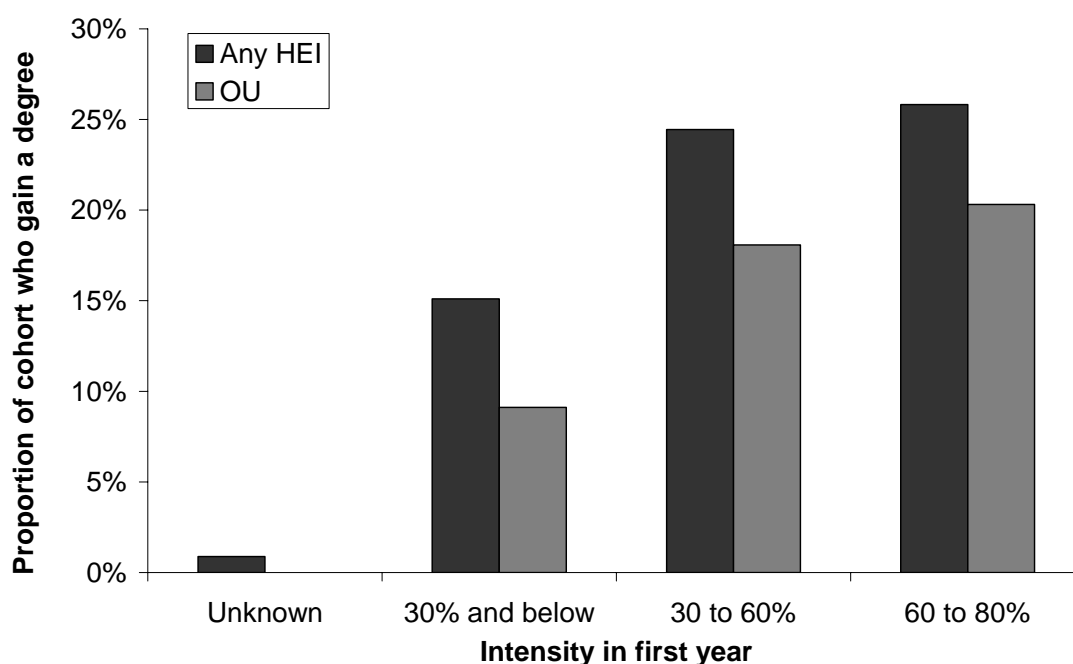
Open University

64. For those students within our OU cohort who completed their degree within the period (group a of paragraph 50) we further classify their completion as:

- i. The first degree was completed within the 11-year period at any UK higher education institution. We refer to this type of completion as 'Any HEI'.
- ii. The first degree was completed within the 11-year period at the OU, where the course was started in 1996-97. This is a subset of students in i above and is referred to as 'OU'.

65. In Figure 4 we show the first degree completion rates of part-time entrants to first degree programmes and institutional credits at the OU, by the intensity of their first year of study. It is shown for students who remain at the OU for the duration of their course as well as for all students.

Figure 4 First degree completion rates, by intensity of study



66. Figure 4 shows that, for part-time students with a known intensity of study, the proportion completing a first degree at any UK HEI (other than the OU) within 11 academic years ranges from 15 per cent for those studying at the lowest intensities, to around a quarter for those studying at an intensity of between 60 and 80 per cent. The proportions for part-time entrants completing their degree at the OU are around five percentage points lower in each instance.

67. We see from Figure 4 that, as with the non-OU cohort, the proportion of entrants that complete a degree within 11 academic years is higher among those studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher. Table 6 shows that the proportion of entrants studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher and completing their degree is 24 per cent, nine percentage points higher than the proportion of entrants studying at intensities lower than 30 per cent who complete (15 per cent).

Table 6 First degree completion rates, by grouped intensity of study in the first year

| Intensity in first year | Number of entrants | % degree |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| Unknown | 115 | 1% |
| Below 30% | 13,430 | 15% |
| 30% or higher | 32,650 | 24% |
| Total | 46,195 | 22% |

68. Our analysis has shown substantial differences in completion rates when we consider students in each cohort by grouped intensity of study. To provide a more

accurate picture of first degree study and completion by part-time students, we show profiles and completion rates split by these intensity groups throughout the remainder of this report.

Time to completion

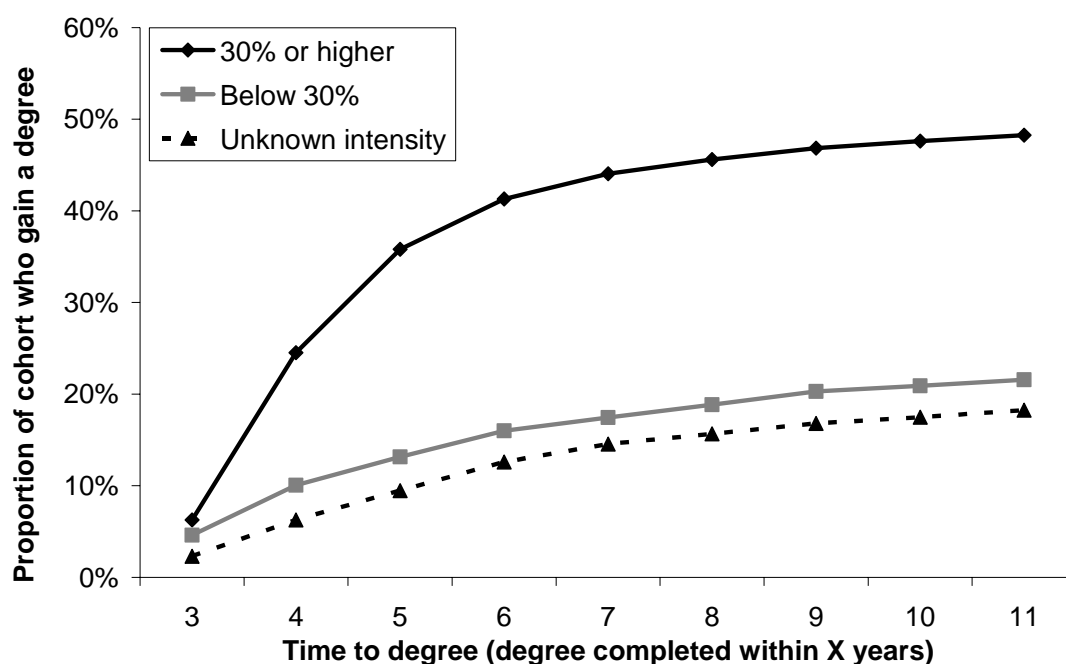
69. To extend our overview of first degree completion, we look now at the time taken for entrants to part-time first degree programmes in 1996-97 to be awarded a first degree.

70. Given that full-time first degree programmes are traditionally expected to last three or four academic years, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of part-time students who are ever going to complete their first degree have done so after 11 academic years. Based also on the findings presented in Table 4, we would therefore anticipate that the distributions shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6 are close to the final distribution of part-time first degree outcomes.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

71. Figure 5 shows the time to completion for the 1996-97 cohort of entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK higher education institutions (other than the OU).

Figure 5 Time to degree completion for part-time starters to first degree programmes in 1996-97, by grouped intensity of study in the first year



72. Figure 5 shows that the majority of 1996-97 entrants who study at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in the first year and complete their first degree do so within six academic years. In the last five years of the period examined, degree completions level off; although 41 per cent of starters complete within six academic years, 48 per cent have completed by 1 August 2007.

73. Among students whose intensity in the first year of study was either unknown or below 30 per cent, Figure 5 shows that the proportion having completed their degree is

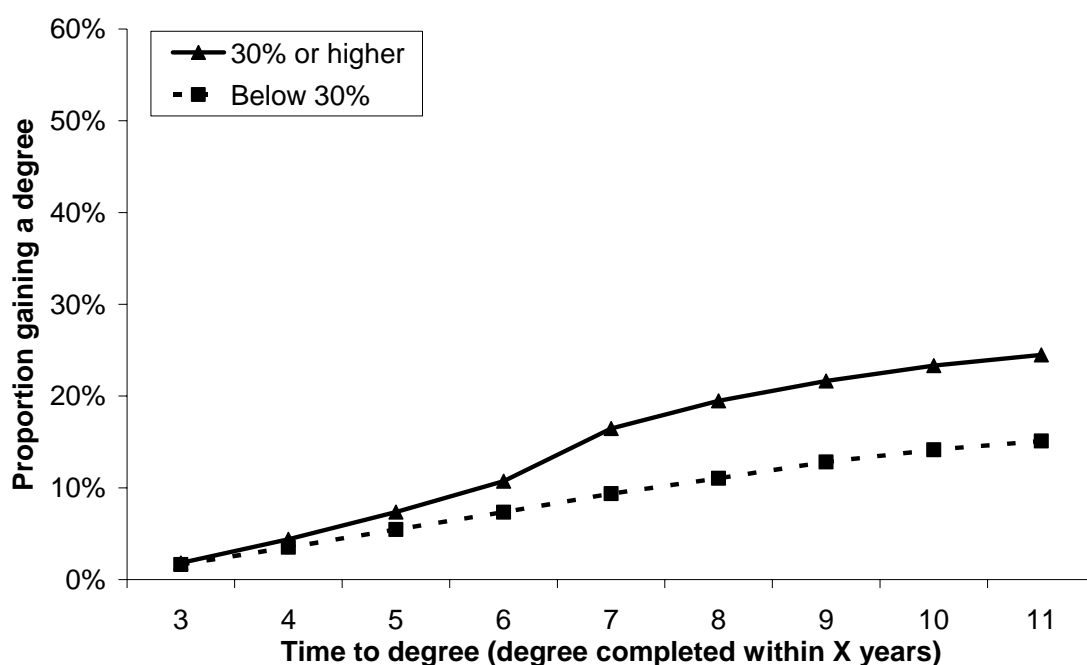
also levelling off after around six years. Of students with an intensity of below 30 per cent, 17 per cent have completed their first degree programmes after six years, and after 11 academic years a further 5 per cent have completed. For students with unknown intensity of study the corresponding figures are 13 per cent and 5 per cent.

Open University

74. For the 1996-97 cohort of entrants to part-time institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU, the time to degree completion is shown in Figure 6.

75. Due to the small number (115) of entrants within this cohort for whom intensity of study is returned as unknown, this group have been omitted from Figure 6.

Figure 6 Time to degree completion for part-time starters to institutional credits and first degree programmes in 1996-97, by grouped intensity of study in the first year



76. Figure 6 shows that, as with non-OU entrants in 1996-97, the year-on-year growth in the proportion of students having completed their first degrees starts to slow towards the end of the period examined. The majority of entrants who study at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in the first year and complete do so within eight academic years (19 per cent of the OU cohort have done so). In the last three years of the period examined a further 5 per cent of starters complete; the proportion of these students to have completed by 1 August 2007 is 24 per cent.

77. Figure 6 also shows that, among students whose intensity in the first year of study was below 30 per cent, 11 per cent have completed their first degree programmes after eight academic years. At the end of the period examined a further 4 per cent have completed.

Institutional credit students

78. The inclusion of institutional credit students within the OU cohort of part-time entrants in 1996-97 has been discussed in earlier paragraphs⁹. The inability to distinguish between those intending to gain a first degree and those studying purely for a module credit until 2003-04 for students registered with the OU has led to their inclusion in the population. Our analysis in Table 3 suggests that it would be reasonable to assume a 50/50 split between the two types of students in years before 2003-04, and if this assumption holds then the true underlying rates of first degree completion for OU entrants are likely to be double the results reported here.

79. In paragraphs 80 to 82 we consider the first degree completion rates of institutional credit students beginning their programme of study at a UK HEI (other than the OU) in 1996-97. Insight into the activities and completion rates of these students may give a clearer indication of the tendencies of OU credit students in the earlier years where such information cannot be gleaned. This in turn may enable us to judge further the impact of the inclusion of institutional credit students on first degree completion rates for the OU.

80. Table 7 shows the cohort of entrants to institutional credit programmes of study at UK HEIs in academic year 1996-97, and the exclusions (as described in paragraphs 22 to 40) made from the potential population. It shows that 16,215 students commenced such study in this year.

Table 7 Part-time entrants to institutional credits at UK HEIs in 1996-97

| Original non-OU population | 36,983 | % removed |
|---|---------------|------------------|
| More than one course in current year | 605 | 2% |
| On a degree course in the previous year | 1,920 | 5% |
| Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student | 955 | 3% |
| Course length shorter than four years | 16,690 | 45% |
| Not entering the first year of course | 460 | 1% |
| Qualifying within two years | 140 | 0% |
| Final non-OU population | 16,215 | 56% |

81. The first degree completion rates for the population described above are shown in Table 8, split by the intensity of study in the first year. It confirms that the rate of degree completion among institutional credit students is low; only 9 per cent of such students complete a first degree within the 11-year period examined.

⁹ Earlier discussion occurs in paragraphs 37, 47 to 49, and 53 to 55.

