



Entrants to higher education

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The number of students applying to university through UCAS has increased for many years. The main exceptions in recent years are when tuition fees were introduced (1998) and 'variable' fees meant they were increased (2006). It is expected that there will be a larger fall in 2012 when fees of up to £9,000 are introduced in England in 2012.

There have been tighter restrictions on new places from 2009 and this contributed to a small fall in accepted home students in 2010. Applications have been strong through recent years in part due to the recession and its aftermath. This has continued in 2011 when home applicants and acceptances reached new highs. This was boosted by an increase in the numbers reapplying and may also have been increased by applicants aiming to start their course before higher fees in 2012.

Data on applicants by 30 June 2012 showed an overall cut of 7.7%; larger falls among students who will be liable for higher fees; and the largest drop among older applicants (who could avoid higher fees by starting earlier) and students from the EU (who could avoid higher fees by studying elsewhere). The latest number of accepted applicants through UCAS in 2012 was 5.8% (just over 28,000) below the equivalent 2011 figure. Further analysis by UCAS which looks at the year students actually intend to start their course implies a much larger fall in full-time entrants. By the middle of September 2012 accepted home and EU applicant numbers for 2012 entry were down by 56,600 or 12% on their 2011 levels.

This note sets out trends in the number of applicants and entrants to higher education institutions since the mid 1990s. The main focus is on total numbers but there is some analysis by age, sex, ethnicity, subject and domicile. The period covered includes important changes to student finance, notably the introduction of tuition fees in the UK in 1998 and 'top-up' or variable tuition fees in England and Northern Ireland in 2006 and Wales in 2007. It also includes a brief look at the impacts of the recession and public sector spending cuts on places from 2009. Related information can be found in these Library publications:

- [Oxbridge 'elitism'](#)
- [Higher education and social class](#)
- [Participation in higher education: Social Indicators page](#)
- [Education: Historical Statistics](#)
- [Changes to higher education funding and student support from 2012/13](#)
- [HE in England from 2012: Student numbers](#)

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Statistics on applications and entrants can be viewed on the websites of the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency at:

www.ucas.ac.uk/about_us/stat_services/
www.hesa.ac.uk/

Universities UK produces an [annual report](#) that looks at the impact of