Table 8 Degree completion rates by intensity of study for institutional credit entrants in 1996-97

| Intensity in first year | Number of entrants | % degree |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Unknown | 5,655 | 8% |
| Below 30% | 7,540 | 8% |
| 30% or higher | 3,020 | 13% |
| Total | 16,215 | 9% |

82. The finding that a low proportion of institutional credit entrants proceed to achieve a first degree qualification adds weight to the assumption that OU completion rates reported within this document are lower than the true underlying rates for OU first degree entrants. Given that around half of the students within our 1996-97 OU cohort are likely to be institutional credit students, it is likely that the underlying OU first degree completion rates are almost double those rates reported here.

How students progress through first degree programmes

83. In paragraphs 85 to 130 we discuss the following aspects of, and variations on the 'standard' pathway through, a first degree programme:

- changing intensity of study between the first and second years of study
- changing intensity of study to full-time
- moving between institutions
- breaks in first degree programmes
- gaining another award
- classification of first degree.

84. We present profiles of the 1996-97 cohorts in relation to each of these aspects to provide an overview of the overall progression paths of part-time students through first degree programmes. As explained in paragraph 68, we consider both the OU and the non-OU populations split by grouped intensity of study.

Changing intensity between first and second year

85. The intensity at which a student studies is likely to be a major influencing factor on their progression through a first degree programme; it is reasonable to assume that it will help determine if and when they complete their degree. Analysis has shown that a large number of students change their intensity of study between the first and second year (academic years 1996-97 and 1997-98 for this cohort). This is examined in more detail in the following paragraphs.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

86. For students who commenced a part-time first degree programme at a UK HEI (other than the OU) in 1996-97, Table 9 shows the changes recorded in the intensity of study between the first and second year of the programme.

Table 9 Degree completion rates by change in intensity between the first and second year

| Year 1 | Intensity Year 2 | Number of entrants | % degree |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Unknown | Increased to full-time | 795 | 48% |
| | Increased (still part-time) | 310 | 28% |
| | Unknown | 30 | * |
| | Not in year 2 | 2,450 | 7% |
| Below 30% | Increased to full-time | 145 | * |
| | Increased (still part-time) | 350 | 43% |
| | Same or decrease | 170 | 24% |
| | Unknown | 35 | * |
| 30% or higher | Not in year 2 | 945 | 8% |
| | Increased to full-time | 900 | 60% |
| | Increased (still part-time) | 1,410 | 64% |
| | Same | 4,315 | 65% |
| | Decreased | 1,890 | 48% |
| | Unknown | 180 | 26% |
| | Not in year 2 | 2,660 | 10% |
| Total | | 16,585 | 39% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

87. We see from Table 9 that a total of 6,620 students (40 per cent of the cohort) who studied at 30 per cent or higher intensities in year one increased their intensity in year two, or remained at the same intensity. The proportion of entrants that complete a first degree programme is highest among this group of students; 64 per cent of entrants who progress through their course in this way have completed their degree by the end of the 11-year period.

88. For those that study at an intensity below 30 per cent in the first year, the greatest proportion to complete their degree (43 per cent) is observed among those who increase

their intensity in the second year, while remaining part-time. Only 24 per cent of those who are known not to have increased their intensity of study have completed their first degree programme by 2006-07.

89. Table 9 shows that there are 3,605 students who do not continue into year two of their programme in 1997-98¹⁰. The effect of this non-continuation is shown in Table 10. It shows that only 9 per cent complete their first degree; 88 per cent of non-continuing students are inactive on a degree programme at the end of the 11-year period examined, having failed to gain a first degree award.

Table 10 Degree completion rates for those not continuing into year two in 1997-98

| Intensity in year one | Number of entrants | % degree | % still active on degree course | % no longer active on degree course |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Below 30% | 945 | 8% | 2% | 90% |
| 30% or higher | 2,660 | 10% | 3% | 87% |
| Total | 3,605 | 9% | 3% | 88% |

Open University

90. Table 11 shows the changes in intensity of study for entrants to OU institutional credit and first degree programmes. It shows that those who increase their intensity of study between the first and second year are more likely to have completed their first degree programme within the 11-year period examined, as was observed among non-OU entrants.

Table 11 Degree completion rates by change in intensity between the first and second year

| Year 1 | Intensity Year 2 | Number of entrants | % degree |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Unknown | Increased to full-time | 5 | * |
| | Increased (still part-time) | 0 | * |
| | Unknown | 0 | * |
| | Not in year 2 | 105 | * |
| Below 30% | Increased to full-time | 2,175 | 32% |
| | Increased (still part-time) | 2,170 | 25% |
| | Same or decrease | 430 | 25% |

¹⁰ No records relating to these students are present in the HESA student record returns for 1997-98.

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | Unknown | 6,120 | 9% |
| | Not in year 2 | 2,540 | 5% |
| 30% or higher | Increased to full-time | 12,395 | 45% |
| | Increased (still part-time) | 340 | 48% |
| | Same | 175 | 74% |
| | Decreased | 2,155 | 26% |
| | Unknown | 11,540 | 10% |
| | Not in year 2 | 6,045 | 6% |
| Total | | 46,195 | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

91. We see from Table 11 that around half of students who studied at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in year one and increased or remained at the same intensity in year two have completed their degree programme by the end of 11 academic years. A total of 12,910 students (28 per cent of the cohort) followed this route of progression.

92. Table 11 also shows that there are 8,585 entrants to the OU who are not recorded as being on an institutional credit or first degree programme in the second year (1997-98). Table 12 shows that such non-continuation leads to a low rate of degree completion. Only 6 per cent of students who fail to continue into their second year in 1997-98 go on to complete their first degree. At 1 August 2007, 91 per cent of these students are inactive, not having gained a first degree award.

Table 12 Degree completion rates for those not continuing into year two in 1997-98

| Intensity in year one | Number of entrants | % degree | % still active on degree course | % no longer active on degree course |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Below 30% | 2,540 | 5% | 2% | 93% |
| 30% or higher | 6,045 | 6% | 4% | 90% |
| Total | 8,585 | 6% | 3% | 91% |

Changing intensity to full-time

93. In the section above we considered the changes students made to their intensity of study between their first and second years. We found that a number of students changed from part-time to full-time study. In the case of students whose intensity of study in the first year was 30 per cent or higher, moving to full-time study was seen to be associated with the highest rates of first degree completion; at UK HEIs, 74 per cent of such students completed their degree.

94. We now consider the completion rates observed for students who change to full-time study at any point in the course of their first degree programme. In terms of whether or not students change to full-time study, we classify them into one of three groups:

- a. **Leave and do not return to studies.** Students who are, at some point, seen to leave the institution at which they were registered in 1996-97, not having gained a first degree. They are not found to study towards a first degree at any future point in the 11-year period examined.
- b. **Change to full-time study.** Students who are seen to be studying on a full-time basis at any point during their first degree programme, having commenced on a part-time basis in 1996-97.
- c. **Remain in part-time study.** All record of their first degree study is found to be on a part-time basis.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

95. In Table 13 we show part-time entrants to first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the OU), split by whether or not they moved to full-time study during the course of their studies.

Table 13 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether or not they moved to full-time during their studies

| Change to full-time? | Intensity of study in first year | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Leave and do not return to studies | Unknown | 2,275 | 14% |
| | Below 30% | 875 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 2,385 | 14% |
| | Subtotal | 5,535 | 33% |
| Change to full-time study | Unknown | 275 | 2% |
| | Below 30% | 165 | 1% |
| | 30% or higher | 1,160 | 7% |
| | Subtotal | 1,600 | 10% |
| Remain in part-time study | Unknown | 1,035 | 6% |
| | Below 30% | 610 | 4% |
| | 30% or higher | 7,805 | 47% |
| | Subtotal | 9,450 | 57% |
| Total | | 16,585 | 100% |

96. We see from Table 13 that there are 1,600 students (10 per cent of the cohort) who change to full-time study at some point during their first degree course. This move is

seen to be most commonly made by those studying at intensities of 30 per cent or higher in their first year: 1,160 such students do so.

97. The rates of first degree completion are shown in Table 14, split by whether or not a move to full-time study was made, and intensity of study in the first year. By definition, students who 'leave and do not return to their studies' have not completed their first degree. Those falling into the other two categories may or may not have completed their first degree. For this reason this group of students are excluded in Table 14.

Table 14 Degree completion rates by whether or not entrants moved to full-time study

| Change to full-time? | Intensity of study in first year | % degree |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Change to full-time study | Unknown | 73% |
| | Below 30% | 74% |
| | 30% or higher | 79% |
| | Subtotal | 77% |
| Remain in part-time study | Unknown | 44% |
| | Below 30% | 38% |
| | 30% or higher | 59% |
| | Subtotal | 56% |
| Overall | | 39% |

98. Table 14 shows that, as might be expected, the 10 per cent of students who are found to change to full-time at some point have higher rates of completion compared to those who remain in part-time study for the duration of their course. The change to full-time study appears to have the greatest impact on those studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent in the first year; the completion rate for such students who move to full-time study is 36 percentage points higher than that for similar students remaining part-time.

Open University

99. Part-time entrants to first degree and credit programmes at the OU are shown in Table 15, split by whether or not they moved to full-time study at any point during their course. It shows that 6 per cent of the cohort (2,825 students) are found to have studied on a full-time basis at some point during their first degree programme, and that the majority of these students studied at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in their first year.

Table 15 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether or not they moved to full-time during their studies

| Change to full-time? | Intensity of study in first year | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Leave and do not return to studies | Unknown | 105 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 2,400 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 5,855 | 12% |
| | Subtotal | 8,160 | 18% |
| Change to full-time study | Unknown | 0 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 655 | 1% |
| | 30% or higher | 2,170 | 5% |
| | Subtotal | 2,825 | 6% |
| Remain in part-time study | Unknown | 5 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 10,375 | 22% |
| | 30% or higher | 24,825 | 54% |
| | Subtotal | 35,205 | 76% |
| Total | | 46,195 | 100% |

100. In Table 16 we consider the degree completion rates, split by whether or not a student changed to full-time study. As with non-OU students, those who do make this change are found to have substantially higher rates of completion. The relatively small proportion of students who undertake full-time study at some stage have a completion rate of 64 per cent. This compares to a rate of 23 per cent for students remaining in part-time study for the duration of their course.

Table 16 Degree completion rates by whether or not entrants moved to full-time study

| Change to full-time? | Intensity of study in first year | % degree |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Change to full-time study | Unknown | * |
| | Below 30% | 63% |
| | 30% or higher | 64% |
| | Subtotal | 64% |
| Remain in part-time study | Unknown | * |
| | Below 30% | 16% |
| | 30% or higher | 27% |
| | Subtotal | 23% |
| Overall | | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

Moving between institutions

101. Tracking students within and through consecutive years' HESA student records enables us to identify those students who remain at one institution for the duration of their degree programme, and those who move to a different institution at some point during their studies. The degree completion rates for both of these groups are considered in this section.

102. In considering the movements of students between institutions we classify them into one of three groups:

- a. **Leave and do not return to studies.** Students who are, at some point, seen to leave the institution at which they were registered in 1996-97, not having gained a first degree. They are not found to study towards a first degree at any future point in the 11-year period examined.
- b. **Transfer to another HEI.** Students who are seen to leave the institution at which they were registered in 1996-97, and continue their first degree studies at another HEI.
- c. **Remain at initial HEI.** All record of their first degree study is found to be at the institution at which they were registered in 1996-97.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

103. Part-time entrants to first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the OU) are shown in Table 17, split by whether or not they moved institution during the course of their studies. Again, we also consider the cohort split by intensity of study in the first year.

Table 17 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether or not they moved institutions during their studies

| Move from initial HEI? | Intensity of study in first year | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Leave and do not return to studies | Unknown | 2,275 | 14% |
| | Below 30% | 875 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 2,385 | 14% |
| | Subtotal | 5,535 | 33% |
| Transfer to another HEI | Unknown | 500 | 3% |
| | Below 30% | 195 | 1% |
| | 30% or higher | 1,530 | 9% |
| | Subtotal | 2,225 | 13% |
| Remain at initial HEI | Unknown | 815 | 5% |
| | Below 30% | 580 | 3% |
| | 30% or higher | 7,435 | 45% |
| | Subtotal | 8,825 | 53% |
| Total | | 16,585 | 100% |

104. Table 17 shows that 13 per cent of entrants in 1996-97 (2,225 students) moved institution at some point during their studies, while 53 per cent remained at the same institution throughout. Further, we have found 5,535 students (33 per cent of the cohort) to leave their initial institution without completing their degree and not return to their studies. The largest proportion of students (45 per cent) are found to remain at their initial HEI, having studied at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in their first year.

105. Students found to 'leave and do not return to their studies' have not completed their first degree, and hence are excluded when we consider the rates of degree completion, split by whether or not a student moved institution, in Table 18.

Table 18 Degree completion rates by whether or not entrants moved institutions during their studies

| Move from initial HEI? | Intensity of study in first year | % degree |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Transfer to another HEI | Unknown | 46% |
| | Below 30% | 54% |
| | 30% or higher | 44% |
| | Subtotal | 46% |
| Remain at initial HEI | Unknown | 52% |
| | Below 30% | 43% |
| | 30% or higher | 65% |
| | Subtotal | 62% |
| Overall | | 39% |

106. The rates of completion for students who either ‘transfer to another HEI’ or ‘remain at initial HEI’ are shown to range between 43 per cent and 65 per cent. For those with either unknown intensity of study, or who study at 30 per cent intensity or higher, we see that the completion rates are higher among those students who did not move institution during the period examined compared to those who did move. While 44 per cent of the part-time students who studied at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher and ‘transfer to another HEI’ complete their first degree, the completion rate for those higher intensity students who ‘remain at initial HEI’ is higher: 65 per cent have completed their degree by 1 August 2007. Similarly, for those with unknown intensity these rates are 46 per cent and 52 per cent respectively.

107. In respect of students studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent the opposite is true; those students who ‘transfer to another HEI’ have a higher completion rate (54 per cent) than students who ‘remain at initial HEI’ (43 per cent). However, it is important to note that we are dealing with relatively small numbers when we consider students at this intensity who ‘transfer to another HEI’, and this may have an impact on the completion rates observed.

Open University

108. In Table 19 we consider entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU by whether or not they move institution during the course of their studies. It shows that there are 7,465 entrants who moved institution at some point during their studies: 16 per cent of the cohort. The majority of students remained at the OU throughout their studies (66 per cent), while 18 per cent were found to ‘leave and do not return to studies’.

Table 19 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether or not they moved institutions during their studies

| Move from initial HEI? | Intensity of study in first year | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Leave and do not return to studies | Unknown | 105 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 2,400 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 5,655 | 12% |
| | Subtotal | 8,160 | 18% |
| Transfer to another HEI | Unknown | 5 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 2,295 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 5,165 | 11% |
| | Subtotal | 7,465 | 16% |
| Remain at initial HEI | Unknown | 5 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 8,735 | 19% |
| | 30% or higher | 21,830 | 47% |
| | Subtotal | 30,565 | 66% |
| Total | | 46,195 | 100% |

Table 20 Degree completion rates by whether or not entrants moved institutions during their studies

| Move from initial HEI? | Intensity of study in first year | % degree |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Transfer to another HEI | Unknown | * |
| | Below 30% | 35% |
| | 30% or higher | 41% |
| | Subtotal | 39% |
| Remain at initial HEI | Unknown | * |
| | Below 30% | 14% |
| | 30% or higher | 27% |
| | Subtotal | 23% |
| Overall | | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

109. Table 20 shows that the highest rate of first degree completion is observed among those entrants who move institution at some point during their studies, having studied at

an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in their first year. Such entrants have a completion rate of 41 per cent. The lowest rate (where intensity is known) is seen for entrants who do not move institution and studied at an intensity of below 30 per cent: only 14 per cent have completed their first degree before 1 August 2007.

Breaks in study

110. In consideration of breaks in study we define a student to have taken a break from their first degree programme if they are found to be inactive for at least one full academic year (1 August to 31 July).

111. As with moving between institutions and changing to full-time we classify students into one of three groups when considering whether or not they take a break from their studies:

- a. **Leave and do not return to studies.** Students who are, at some point, seen to leave the institution at which they were registered in 1996-97, not having gained a first degree. They are not found to study towards a first degree at any future point in the 11-year period examined.
- b. **No break.** Students who are seen to study towards their first degree without taking a break of more than one academic year.
- c. **Take a break.** Students are found to have been inactive for at least one full academic year during the course of their studies.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

112. Part-time entrants to first degree programmes in 1996-97 are shown in Table 21, split by intensity of study in the first year of study and whether or not entrants took a break from their studies at some point during their first degree programme. The table shows that the majority of entrants (58 per cent) did not take a break from their studies. As was identified in the analysis of moving between institutions, 33 per cent of the cohort are seen to 'leave and do not return to studies'. Only 9 per cent of the cohort are found to take a break and return to their studies.

Table 21 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether or not they take a break from their studies

| Break in study? | Intensity of study in first year | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Leave and do not return to studies | Unknown | 2,275 | 14% |
| | Below 30% | 875 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 2,385 | 14% |
| | Subtotal | 5,535 | 33% |
| No break | Unknown | 1,015 | 6% |
| | Below 30% | 620 | 4% |
| | 30% or higher | 7,845 | 48% |
| | Subtotal | 9,575 | 58% |
| Take a break | Unknown | 300 | 2% |
| | Below 30% | 155 | 1% |
| | 30% or higher | 1,020 | 6% |
| | Subtotal | 1,475 | 9% |
| Total | | 16,585 | 100% |

113. Table 22 considers the rates of degree completion by whether or not students take a break in their studies. Again, students found to 'leave and do not return to studies' are not included here since they fail to complete their degree by definition.

Table 22 Degree completion rates by whether or not entrants took a break in their studies

| Break in study? | Intensity of study in first year | % degree |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| No break | Unknown | 39% |
| | Below 30% | 37% |
| | 30% or higher | 59% |
| | Subtotal | 55% |
| Take a break | Unknown | 86% |
| | Below 30% | 81% |
| | 30% or higher | 79% |
| | Subtotal | 81% |
| Overall | | 39% |

114. Table 22 shows that the highest rate of degree completion is observed among entrants whose intensity of study is unknown in the first year and who take a break at some point during their first degree programme: 86 per cent of such students have completed their degree before 1 August 2007.

115. Students who are found to have taken a break in their studies are seen to have higher rates of degree completion for all groups of study intensity. However, it should be noted that the numbers of students in these categorisations are relatively small, particularly in the case of unknown or intensities lower than 30 per cent. For this reason, caution should be exercised in the interpretation of these results.

Open University

116. The entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97 are shown in Table 23, split by whether or not they took a break from their studies at some point during their course and the intensity of their study in the first year.

Table 23 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether or not they take a break from their studies

| Break in study? | Intensity of study in first year | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
|------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Leave and do not return to studies | Unknown | 105 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 2,400 | 5% |
| | 30% or higher | 5,655 | 12% |
| | Subtotal | 8,160 | 18% |
| No break | Unknown | 5 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 9,870 | 21% |
| | 30% or higher | 24,670 | 53% |
| | Subtotal | 34,550 | 75% |
| Take a break | Unknown | 0 | 0% |
| | Below 30% | 1,160 | 3% |
| | 30% or higher | 2,325 | 5% |
| | Subtotal | 3,485 | 8% |
| Total | | 46,195 | 100% |

117. Table 23 shows that while 18 per cent of the cohort were found to 'leave and do not return to studies', another three-quarters studied continuously towards their first degree (75 per cent). Only 8 per cent (3,485 students) were found to have taken a break of at least one full academic year during the course of their studies.

118. By definition, students who ‘leave and do not return to studies’ fail to complete their first degree and hence are not included in Table 24, which considers degree completion rates by whether or not a student took a break in their studies.

Table 24 Degree completion rates by whether or not entrants took a break in their studies

| Break in study? | Intensity of study in first year | % degree |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| No break | Unknown | * |
| | Below 30% | 14% |
| | 30% or higher | 26% |
| | Subtotal | 23% |
| Take a break | Unknown | * |
| | Below 30% | 59% |
| | 30% or higher | 67% |
| | Subtotal | 64% |
| Overall | | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

119. From Table 24 we observe that the rate of degree completion among those students that did take a break from their studies is more than 40 percentage points higher than that of those who took no such break: 64 per cent compared to 23 per cent. Students studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in the first year and taking a break during their studies have the highest completion rate (67 per cent). For equivalent students in the lower intensity group, the completion rate is eight percentage points lower, at 59 per cent.

Gaining another award

120. Although we have defined the cohort of students as being on first degree programmes (or institutional credits at the OU), some of these students will qualify with other awards, either on their way to a first degree or as the final qualification. In this section we consider our cohorts of interest with regard to the highest qualifications they gain during the period examined.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

121. The cohort of entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK HEIs in 1996-97 are shown in Table 25, split by the highest qualification gained during the 11-year period examined.

Table 25 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by highest qualification gained

| Qualification gained | Intensity of study in first year | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | | Below 30% | | 30% or higher | |
| | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants |
| First degree or higher | 655 | 18% | 355 | 22% | 5,480 | 48% |
| Other undergraduate | 145 | 4% | 45 | 3% | 240 | 2% |
| Diploma/Certificate of HE | 85 | 2% | 50 | 3% | 265 | 2% |
| HND/HNC | 5 | 0% | 5 | 0% | 55 | 0% |
| Institutional credit | 125 | 4% | 30 | 2% | 170 | 1% |
| None | 2,565 | 72% | 1,165 | 70% | 5,145 | 45% |
| Total | 3,585 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 11,350 | 100% |

122. Table 25 shows that gaining a qualification other than a first degree is relatively uncommon within our cohort of students. For each intensity of study group around 90 per cent of students either gain a first degree qualification during the period examined, or gain no qualification at all. Where intensity of study in the first year is known, 'Diploma/Certificate of HE' is found to be the qualification gained by the largest proportion of students other than 'First degree' and 'None'.

123. In Table 26 we consider the students within our cohort who do not gain a first degree, and show the proportion gaining another type of qualification split by intensity of study and whether or not they were still active on a degree programme at the end of the 11-year period examined. It shows that 12 per cent of those students no longer active on a degree programme have gained another qualification during the course of their first degree studies.

Table 26 Proportion of entrants in 1996-97 gaining a non-degree qualification

| Intensity of study in first year | Still active on degree course | No longer active on degree course |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Unknown | 33% | 12% |
| Below 30% | 27% | 10% |
| 30% or higher | 23% | 12% |
| Total | 25% | 12% |

Open University

124. In Table 27 we show the 1996-97 cohort of entrants to OU programmes, split by the highest qualification gained during the 11-year period examined.

Table 27 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by highest qualification gained

| Qualification gained | Intensity of study in first year | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | | Below 30% | | 30% or higher | |
| | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants |
| First degree or higher | 0 | 1% | 2,030 | 15% | 8,000 | 24% |
| Other undergraduate | 0 | 0% | 920 | 7% | 1,880 | 6% |
| Diploma/Certificate of HE | 0 | 1% | 105 | 1% | 260 | 1% |
| HND/HNC | 0 | 0% | 25 | 0% | 85 | 0% |
| Institutional credit | 0 | 0% | 160 | 1% | 255 | 1% |
| None | 110 | 98% | 10,195 | 76% | 22,170 | 68% |
| Total | 110 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 32,650 | 100% |

125. Table 27 shows that, as with non-OU students, gaining a qualification other than a first degree is relatively uncommon within our cohort of OU students. 'Other undergraduate' is the group in which qualifications are gained by the largest proportion of students other than 'First degree' and 'None'.

Table 28 Proportion of entrants in 1996-97 gaining a non-degree qualification

| Intensity of study in first year | Still active on degree course | No longer active on degree course |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Unknown | 0% | 0% |
| Below 30% | 27% | 10% |
| 30% or higher | 25% | 9% |
| Total | 26% | 9% |

126. In Table 28 we consider the proportion of students within our cohort who gain a non-first degree qualification, split by intensity of study and whether or not they were still active on a degree programme at the end of the 11-year period examined. It shows that 9 per cent of those students no longer active on a degree programme have gained another qualification during the course of their first degree studies.

Classification of first degree

127. In the following tables we consider the 6,490 students at UK HEIs and 10,025 students at the OU who complete their first degree programme and gain this qualification. To provide further details of these qualifiers, we consider the classification of the degree they obtained.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

128. Entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK HEIs in 1996-97 who go on to gain a first degree qualification during the 11-year period examined are shown in Table 29, split by the classification of the degree they were awarded. It shows that the vast majority of students who qualify do so with a classification of 'other second-class honours' or higher. 'Upper second-class honours' is the most common classification, with around 42 per cent of qualifiers achieving this classification in each of the two known intensity of study groups.

Table 29 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 who qualify, by degree classification

| Classification of qualification gained | Intensity of study in first year | | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | Unknown | | Below 30% | | 30% or higher | |
| | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants |
| First-class honours | 55 | 8% | 25 | 7% | 540 | 10% |
| Upper second-class honours | 225 | 35% | 150 | 43% | 2,295 | 42% |
| Other second-class honours | 195 | 29% | 60 | 17% | 1,605 | 29% |
| Third-class and lower | 30 | 5% | 5 | 2% | 200 | 4% |
| Unclassified, and non-honours classifications | 40 | 6% | 45 | 13% | 360 | 7% |
| Unknown degree classification | 110 | 17% | 65 | 18% | 485 | 9% |
| Total | 655 | 100% | 355 | 100% | 5,480 | 100% |

Open University

129. Table 30 shows the equivalent to Table 29 for part-time entrants to the OU. The 'unknown' intensity of study grouping is not shown in this table because none of the qualifiers within this cohort fall into this intensity group.

Table 30 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 who qualify, by degree classification

| Classification of qualification gained | Intensity of study in first year | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Below 30% | | 30% or higher | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| First-class honours | 135 | 7% | 745 | 9% |
| Upper second-class honours | 350 | 17% | 2,060 | 26% |
| Other second-class honours | 205 | 10% | 1,515 | 19% |
| Third-class and lower | 35 | 2% | 380 | 5% |
| Unclassified, and non-honours classifications | 370 | 18% | 1,345 | 17% |
| Unknown degree classification | 940 | 46% | 1,955 | 24% |
| Total | 2,030 | 100% | 8,000 | 100% |

130. Table 30 shows that degree classification is unknown for a large proportion of qualifiers within our cohort; 46 and 24 per cent of students are returned in this way for the low and high intensity groups respectively. Where degree classification is known, achieving an 'upper second-class honours' qualification was again most common.

First degree completion rates by programme and student attributes

131. In this section we concentrate on whether a part-time student completes the first degree programme or not after 11 years. We have examined the differences in first degree completion rates according to the following attributes:

- age on entry
- sex
- ethnicity
- disability status
- domicile of student
- previous qualifications and route to first degree programme
- subject area
- institution and subject area within institution.

132. We present information on these attributes in simple summaries. As in earlier sections we consider the cohort by grouped intensity of study in the first year of their degree programme (1996-97). In this section of the report we focus on entrants in the high intensity of study grouping: those studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher in their first year. Unless otherwise stated we consider entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) and the OU (cohorts of 11,350 and 32,650 respectively).

133. Entrants known to be studying at an intensity below 30 per cent in their first year have also been considered with respect to the attributes detailed in paragraph 131, and Annex D provides the profiles and completion rates for low intensity students. In addition, the tables at Annex D show the profile of the high intensity entrants in context of the overall profile.

Age on entry

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

134. The age profile for entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 is shown in Table 31, for those studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher. The degree completion rates for these entrants are also shown in Table 31. Note that it does not report the degree completion rate for students with unknown age because of the small number of such students.

Table 31 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student age on commencement

| Age range | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 24 and under | 2,370 | 21% | 51% |
| 25 to 34 | 4,750 | 42% | 49% |
| 35 to 44 | 2,695 | 24% | 48% |
| 45 and over | 1,455 | 13% | 43% |
| Unknown age | 85 | 1% | * |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Tables D1 and D2 at Annex D.

135. In Table 31 we observe that the majority of our cohort is aged between 25 and 34. There are 4,750 students (42 per cent) studying at 30 per cent intensity or higher in their first year who fall into this age group.

136. Table 31 also shows that the degree completion rates decrease as the age of students on commencement increases. The '45 and over' age group is the smallest known, and also has the lowest degree completion rate. Among those studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities, 43 per cent complete their first degree programme within 11 academic years. This compares with the highest completion rate of 51 per cent, which is observed in the youngest age group ('24 and under').

Open University

137. In Table 32 we consider the age profile of high intensity part-time entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU, and the associated degree completion rates.

138. Table 32 shows that, for entrants studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities in their first year, the largest age group is '25 to 34' while the smallest (when we consider those with known age on commencement) is '24 and under'.

Table 32 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student age on commencement

| Age range | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| 24 and under | 3,940 | 12% | 23% |
| 25 to 34 | 13,850 | 42% | 25% |
| 35 to 44 | 9,110 | 28% | 26% |
| 45 and over | 5,750 | 18% | 23% |
| Unknown age | 5 | 0% | * |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 24% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Tables D3 and D4 at Annex D.

139. For those who study at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher, Table 32 shows that students aged '35 to 44' on commencement have the highest rates of first degree completion: 26 per cent of such students complete their degree within the period examined. The lowest rates of completion are only three percentage points lower: 23 per cent of those aged either '24 and under' or '45 and over' complete their first degree within the 11 academic years.

Sex

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

140. We consider part-time, first degree entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 by sex in Table 33. It shows that there are more than 2,000 more females than males in our cohort of entrants studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities: females account for 60 per cent of this group of students.

Table 33 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by sex of student

| Sex | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| Female | 6,765 | 60% | 49% |
| Male | 4,590 | 40% | 47% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D5 and D6 at Annex D.

141. In Table 33 we show the degree completion rates for our cohort of entrants. It shows that while female students outnumber male students, they also have somewhat higher rates of first degree completion. It shows that female students studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher have a completion rate two percentage points higher than male students in the same intensity group: 49 per cent for females compared to 47 per cent for males.

Open University

142. In Table 34 we show our cohort of entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU split by sex. It shows that among high intensity students, females once again outnumber males; 52 per cent of our cohort is female compared to 48 per cent being male.

Table 34 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by sex of student

| Sex | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Female | 16,835 | 52% | 27% |
| Male | 15,820 | 48% | 22% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 24% |

Note: Relates to Tables D7 and D8 at Annex D.

143. The degree completion rates for high intensity, part-time entrants to first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97 are also shown in Table 34. It shows that female students have higher rates of first degree completion. However, the differences observed between male and female students registered at the OU are larger than those seen for students at non-OU HEIs. Table 34 shows that for OU students the completion rate for females is five percentage points higher than for males: 27 per cent of females complete their degree within the period, compared to 22 per cent of males.

Ethnicity

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

144. Table 35 shows the profile of high intensity, first degree part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) split by ethnicity, and the associated degree completion rates.

Table 35 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by ethnicity of student

| Ethnicity | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| White | 8,100 | 71% | 50% |
| Black | 765 | 7% | 45% |
| Asian | 645 | 6% | 40% |
| Unknown ethnicity | 1,840 | 16% | 44% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D9 and D10 at Annex D.

145. Table 35 shows that the majority of the cohort come from a White ethnic background and that it is these students who have the highest rates of degree completion. The table shows that half of White students studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher complete their first degree programme within the 11-year period examined. The lowest completion rate is observed for Asian students (40 per cent).

Open University

146. The equivalent information to Table 35 is shown in Table 36 for entrants in 1996-97 to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU. It shows that White students are again in the majority: 92 per cent of the OU cohort are returned as having a White ethnic background.

Table 36 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by ethnicity of student

| Ethnicity | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| White | 30,130 | 92% | 25% |
| Black | 885 | 3% | 16% |
| Asian | 835 | 3% | 19% |
| Unknown ethnicity | 800 | 2% | 20% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 24% |

Note: Relates to Tables D11 and D12 at Annex D.

147. In Table 36 we also consider the rates of degree completion for these students. It shows that there is less variation in rates of first degree completion between the ethnic groups than for the cohort of entrants to non-OU HEIs. Black students have the lowest rates of degree completion among those studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities (16 per cent). This completion rate is nine percentage points lower than the highest completion rate of 25 per cent, which is for White students.

Disability status

148. In the following paragraphs we consider the disability status returned for part-time entrants in our cohorts in their first year of study (1996-97)¹¹.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

149. Entrants to first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 studying at intensities of 30 per cent or higher are shown split by disability status in Table 37.

¹¹ Students' disability status is derived using HESA field 071 – DISABLE – where students identify themselves as having one of the following disabilities: dyslexia; blind/partially sighted; deaf/hearing impaired; wheelchair user/mobility difficulties; personal care support; mental health difficulties; unseen disability, for example diabetes, epilepsy, asthma; multiple disabilities; disability not listed above. This field has been used in preference over the 'DISALL' field (introduced in 1998-99), or its predecessor 'REGDIS', due to inconsistencies between these fields affecting our time series.

Table 37 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student disability status

| Disability status | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Not disabled | 10,215 | 90% | 48% |
| Returned as having a disability | 325 | 3% | 43% |
| Unknown disability status | 810 | 7% | 49% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D13 and D14 at Annex D.

150. The degree completion rates for the entrants described in Table 37 are also shown. Those returned as having a disability are found to have the lowest completion rate of 43 per cent. The highest completion rate is observed to be six percentage points higher, at 49 per cent for the 890 students whose disability status is unknown.

Open University

151. The profile of students commencing part-time institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97 and studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher are shown in Table 38 split by their disability status. Around 4 per cent of the entrants are returned as having a disability (1,330 students).

Table 38 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student disability status

| Disability status | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Not disabled | 31,315 | 96% | 25% |
| Returned as having a disability | 1,330 | 4% | 19% |
| Unknown disability status | 5 | 0% | * |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 24% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Tables D15 and D16 at Annex D.

152. In Table 38 we see that the highest rate of first degree completion is observed among those returned as not having a disability: a quarter of such students complete their first degree within 11 academic years.

Domicile of student

153. Our cohorts include UK-domiciled entrants to part-time first degree programmes in 1996-97. In the following paragraphs we look more closely at the domiciles of the entrants in the cohorts.

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

154. In Table 39 we examine our cohort of entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) split by the student's country of domicile. The majority of entrants studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities are domiciled in England: 11,190 students (86 per cent).

Table 39 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by domicile of student

| Domicile | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| England | 9,665 | 85% | 48% |
| Northern Ireland | 535 | 5% | 61% |
| Scotland | 750 | 7% | 38% |
| Wales | 405 | 4% | 52% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D17 and D18 at Annex D.

155. The degree completion rates for these students are also shown in Table 39. The table shows that, for students studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or higher, those domiciled in Scotland have the lowest rate of first degree completion: 38 per cent of such students complete within the 11-year period examined. The highest completion rate is observed for students domiciled in Northern Ireland where 61 per cent have completed their degree before 1 August 2007.

Open University

156. The equivalent information to Table 39 is shown in Table 40 for part-time entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97. It shows that 84 per cent of entrants studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities were domiciled in England.

Table 40 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by domicile of student

| Domicile | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| England | 27,360 | 84% | 24% |
| Northern Ireland | 885 | 3% | 25% |
| Scotland | 3,045 | 9% | 26% |
| Wales | 1,360 | 4% | 24% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 24% |

Note: Relates to Tables D19 and D20 at Annex D.

157. Table 40 also shows the rates of first degree completion for the 1996-97 OU cohort. It shows that there is little variation between the countries of domicile when we consider the rates of first degree completion. Around a quarter of students in each domicile complete their degree when we consider those studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities in their first year.

Prior entry qualifications

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

158. The highest qualifications held by our cohort of high intensity part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) are shown in Table 41. It shows that there are almost 2,500 students who commence a first degree in 1996-97 whose highest qualification is either a professional, first degree or postgraduate qualification. It should be noted that while these qualifications were not gained in the previous academic year (1995-96)¹², a substantial proportion of our cohort have prior experience of HE and have already gained higher level HE qualifications.

Table 41 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by students qualifications on entry

| Qualifications on entry | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|---|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 2,485 | 22% | 43% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 2,085 | 18% | 57% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 2,460 | 22% | 54% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 1,005 | 9% | 47% |
| Other qualifications or previous experience | 1,500 | 13% | 49% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 435 | 4% | 35% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 1,385 | 12% | 39% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D21 and D22 at Annex D.

159. Table 41 shows that one of the qualifications most commonly held by entrants studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities is 'A-levels or equivalent', and that these students have one of the highest rates of degree completion, at 54 per cent. Only those entering with 'HNC/D and other undergraduate' qualifications have a higher completion rate (57 per cent).

Open University

160. In Table 42 we consider the equivalent information to Table 41 for part-time entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97.

¹² As described in paragraph 33, students found to be studying for a first degree in 1995-96 have been excluded from analysis due to difficulties in confirming their status as entrants to HE as opposed to continuing students.

Table 42 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by students' qualifications on entry

| Qualifications on entry | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 7,160 | 22% | 29% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 11,320 | 35% | 31% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 3,190 | 10% | 21% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 9,305 | 29% | 17% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 1,415 | 4% | 10% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 260 | 1% | 20% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 24% |

Note: Relates to Tables D23 and D24 at Annex D.

161. Table 42 shows that among students whose intensity of study in the first year is 30 per cent or higher, the most commonly held qualifications are 'HNC/D and other undergraduate': 11,320 students hold these qualifications. It also shows that 31 per cent of these students have completed their first degree within 11 academic years.

162. There is substantial variation in the rates of degree completion when considering our cohort of entrants split by highest qualification on entry. The highest completion rate is 21 percentage points higher than the lowest: 31 per cent of students whose highest qualification is 'HNC/D and other undergraduate' complete their first degree while 10 per cent of those entering with no formal qualification complete.

Subject area – UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

163. Prior to 2003-04, as well as recording all students as registering for modules, or institutional credits (as was described in paragraph 37), the OU recorded all students' subject area of study as 'Combined'. For this reason we are only able to provide analysis of the 1996-97 UK HEIs (other than the OU) cohort split by subject area.

164. Table 43 considers our non-OU cohort split by the subject area of study. It shows that the most popular areas of study are 'business and administrative studies', 'subjects allied to medicine' and 'combined and other' subjects.

Table 43 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by subject area of study

| Subject area of study | No. of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Business and administrative studies | 1,350 | 12% | 52% |
| Languages | 410 | 4% | 60% |
| Subjects allied to medicine | 1,990 | 18% | 45% |
| Agriculture and related subjects | 15 | 0% | * |
| Architecture, building and planning | 400 | 4% | 54% |
| Biological sciences | 395 | 3% | 50% |
| Computer science | 625 | 5% | 38% |
| Creative arts and design | 480 | 4% | 52% |
| Education | 625 | 6% | 31% |
| Engineering and technology | 805 | 7% | 53% |
| Humanities | 340 | 3% | 62% |
| Law | 1,210 | 11% | 53% |
| Librarianship and information science | 70 | 1% | * |
| Mathematical sciences | 20 | 0% | * |
| Physical sciences | 210 | 2% | 57% |
| Social, economic and political studies | 730 | 6% | 43% |
| Combined and other subjects | 1,675 | 15% | 46% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D25 and D26 at Annex D.

165. Table 43 shows that rates of first degree completion among part-time entrants vary considerably by subject area. The rate ranges from 31 per cent in education to 62 per cent for humanities.

Franchising – UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

166. Since no students registered at the OU are recorded as being part of a franchising arrangement, we consider only the UK HEIs (other than the OU) cohort when we consider franchising in paragraphs 167 and 168.

167. The non-OU cohort, split by whether or not the student was recorded as undertaking franchised provision, is shown in Table 44. We find that there are a total of 770 students (7 per cent) within our cohort who are recorded as being part of a franchising arrangement.

Table 44 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether the provision was franchised in the first year

| Provision is franchised? | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Not franchised | 10,580 | 93% | 49% |
| Franchised | 770 | 7% | 36% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D27 and D28 at Annex D.

168. We also consider the rates of first degree completion for the non-OU cohort in Table 44. It shows that students who are not involved in franchised provision have the higher rate of degree completion when we consider those studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities. While 49 per cent of non-franchised students have completed their degree within the 11-year period examined, 36 per cent of franchised students are found to have completed.

Distance learning – UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

169. Due to the nature of study at the OU all students are recorded as being distance learners. As with subject area of study and franchising, we consider only the 1996-97 cohort of part-time entrants to non-OU HEIs and whether or not they were recorded as being distance learners. Table 45 shows that there were 395 distance learners studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities, accounting for 3 per cent of the cohort.

Table 45 High intensity, part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether students were distance learners

| Distance learner? | Number of entrants | % of entrants | % degree |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| No | 10,960 | 97% | 49% |
| Yes | 395 | 3% | 38% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 48% |

Note: Relates to Tables D29 and D30 at Annex D.

170. Table 45 also considers the degree completion rates of our non-OU cohort. We see that the completion rate of distance learners among those studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities is lower than that of entrants not recorded as being distance learners. While 38 per cent of distance learners are found to have completed their degree before 1 August 2007, 49 per cent of non-distance learners do so.

Institution

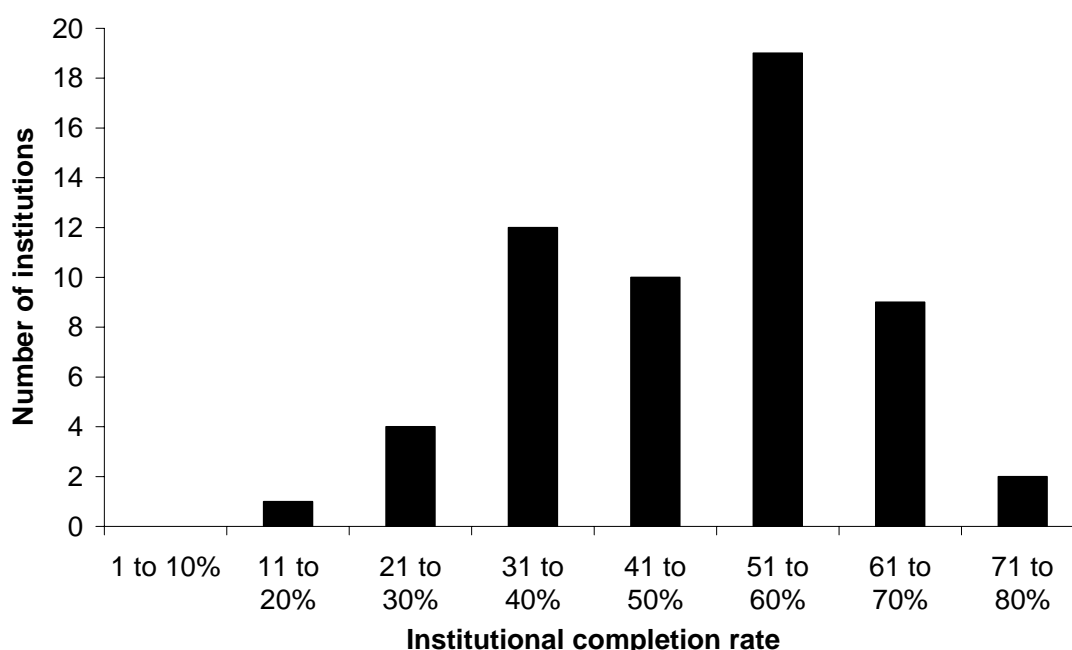
171. Figure 7 shows the distribution of institutional completion rates for UK HEIs (other than the OU) for entrants to first degree programmes in 1996-97.

172. There are 48 higher education institutions at which students are identified as studying on low intensity (below 30 per cent) part-time first degree courses. However,

only five of these institutions have more than 50 such students registered. To avoid the dangers associated with analysis of such small numbers, we consider only institutions with 50 or more students studying on high intensity (30 per cent or higher) courses in Figure 7.

173. It shows that the majority of institutions have a completion rate of between 31 and 70 per cent. The median rate is 51 per cent having completed their first degree within the 11 academic year period examined.

Figure 7 Distribution of institutional completion rates (30 per cent or higher intensity provision)



Note: only institutions with 50 or more students studying on high intensity (30 per cent or higher) part-time first degree courses are included.

Comparison of cohorts

174. While previous sections of this report have focused largely on the 11-year completion rates observed for the 1996-97 cohort of entrants to part-time first degree programmes, we now introduce a second cohort. It can be argued that the 1996-97 cohort may be out of date, and hence that our findings with regard to rates of part-time completion may not be relevant or applicable to part-time students active today.

175. Rates of completion reported earlier in this document allow the maximum 11 academic years for students to complete their programme of study and gain their first degree. In this section we once again consider the 1996-97 cohort, but limit the time allowed for completion to seven years.

176. Earlier analysis of the time to completion showed that the majority of UK HEI students completing their first degree do so within six academic years, and that the majority of OU students who do so do within eight academic years. Given the consideration of timeliness in this aspect of the report, a period of seven academic years was deemed reasonable.

177. The seven-year completion rates observed for the 1996-97 cohort are compared to those found among the 2000-01 cohort; the most recent cohort that we are able to follow for a period of seven academic years. This second cohort is defined using the same methods, definitions and exclusions as the 1996-97 cohort, discussed in paragraphs 22 to 40 of this report. The 1996-97 cohort remains the same as previously, and again we consider the OU and UK HEI (non-OU) populations separately.

178. In 2000-01 we identify a final population of 14,975 part-time entrants to first degrees at UK HEIs, and 38,970 entrants at the OU. Analysis has shown that the profile of these students is similar to that of the 1996-97 cohort, particularly with respect to attributes such as age, highest qualification on entry and intensity of study¹³. The seven-year completion rates observed among this later cohort are compared to seven-year completion rates obtained for the 1996-97 cohort and, given the similar profiles of the cohorts, this comparison may give an indication of what we might expect of more recent cohorts in terms of part-time completion rates.

179. Table 46 considers the outcomes after seven academic years of part-time entrants to a first degree programme in 1996-97 and 2000-01. It shows that the proportions of entrants that have been awarded, or are still active on, a first degree are higher among the 2000-01 cohort. While 40 per cent of entrants to UK HEIs in 1996-97 can be classified as 'degree awarded or still active', the equivalent proportion for the 2000-01 cohort is five percentage points higher at 45 per cent.

Table 46 Outcomes of part-time first degree entrants after seven academic years, 1996-97 and 2000-01 cohorts

| Cohort | | First degree awarded | | Still active on degree course | | No longer active on degree course | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| | | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants |
| 1996-97 cohort | UK HEIs (non-OU) | 5,820 | 35% | 820 | 5% | 9,945 | 60% |
| | Open University | 6,810 | 15% | 1,070 | 2% | 38,315 | 83% |
| Total | | 12,635 | 20% | 1,890 | 3% | 48,260 | 77% |
| 2000-01 cohort | UK HEIs (non-OU) | 5,845 | 39% | 845 | 6% | 8,285 | 55% |
| | Open University | 4,920 | 13% | 3,325 | 9% | 30,725 | 79% |
| Total | | 10,765 | 20% | 4,170 | 8% | 39,010 | 72% |

180. For entrants to the OU there is another difference of five percentage points: 22 per cent of entrants in 2000-01 have completed their degree or remain active after seven years compared to 17 per cent of entrants in 1996-97. However, we note that the rate of degree completion after seven years is higher for the earlier OU cohort: 15 per cent of

¹³ The two cohorts are compared with respect to these attributes at Annex E.

entrants in 1996-97 have completed after seven academic years compared to 13 per cent of entrants in 2000-01.

181. In Table 47 we compare the seven-year rates of degree completion for 1996-97 and 2000-01 entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU), split by the intensity of study in the first year of study. We see that the completion rate for those studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent is consistent across both cohorts at 18 per cent.

Table 47 Degree completion after seven years, by intensity of study in the first year, for entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK HEIs

| Intensity in first year | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Number of entrants | % degree | Number of entrants | % degree |
| Unknown | 3,585 | 15% | 3,185 | 20% |
| Below 30% | 1,650 | 18% | 1,495 | 18% |
| 30% or higher | 11,350 | 44% | 10,290 | 48% |
| Total | 16,585 | 35% | 14,975 | 39% |

182. For students whose intensity of study is either unknown or 30 per cent or higher, Table 47 shows that the completion rate is five and four percentage points higher, respectively, when we consider the 2000-01 cohort compared to the 1996-97 cohort.

183. Table 48 shows that the seven-year completion rates observed for the 2000-01 cohort are in fact closer to the 11-year completion rates observed for the 1996-97 cohort. Only the seven-year rate of completion for those studying at intensities lower than 30 per cent in 2000-01 is lower than the 11-year rate of completion for equivalent students in the 1996-97 cohort.

Table 48 Degree completion rates for the 1996-97 cohort after seven and 11 academic years

| Intensity in first year | Number of entrants | % degree after... | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| | | Seven years | 11 years |
| Unknown | 3,585 | 15% | 18% |
| Below 30% | 1,650 | 18% | 22% |
| 30% or higher | 11,350 | 44% | 48% |
| Total | 16,585 | 35% | 39% |

184. Table 48 also shows that, by allowing an additional four years for students to complete, the rate of first degree completion among part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) increases by around 4 per cent for each intensity of study group. Table 46 showed that there is a similar proportion of these students remaining active on a first degree after seven academic years (6 per cent for the 2000-01 cohort and 5 per cent for

the 1996-97 cohort). In addition, the higher completion rates observed for the later cohort, and the finding that additional time increases the rates further, suggest that final completion rates for the 2000-01 UK HEIs cohort are likely to be higher than those rates reported in this document for the 1996-97 cohort.

185. The equivalent information to Table 47 is shown for entrants to the OU in Table 49. It shows that, in contrast to the changes observed among non-OU entrants, the rates of degree completion are lower for the 2000-01 cohort compared to the 1996-97 cohort. While 10 per cent of the 1996-97 cohort studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent complete their degree within seven years, 6 per cent of equivalent students within the 2000-01 cohort do so. For those studying at 30 per cent or higher intensities the 1996-97 cohort's completion rate is one percentage point higher at 17 per cent completing, compared to 16 per cent for the 2000-01 cohort.

Table 49 Degree completion after seven years, by intensity of study in the first year, for entrants to part-time first degree programmes at the OU

| Intensity in first year | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------|------------|
| | Number of entrants | % degree | Number of entrants | % degree |
| Unknown | 115 | * | 5 | * |
| Below 30% | 13,430 | 10% | 13,620 | 6% |
| 30% or higher | 32,650 | 17% | 25,340 | 16% |
| Total | 46,195 | 15% | 38,970 | 13% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

186. In Table 50 we compare the seven- and 11-year completion rates for part-time entrants to first degree and institutional credit programmes at the OU in 1996-97. We see that allowing an additional four years for students to complete increases the rate of first degree completion for each intensity of study group, and by seven percentage points overall.

Table 50 Degree completion rates for the 1996-97 cohort after seven and 11 academic years

| Intensity in first year | Number of entrants | % degree after.. | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|
| | | Seven years | 11 years |
| Unknown | 115 | * | * |
| Below 30% | 13,430 | 10% | 15% |
| 30% or higher | 32,650 | 17% | 24% |
| Total | 46,195 | 15% | 22% |

187. Table 49 showed that the rates of degree completion are lower for the 2000-01 cohort compared to the 1996-97 cohort when we consider entrants to the OU. However,

it should be noted that Table 47 shows the proportion of the later cohort still active on a first degree programme to be more than four times that for the 1996-97 cohort. This proportion is found to be 2 per cent for the earlier cohort, and 9 per cent for the later. Also, given the increases observed in completion rates when allowing students 11 years to complete, it would be reasonable to assume that final completion rates for the 2000-01 cohort of part-time students registered with the OU will match, or exceed, the completion rates reported in this document for the 1996-97 cohort. It should also be remembered that the true, underlying OU completion rates are likely to be double those reported here due to the inclusion of students studying for institutional credit in the OU population.

Annex A Cohort definitions

Original population

1. The original population, for year X, is made up of students who are recorded on the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) individualised student record and:

- commenced between 1 August year X and 31 July year X+1
(HESA field: COMDATE between dates specified)
- are not an incoming ERASMUS (or other visiting or exchange) student
(HESA field: SPCSTU not in '3', '8', '4', '5', '6' or '8')
- are studying at first degree level
(HESA field: FLGLEVEL returned as 'A' or 'B' in 1996-97 and 1997-98, or XLEV501 returned as '3' or '4' for 1998-99 onwards)
- are studying for a higher education qualification at any higher education institution
(HESA field: QUALAIM returned as '02', '03', '04', '05', '06', '07', '08', '09', '10', '12', '13', '14', '18', '19', '20', '21', '22', '23', '24', '28', '41' or '42')
or studying for an institutional credit at the Open University (OU)
(HESA field: HESAINST recorded as 'H-0001' and QUALAIM returned as '61' or '62')
- are studying part-time
(HESA field: MODE returned as '31', '32', '33', '34', '35', '36', '37', '38', '39', '65', '66', '67', '68' or '69')
- are studying some, or all, of their programme of study (to date) within the UK
(HESA field: LOCSDY not returned as '7')
- are domiciled in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales
(HESA field: DOMICILE returned as '5826', '6826', '7826' or '8826').

2. Where there are multiple instances of the same student, only a single record is selected, with first-degree qualifications favoured over other types of qualification. A flag is placed on a student who is found to have multiple instances of study to ensure their exclusion at a later stage.

Cohort for analysis

3. To be included in our final cohort for analysis, students at UK higher education institutions (excluding the OU) had to fulfil the following additional criteria:

- not studying on more than one undergraduate course in year X
- not on a first degree course in year X or X-1
- not studying at the same intensity as a full-time student (in other words, those with a full-time equivalence (FTE) of less than 100 per cent)
- studying a course of more than four years in length

- studying on a course that does not give Qualified Teacher Status or registration with the General Teaching Council
 - commencing on the first year of the course
 - not found to have completed the course within two years of starting it.
4. Students registered at the OU had to fulfil the following criteria to be included in our final cohort for analysis:
- not studying on more than one undergraduate course in year X
 - not studying at the same intensity as a full-time student (in other words, those with an FTE of less than 100%)
 - not studying on an OU course in any previous year
 - not found to have completed the course within two years of starting it.

Outline of overall linking process

5. In order to link all available HESA records a unique longitudinal identifier is created for each individual that appears at any point in the HESA record. This identifier is created as follows:

- a. All students in a HESA individualised student record (year X) are matched to the following record (year X+1) using a number of match processes:
- records with matching HESA fields HUSID, HESAINST and NUMHUS (HIN linked)
 - records matched on gender, birth date, first name and surname, with restriction for common names and an allowance for maiden name changes and spelling errors
 - records matched on HUSID and either postcode, birth date, surname or first name
 - records matched on HESAINST, HUSID, gender and surname with potential spelling errors or maiden name changes
 - records matched on birth date, gender and first part of postcode. A combination of first name, HUSID and second part of postcode is further used to eliminate/select potential matches.
- b. These five matching processes are also used to internally match up students within a single academic year's HESA record. This internal matching is done for both year X and year X+1.
- c. The identified matches are then resolved so that a single person identifier exists for year X and year X+1.
- d. The process is repeated for matching between all pairs of years (X+1 and X+2, X and X+2, and so on).
- e. The final step is to resolve all found links across all the years to produce a single HESA longitudinal identifier.

Annex B Tables to show the effect of exclusions from an original population, for the years 1996-97 through to 2006-07

Table B1 Exclusions for each cohort from 1996-97 to 2006-07 (non-OU population)

| | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-00 | 2000-01 | 2001-02 | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Original non-OU population | 38,325 | 33,185 | 37,440 | 33,465 | 31,775 | 35,255 | 34,680 | 34,695 | 32,415 | 33,055 | 29,655 |
| More than one course in current year | 365 | 285 | 500 | 540 | 370 | 485 | 420 | 615 | 720 | 620 | 605 |
| On a degree course in the previous year | 5,705 | 4,265 | 5,340 | 2,750 | 2,555 | 2,395 | 2,500 | 2,710 | 2,710 | 2,510 | 2,350 |
| Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student | 995 | 1,010 | 1,250 | 1,040 | 1,355 | 1,465 | 1,225 | 1,410 | 1,660 | 1,700 | 1,835 |
| Course length shorter than four years | 6,990 | 5,560 | 6,400 | 6,285 | 6,685 | 8,030 | 8,225 | 8,150 | 7,175 | 8,050 | 7,880 |
| First degree with QTS | 435 | 0 | 25 | 15 | 25 | 10 | 25 | 40 | 25 | 15 | 15 |
| Not entering the first year of course | 6,465 | 5,180 | 6,375 | 6,055 | 4,870 | 5,545 | 4,810 | 5,745 | 5,725 | 5,810 | 5,015 |
| Qualifying within two years | 785 | 775 | 890 | 895 | 940 | 1,115 | 1,265 | 1,145 | 1,050 | 980 | 190 |
| Final non-OU population | 16,585 | 16,110 | 16,660 | 15,885 | 14,975 | 16,210 | 16,210 | 14,880 | 13,350 | 13,370 | 11,765 |

Table B2 Exclusions from each cohort from 1996-97 to 2006-07 (OU population)

| | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-00 | 2000-01 | 2001-02 | 2002-03 | 2003-04 | 2004-05 | 2005-06 | 2006-07 |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Original OU population | 122,900 | 32,775 | 34,175 | 45,515 | 43,195 | 51,385 | 46,185 | 47,715 | 46,710 | 57,430 | 61,795 |
| More than one course in current year | 720 | 195 | 245 | 300 | 300 | 345 | 290 | 680 | 505 | 605 | 665 |
| Studying at the same intensity as a full-time student | 3,880 | 1,010 | 950 | 1,235 | 1,165 | 1,415 | 1,510 | 960 | 840 | 1,530 | 1,480 |
| Not the first year at OU | 71,260 | 2,375 | 1,955 | 2,215 | 1,960 | 2,575 | 2,240 | 2,600 | 4,240 | 8,790 | 10,275 |
| Qualifying within two years | 850 | 60 | 50 | 55 | 800 | 65 | 65 | 85 | 75 | 135 | 0 |
| Final non-OU population | 46,190 | 29,135 | 30,975 | 41,710 | 38,970 | 46,985 | 42,080 | 43,390 | 41,050 | 46,370 | 49,375 |

Annex C – Analysis to inform a split by intensity of study

1. In the following paragraphs we provide analysis of part-time entrants to first degree programmes in 1996-97 that has helped to inform the choice to split the part-time entrants examined in the main report by intensity of study in their first year. The main report considers entrants studying at intensities of ‘below 30%’ and ‘30% or above’: a split that is applied consistently for entrants to both the UK HEIs (non-OU) cohort and the Open University cohort.

UK higher education institutions (non-Open University)

2. Paragraphs 57 to 68 of the main report discuss the completion rates of entrants to part-time first degree programmes at UK HEIs (non-Open University) in 1996-97 by intensity of study in the first year. Here we extend the analysis of this cohort with respect to the different intensities of study, and provide further information on the relationship between intensity of study and degree completion used in the report.

3. Table C1 considers this cohort of entrants by intensity of study in the first year, and examines both the profile of the entrants and the completion rates observed among them. The table relates to Figure 3 of the main report and further highlights the natural break observed in these entrants at 30 per cent intensity of study in the first year.

Table C1 Part-time first degree entrants in 1996-97, by intensity of study in the first year and rates of completion

| Intensity of study in the first year | Number of students | Proportion of cohort | % degree |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Undefined | 3,585 | 22% | 18% |
| 1-9% | 285 | 2% | 17% |
| 10-19% | 535 | 3% | 17% |
| 20-29% | 830 | 5% | 26% |
| 30-39% | 980 | 6% | 42% |
| 40-49% | 1,200 | 7% | 42% |
| 50-59% | 4,175 | 25% | 45% |
| 60-69% | 2,690 | 16% | 50% |
| 70-80% | 2,310 | 14% | 58% |
| Total | 16,585 | 100% | 39% |

4. Table C1 shows that, as observed in Figure 3 of the main report, the completion rates of those entrants studying at an intensity of 30 per cent or more are notably higher than those of entrants studying at intensities of below 30 per cent. Among the intensities falling into the ‘below 30%’ grouping the completion rates range between 17 per cent and 26 per cent. There is a sharp break at 30 per cent intensity and, for intensities upwards of this, these rates range between 42 per cent and 58 per cent.

5. Table C1 also shows that the largest proportion (25 per cent) of entrants are studying at an intensity between 50 per cent and 59 per cent. HEFCE analysis has

shown that 23 per cent of the 1996-97 cohort of entrants studied at an intensity of exactly 50 per cent in the first year.

6. The finding that there is a natural break in rates of completion at 30 per cent intensity is found to be consistent in each academic year from 1996-97 through to 2000-01. Table C2 shows in each year entrants studying at intensities higher than 30 per cent have higher rates of completion than those studying at any of the lower intensities.

Table C2 Rates of part-time first degree completion by intensity of study in the first year, 1996-97 to 2000-01

| Intensity of study in the first year | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-2000 | 2000-01 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Undefined | 18% | 22% | 20% | 21% | 20% |
| 1-9% | 17% | 24% | * | * | * |
| 10-19% | 17% | 24% | 24% | 19% | 16% |
| 20-29% | 26% | 29% | 27% | 26% | 22% |
| 30-39% | 42% | 32% | 44% | 37% | 40% |
| 40-49% | 42% | 45% | 40% | 35% | 42% |
| 50-59% | 45% | 49% | 48% | 49% | 48% |
| 60-69% | 50% | 51% | 51% | 50% | 46% |
| 70-80% | 58% | 56% | 54% | 55% | 54% |
| Total | 39% | 40% | 40% | 40% | 39% |
| Academic years allowed for completion | 11 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

7. In 2006-07, financial support for part-time students became statutory and took the form of grants available to those studying at an intensity of 50 per cent or higher. Prior to this, support for part-time students was offered at an HEI's discretion and often took the form of fee waivers. With some exceptions these concessions were offered when a student was studying at 50 per cent intensity or higher: disabled students, for example, may receive support even when studying at intensities of less than 50 per cent.

8. Given the financial support available to those studying at intensities of 50 per cent or higher it is reasonable to assume that this may act as an incentive to these students to continue and complete their part-time studies. For this reason a split of the cohort at 50 per cent intensity of study, as opposed to 30 per cent, might be considered plausible.

9. Table C3 shows the difference in the overall rates of degree completion for the grouped intensities when we consider grouping at both the 30 per cent and 50 per cent split for entrants in 1996-97. The table shows that completion rates are higher when we consider grouping according to the 50 per cent split.

Table C3 Rates of part-time first degree completion by grouped intensity of study in the first year, entrants in 1996-97

| Value of X | % degree when intensity of study in the first year is... | | |
|------------|--|----------|-------------|
| | Unknown | Below X% | X% or above |
| 30 | 18% | 22% | 48% |
| 50 | 18% | 33% | 50% |

10. While completion rates are higher when we consider the groupings based on the 50 per cent split, we notice that there is less difference between the rates of the higher and lower intensity groupings. At 48 per cent, the completion rate for entrants studying at an intensity of '30% or above' is 26 percentage points higher than that for entrants grouped as 'below 30%'. This difference is 17 percentage points when we consider the 'below 50%' and '50% or above' groupings: the completion rates are 33 per cent and 50 per cent respectively.

11. This results from the inclusion of the 2,180 entrants studying at an intensity between 30 per cent and 49 per cent in the lower intensity grouping when we use the 50 per cent split. Table C1 shows that these students have similar completion rates to those entrants studying at intensities of 50 per cent or higher, and it could therefore be argued that these 2,180 students are more representative of the higher intensity grouping. It would seem sensible to group these entrants along with those that are similar and better distinguish between the behaviours of different part-time students. As such, use of the groupings of 'below 30%' and '30% or above' is preferable.

Open University

12. Table C4 shows the equivalent information to Table C1 for part-time entrants to the Open University in 1996-97. It should be noted that a large number of students were recorded with exactly 50 per cent intensity of study in the first year.

Table C4 Part-time first degree entrants in 1996-97, by intensity of study in the first year and rates of completion

| Intensity of study in the first year | Number of students | Proportion of cohort | % degree |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Undefined | 113 | 0% | * |
| 1-9% | 0 | 0% | * |
| 10-19% | 1,677 | 4% | 13% |
| 20-29% | 11,751 | 25% | 15% |
| 30-39% | 196 | 0% | 35% |
| 40-49% | 0 | 0% | n/a |
| 50-59% | 31,239 | 68% | 24% |
| 60-69% | 6 | 0% | * |
| 70-80% | 1,210 | 3% | 26% |
| Total | 46,192 | 100% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

13. Although the difference is less pronounced than was observed among entrants to other UK HEIs, Table C4 shows that the cohort of entrants can once again be split. The completion rates observed among those studying at intensities of 30 per cent or more in their first year are higher than those for entrants studying at lower intensities.

14. As with entrants to other UK HEIs, the finding that completion rates differ above and below 30 per cent intensity of study is found to be consistent in each year from 1996-97 to 2000-01. Although small numbers of entrants cause Table C5 to be somewhat less clear than Table C2, we see that entrants studying at intensities of 30 per cent or higher have a higher rate of completion each year, despite students in later cohorts having been allowed fewer years to have completed.

Table C5 Rates of part-time first degree completion by intensity of study in the first year, 1996-97 to 2000-01

| Intensity of study in the first year | 1996-97 | 1997-98 | 1998-99 | 1999-2000 | 2000-01 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Undefined | * | * | * | * | * |
| 1-9% | * | * | * | * | 4% |
| 10-19% | 13% | * | * | * | 9% |
| 20-29% | 15% | 14% | 12% | 9% | 6% |
| 30-39% | 35% | * | * | 13% | 17% |
| 40-49% | * | * | * | * | * |
| 50-59% | 24% | 25% | 23% | 19% | 16% |
| 60-69% | * | * | * | * | 26% |
| 70-80% | 26% | 31% | 30% | 22% | 22% |
| Academic years allowed for completion | 11 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| Total | 22% | 22% | 21% | 16% | 13% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

15. Table C6 shows the overall rates of first degree completion among entrants in 1996-97 by grouped intensity of study in the first year.

Table C6 Rates of part-time first degree completion by grouped intensity of study in the first year, entrants in 1996-97

| Value of X | % degree when intensity of study in the first year is... | | |
|-------------------|---|--------------------|-----------------|
| | Unknown | X% or below | Above X% |
| 30 | * | 15% | 24% |
| 50 | * | 22% | 26% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants.

16. As with entrants to other UK HEIs, completion rates are higher when we consider intensity grouped by the 50 per cent split and the difference between the rates for the higher and lower intensity groups is reduced. Once again, this suggests that similar students would span both the higher and lower intensity groupings if the 50 per cent split

were to be used. The 30 per cent split can be considered more appropriate to accurately capture entrants studying at higher and lower intensities, and the differences between the two groups.

Annex D Tables to show first degree completion rates by programme and student attributes for low intensity entrants

1. In paragraphs 131 to 173 of the main report we considered whether a part-time student completes the first degree programme or not after 11 years. We examined the differences in first degree completion rates among entrants studying at high intensities (30 per cent or higher) according to the following attributes:

- age on entry
- sex
- ethnicity
- disability status
- domicile of student
- previous qualifications and route to first degree programme
- subject area.

2. Here we provide equivalent information to that presented in Tables 31 to 45 of the main report for low intensity students (that is, those known to be studying at below 30 per cent intensity). In addition, the following tables show the profile of the high intensity entrants in context of the overall profile combining the high and low intensity groupings.

3. For the remainder of this report we have excluded the relatively small numbers of students whose first-year intensity of study is not known from our analysis. This exclusion involves 3,585 students in our 1996-97 UK HEI (other than the OU) cohort of part-time entrants and 115 students in our OU cohort. Unless otherwise stated, we now consider cohorts of 13,000 and 46,080 entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) and the OU respectively.

Age on entry

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

Table D1 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student age on commencement

| Age range | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| 24 and under | 2,370 | 21% | 290 | 18% | 2,655 | 20% |
| 25 to 34 | 4,750 | 42% | 595 | 36% | 5,340 | 41% |
| 35 to 44 | 2,695 | 24% | 385 | 23% | 3,085 | 24% |
| 45 and over | 1,455 | 13% | 245 | 15% | 1,700 | 13% |
| Unknown age | 85 | 1% | 135 | 8% | 220 | 2% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 31 of the main report.

4. In Table D1 we observe that, for each grouped intensity of study, the majority of our cohort is aged between 25 and 34. There are 595 students (36 per cent) studying at below 30 per cent intensity in their first year who fall into this age group. The degree completion rates for the entrants described above are shown in Table D2.

Table D2 Degree completion rates by student age on commencement

| Age range | Intensity in first year | |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| 24 and under | 51% | 34% |
| 25 to 34 | 49% | 24% |
| 35 to 44 | 48% | 23% |
| 45 and over | 43% | 11% |
| Unknown age | * | * |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 31 of the main report.

5. Table D2 shows that the '45 and over' age group is the smallest known for both groups of intensity of study (as shown in Table D1), and also has the lowest degree completion rate for both. Among those studying in the lower intensity group, 11 per cent complete their first degree programme within 11 academic years. This compares with the highest completion rate of 34 per cent, which is observed in the youngest age group ('24 and under').

Open University

6. In Table D3 and Table D4 we consider the age profile of part-time entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU, and the associated degree completion rates respectively. Both are split by grouped intensity of study in the first year.

7. Table D3 shows that, for both intensities of study, the largest age group is '25 to 34' while the smallest (when we consider those with known age on commencement) is '24 and under'.

Table D3 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student age on commencement

| Age range | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| 24 and under | 3,940 | 12% | 910 | 7% | 4,850 | 11% |
| 25 to 34 | 13,850 | 42% | 4,560 | 34% | 18,405 | 40% |
| 35 to 44 | 9,110 | 28% | 4,335 | 32% | 13,445 | 29% |
| 45 and over | 5,750 | 18% | 3,630 | 27% | 9,380 | 20% |
| Unknown age | 5 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 5 | 0% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 46,080 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 32 of the main report.

Table D4 Degree completion rates by student age on commencement

| Age range | Intensity in first year | |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| 24 and under | 23% | 17% |
| 25 to 34 | 25% | 17% |
| 35 to 44 | 26% | 17% |
| 45 and over | 23% | 10% |
| Unknown age | * | * |
| Total | 24% | 15% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 32 of the main report.

8. For those who study at an intensity of below 30 per cent in their first year, Table D4 shows that the rate of degree completion is highest among those aged 44 and under: for each of the age groups encompassed here, 17 per cent of students complete their first degree before 1 August 2007. The lowest rate of degree completion is observed among those aged '45 and over' where only 10 per cent complete.

Sex

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

9. We consider part-time, first degree entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 by sex and intensity of study in Table D5. It shows that there are around 2,500 more females than males in our cohort, and that females account for approximately 60 per cent of both intensity of study groups.

Table D5 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by sex of student

| Sex | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Female | 6,765 | 60% | 1,020 | 62% | 7,785 | 60% |
| Male | 4,590 | 40% | 630 | 38% | 5,215 | 40% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 33 of the main report.

10. In Table D6 we show the degree completion rates for our cohort of entrants. It shows that although female students outnumber male students in both intensity groups, they also have the higher rates of first degree completion.

Table D6 Degree completion rates by sex of student

| Sex | Intensity in first year | |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Female | 49% | 25% |
| Male | 47% | 16% |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Notes: Relates to Table 33 of the main report.

11. Table D6 shows that female students studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent have a completion rate nine percentage points higher than male students in the same intensity group: 25 per cent for females compared to 16 per cent for males.

Open University

12. In Table D7 we show our cohort of entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU, split by sex and their intensity of study in the first year. It shows that female students once again outnumber male students; 51 per cent of our cohort is female compared to 49 per cent being male.

Table D7 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by sex of student

| Sex | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Female | 16,835 | 52% | 6,495 | 48% | 23,330 | 51% |
| Male | 15,820 | 48% | 6,935 | 52% | 22,750 | 49% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 46,080 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 34 of the main report.

13. The degree completion rates for part-time entrants to first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97 are shown in Table D8 split by sex.

Table D8 Degree completion rates by sex of student

| Sex | Intensity in first year | |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Female | 27% | 16% |
| Male | 22% | 14% |
| Total | 24% | 15% |

Notes: Relates to Table 34 of the main report.

14. Table D8 shows that female students have the higher rates of first degree completion. However, the differences observed between male and female students registered at the OU are smaller than those seen for students at non-OU HEIs when we consider those studying at below 30 per cent intensity. While Table D6 shows a nine percentage point difference between the sexes for this intensity group, Table D8 shows that for OU students the completion rate for females is only two percentage points higher than for males: 16 per cent of females complete their degree within the period, compared to 14 per cent of males.

Ethnicity

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

15. Table D9 shows the profile of first degree part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) split by their intensity of study in the first year and their ethnicity, and Table D10 shows the associated degree completion rates.

Table D9 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by ethnicity of student

| Ethnicity | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| White | 8,100 | 71% | 980 | 60% | 9,080 | 70% |
| Black | 765 | 7% | 60 | 4% | 825 | 6% |
| Asian | 645 | 6% | 115 | 7% | 760 | 6% |
| Unknown ethnicity | 1,840 | 16% | 495 | 30% | 2,340 | 18% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 35 of the main report.

Table D10 Degree completion rates by ethnicity of student

| Ethnicity | Intensity in first year | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| White | 50% | 28% |
| Black | 45% | * |
| Asian | 40% | * |
| Unknown ethnicity | 44% | 11% |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 35 of the main report.

16. Table D9 shows that the majority of the cohort come from a White ethnic background. Table D10 shows that it is these students who have the highest rates of degree completion: higher than the overall completion rate in both intensity groups. The table shows that 28 per cent of White students whose intensity is below 30 per cent complete their first degree programme within the 11-year period examined.

Open University

17. The equivalent information to Table D9 is shown in Table D11 for entrants in 1996-97 to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU. It shows that White students are again in the majority: 92 per cent of the OU cohort are returned as having a White ethnic background.

Table D11 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by ethnicity of student

| Ethnicity | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| White | 30,130 | 92% | 12,145 | 90% | 42,275 | 92% |
| Black | 885 | 3% | 260 | 2% | 1,150 | 2% |
| Asian | 835 | 3% | 345 | 3% | 1,185 | 3% |
| Unknown ethnicity | 800 | 2% | 675 | 5% | 1,475 | 3% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 46,080 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 36 of the main report.

18. In Table D12 we consider the rates of degree completion for these students, split by their ethnicity and intensity of study in the first year. It shows that there is less variation in rates of first degree completion between the ethnic groups than for the cohort of entrants to non-OU HEIs.

Table D12 Degree completion rates by ethnicity of student

| Ethnicity | Intensity in first year | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| White | 25% | 15% |
| Black | 16% | 12% |
| Asian | 19% | 14% |
| Unknown ethnicity | 20% | 15% |
| Total | 24% | 15% |

Note: Relates to Table 36 of the main report.

19. Table D12 shows that, for both intensities of study in the first year, Black students have the lowest rates of degree completion. Among Black entrants studying at below 30 per cent intensity, 12 per cent complete their degree within the 11-year period examined. This is three percentage points lower than the highest completion rate, which is found among those with White or unknown ethnicity (15 per cent).

Disability status

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

20. Entrants to first degree programmes at UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 are shown split by disability status and intensity of study in Table D13. It shows that around 3 per cent (360 students) of the total cohort identify themselves as having a disability.

Table D13 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student disability status

| Disability status | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Not disabled | 10,215 | 90% | 1,535 | 93% | 11,750 | 90% |
| Returned as having a disability | 325 | 3% | 35 | 2% | 360 | 3% |
| Unknown disability status | 810 | 7% | 85 | 5% | 890 | 7% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 37 of the main report.

21. The degree completion rates for the entrants described in Table D13 are shown in Table D14, again split by students' disability status.

Table D14 Degree completion rates by student disability status

| Disability status | Intensity in first year | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Not disabled | 48% | 22% |
| Returned as having a disability | 43% | * |
| Unknown disability status | 49% | * |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 37 of the main report.

Open University

22. The profile of students commencing part-time institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97 are shown in Table D15 split by their disability status and intensity of study in the first year. Around 4 per cent of the cohort are returned as having a disability (1,705 students).

Table D15 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by student disability status

| Disability status | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Not disabled | 31,315 | 96% | 13,055 | 97% | 44,370 | 96% |
| Returned as having a disability | 1,330 | 4% | 375 | 3% | 1,705 | 4% |
| Unknown disability status | 5 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 10 | 0% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 46,080 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 38 of the main report.

23. In Table D16 we show the rates of degree completion for these students. We see that the lowest completion rate is observed among entrants studying at below 30 per cent intensity of study and returned as having a disability: 12 per cent of such entrants are found to have completed their degree by 1 August 2007.

Table D16 Degree completion rates by student disability status

| Disability status | Intensity in first year | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Not disabled | 25% | 15% |
| Returned as having a disability | 19% | 12% |
| Unknown disability status | * | * |
| Total | 24% | 15% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 38 of the main report.

Domicile of student

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

24. In Table D17 we examine entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) split by the student's country of domicile and intensity of study in the first year. The majority of our total cohort is domiciled in England: 11,190 students (86 per cent).

Table D17 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by domicile of student

| Domicile | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| England | 9,665 | 85% | 1,525 | 92% | 11,190 | 86% |
| Northern Ireland | 535 | 5% | 10 | 1% | 545 | 4% |
| Scotland | 750 | 7% | 75 | 5% | 825 | 6% |
| Wales | 405 | 4% | 35 | 2% | 445 | 3% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 39 of the main report.

25. The degree completion rates for these students are shown in Table D18. The table shows that 20 per cent of entrants domiciled in England and studying at below 30 per cent intensity in their first year complete their degree within the 11-year period examined.

Table D18 Degree completion rates by student domicile

| Domicile | Intensity in first year | |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| England | 48% | 20% |
| Northern Ireland | 61% | * |
| Scotland | 38% | * |
| Wales | 52% | * |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 39 of the main report.

Open University

26. The equivalent information to Table D17 is shown in Table D19 for part-time entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97. It shows that 84 per cent of entrants were domiciled in England.

Table D19 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by domicile of student

| Domicile | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| England | 27,360 | 84% | 11,415 | 85% | 38,775 | 84% |
| Northern Ireland | 885 | 3% | 250 | 2% | 1,135 | 2% |
| Scotland | 3,045 | 9% | 1,215 | 9% | 4,260 | 9% |
| Wales | 1,360 | 4% | 550 | 4% | 1,905 | 4% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 46,080 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 40 of the main report.

27. Table D20 shows the rates of first degree completion for the 1996-97 OU cohort, split by the student's domicile. It shows that there is little variation between the countries of domicile when we consider the rates of first degree completion.

Table D20 Degree completion rates by student domicile

| Domicile | Intensity in first year | |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| England | 24% | 15% |
| Northern Ireland | 25% | 16% |
| Scotland | 26% | 16% |
| Wales | 24% | 16% |
| Total | 24% | 15% |

Note: Relates to Table 40 of the main report.

28. Around 15 per cent of students in each domicile complete their degree when we consider those studying at below 30 per cent intensity.

Prior entry qualifications

UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

29. The highest qualifications held by our cohort of part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) are shown in Table D21. It shows that there are almost 3,000 students who commence a first degree in 1996-97 whose highest qualification is either a professional, first degree or postgraduate qualification. It should be noted that while these qualifications were not gained in the previous academic year (1995-96)¹⁴, a substantial

¹⁴ As described in paragraph 33, students found to be studying for a first degree in 1995-96 have been excluded from analysis due to difficulties in confirming their status as entrants to HE as opposed to continuing students.

proportion of our cohort have prior experience of HE and have already gained higher-level HE qualifications.

Table D21 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by students qualifications on entry

| Qualifications on entry | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|---|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants |
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 2,485 | 22% | 350 | 21% | 2,835 | 22% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 2,085 | 18% | 160 | 10% | 2,240 | 17% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 2,460 | 22% | 130 | 8% | 2,590 | 20% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 1,005 | 9% | 70 | 4% | 1,075 | 8% |
| Other qualifications or previous experience | 1,500 | 13% | 115 | 7% | 1,615 | 12% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 435 | 4% | 260 | 16% | 695 | 5% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 1,385 | 12% | 565 | 34% | 1,950 | 15% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 41 of the main report.

Table D22 Degree completion rates by students' qualifications on entry

| Qualifications on entry | Intensity in first year | |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 43% | 26% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 57% | 29% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 54% | * |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 47% | * |
| Other qualifications or previous experience | 49% | * |
| Student has no formal qualification | 35% | 9% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 39% | 19% |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 41 of the main report.

30. Among those studying at an intensity of below 30 per cent Table D21 shows that it is most common that students' qualifications on entry are unknown: around one-third of such students are returned this way. Entrants studying at this intensity who have no formal qualification have the lowest rate of completion; only 9 per cent complete their degree before 1 August 2007.

Open University

31. In Table D23 we consider the equivalent information to Table D21 for part-time entrants to institutional credits and first degree programmes at the OU in 1996-97.

Table D23 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by students' qualifications on entry

| Qualifications on entry | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 7,160 | 22% | 5,435 | 40% | 12,595 | 27% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 11,320 | 35% | 3,805 | 28% | 15,130 | 33% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 3,190 | 10% | 910 | 7% | 4,100 | 9% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 9,305 | 29% | 2,605 | 19% | 11,910 | 26% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 1,415 | 4% | 400 | 3% | 1,815 | 4% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 260 | 1% | 270 | 2% | 530 | 1% |
| Total | 32,650 | 100% | 13,430 | 100% | 46,080 | 100% |

Note: Relates to Table 42 of the main report.

32. Table D23 shows that among students whose intensity of study in the first year is below 30 per cent, the most commonly held qualifications are 'professional, first degree and postgraduate'. Table D24 shows that 17 per cent of these students have completed their first degree within 11 academic years.

Table D24 Degree completion rates by students' qualifications on entry

| Qualifications on entry | Intensity in first year | |
|---|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate qualifications | 29% | 17% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 31% | 18% |
| A-levels or equivalents | 21% | 13% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 17% | 10% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 10% | 6% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 20% | 11% |
| Total | 24% | 15% |

Note: Relates to Table 42 of the main report.

33. There is substantial variation in the rates of degree completion when considering our cohort of entrants split by highest qualification on entry and intensity of study in the first year. The lowest completion rate is observed among those studying at below 30 per cent intensity with no formal qualifications on entry; only 6 per cent complete.

Subject area – UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

34. Table D25 considers our non-OU cohort split by intensity of study in the first year and the subject area of study. It shows that the most popular areas of study are 'business and administrative studies', 'subjects allied to medicine' and, for those studying at the higher intensities, 'combined and other' subjects.

Table D25 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by subject area of study

| Subject area of study | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants | No. of entrants | % of entrants |
| Business and administrative studies | 1,350 | 12% | 435 | 26% | 1,785 | 14% |
| Languages | 410 | 4% | 250 | 15% | 665 | 5% |
| Subjects allied to medicine | 1,990 | 18% | 300 | 18% | 2,290 | 18% |
| Agriculture and related subjects | 15 | 0% | | | | |
| Architecture, building and planning | 400 | 4% | | | | |
| Biological sciences | 395 | 3% | | | | |
| Computer science | 625 | 5% | | | | |
| Creative arts and design | 480 | 4% | | | | |
| Education | 625 | 6% | | | | |
| Engineering and technology | 805 | 7% | 495 | 30% | 6,415 | 49% |
| Humanities | 340 | 3% | | | | |
| Law | 1,210 | 11% | | | | |
| Librarianship and information science | 70 | 1% | | | | |
| Mathematical sciences | 20 | 0% | | | | |
| Physical sciences | 210 | 2% | | | | |
| Social, economic and political studies | 730 | 6% | | | | |
| Combined and other subjects | 1,675 | 15% | 170 | 10% | 1,845 | 14% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 43 of the main report.

35. Table D26 shows that rates of first degree completion among part-time entrants varies considerably by subject area. The lowest rate for students with an intensity of below 30 per cent is 8 per cent (for languages), which compares to the highest rate of 34 per cent for entrants studying 'subjects allied to medicine'.

Table D26 Degree completion rates by subject area of study

| Subject area of study | Intensity in first year | |
|--|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Business and administrative studies | 52% | 25% |
| Languages | 60% | 8% |
| Subjects allied to medicine | 45% | 34% |
| Agriculture and related subjects | * | |
| Architecture, building and planning | 54% | |
| Biological sciences | 50% | |
| Computer science | 38% | |
| Creative arts and design | 52% | |
| Education | 31% | |
| Engineering and technology | 53% | 18% |
| Humanities | 62% | |
| Law | 53% | |
| Librarianship and information science | * | |
| Mathematical sciences | * | |
| Physical sciences | 57% | |
| Social, economic and political studies | 43% | |
| Combined and other subjects | 46% | 24% |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Notes: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Due to the small numbers involved in many subject areas when we consider entrants studying at 30 per cent intensity or below, these subject areas have been grouped to provide an overall % degree rate. Relates to Table 43 of the main report.

Franchising – UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

36. The non-OU cohort, split by intensity of study in the first year and whether or not the student was recorded as undertaking franchised provision, is shown in Table D27. We find that there are a total of 900 students (7 per cent) within our cohort who are recorded as being part of a franchising arrangement.

Table D27 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether the provision was franchised in the first year

| Provision is franchised? | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Not franchised | 10,580 | 93% | 1,520 | 92% | 12,100 | 93% |
| Franchised | 770 | 7% | 130 | 8% | 900 | 7% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 44 of the main report.

37. We consider the rates of first degree completion for the non-OU cohort in Table D28. It shows that when we consider those studying at lower intensities the completion rate for non-franchised students is 22 per cent.

Table D28 Degree completion rates by whether the provision was franchised in the first year

| Provision is franchised? | Intensity in first year | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| Not franchised | 49% | 21% |
| Franchised | 36% | * |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 44 of the main report.

Distance learning – UK higher education institutions (other than the Open University)

38. Table D29 shows our non-OU cohort split by intensity of study in the first year and whether or not the student was recorded as being a distance learner. It shows that there are a total of 420 students recorded as being distance learners, accounting for 3 per cent of the total cohort. Table D30 then considers the degree completion rates of our non-OU cohort.

Table D29 Part-time entrants in 1996-97 by whether students were distance learners

| Distance learner? | Intensity in first year | | | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | 30% or higher | | Below 30% | | | |
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| No | 10,960 | 97% | 1,625 | 98% | 12,585 | 97% |
| Yes | 395 | 3% | 25 | 2% | 420 | 3% |
| Total | 11,350 | 100% | 1,650 | 100% | 13,000 | 100% |

Notes: Relates to Table 45 of the main report.

Table D30 Degree completion rates by whether students were distance learners

| Distance learner? | Intensity in first year | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | 30% or higher | Below 30% |
| No | 49% | 21% |
| Yes | 38% | * |
| Total | 48% | 22% |

Note: % degree rates are not reported in instances where there are fewer than 150 entrants. Relates to Table 45 of the main report.

Annex E Tables to compare the 1996-97 and 2000-01 cohorts

The tables in this annex show that the profile of students within the 2000-01 cohort is similar to that of the 1996-97 cohort. We consider the attributes of age, intensity of study and highest qualification on entry.

Table E1 Part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 and 2000-01, by age

| Age | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| 24 and under | 3,315 | 20% | 3,075 | 21% |
| 25 to 34 | 6,670 | 40% | 5,355 | 36% |
| 35 to 44 | 3,980 | 24% | 4,125 | 28% |
| 45 and over | 2,385 | 14% | 2,310 | 15% |
| Unknown age | 240 | 1% | 110 | 1% |
| Total | 16,585 | 100% | 14,975 | 100% |

Table E2 Part-time entrants to the OU in 1996-97 and 2000-01, by age

| Age | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| 24 and under | 4,855 | 11% | 6,375 | 16% |
| 25 to 34 | 18,420 | 40% | 15,260 | 39% |
| 35 to 44 | 13,465 | 29% | 10,935 | 28% |
| 45 and over | 9,450 | 20% | 6,380 | 16% |
| Unknown age | 5 | 0% | 15 | 0% |
| Total | 46,190 | 100% | 38,970 | 100% |

Table E3 Part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 and 2000-01, by intensity of study

| Intensity of study | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Unknown | 3,585 | 22% | 3,185 | 21% |
| Below 30% | 1,650 | 10% | 1,495 | 10% |
| 30% or higher | 11,350 | 68% | 10,290 | 69% |
| Total | 16,585 | 100% | 14,975 | 100% |

Table E4 Part-time entrants to the OU in 1996-97 and 2000-01, by intensity of study

| Intensity of study | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Unknown | 115 | 0% | 5 | 0% |
| Below 30% | 13,430 | 29% | 13,620 | 35% |
| 30% or higher | 32,650 | 71% | 25,340 | 65% |
| Total | 46,190 | 100% | 38,970 | 100% |

Table E5 Part-time entrants to UK HEIs (other than the OU) in 1996-97 and 2000-01, by highest qualification on entry

| Highest qualification on entry | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|---|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 3,790 | 23% | 3,260 | 22% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 2,745 | 17% | 3,045 | 20% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 3,180 | 19% | 2,980 | 20% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 1,460 | 9% | 1,190 | 8% |
| Other qualifications or previous experience | 2,185 | 13% | 1,605 | 11% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 825 | 5% | 375 | 3% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 2,405 | 14% | 2,515 | 17% |
| Total | 16,585 | 100% | 14,975 | 100% |

Table E6 Part-time entrants to the OU in 1996-97 and 2000-01, by highest qualification on entry

| Highest qualification on entry | 1996-97 cohort | | 2000-01 cohort | |
|--|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| | Number of entrants | % of entrants | Number of entrants | % of entrants |
| Professional, first degree or postgraduate | 12,620 | 27% | 7,255 | 19% |
| HNC/D and other undergraduate | 15,185 | 33% | 6,585 | 17% |
| A-levels or equivalent | 4,105 | 9% | 8,095 | 21% |
| Access courses, GCSEs or equivalent | 11,920 | 26% | 10,450 | 27% |
| Student has no formal qualification | 1,830 | 4% | 2,605 | 7% |
| Unknown qualifications on entry | 530 | 1% | 3,980 | 10% |
| Total | 46,195 | 100% | 38,970 | 100% |

Annex F List of abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|--|
| FTE | Full-time equivalent/equivalence |
| HE | Higher education |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEI | Higher education institution |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| HNC | Higher National Certificate |
| HND | Higher National Diploma |
| NAO | National Audit Office |
| OU | Open University |
| QTS | Qualified Teacher Status |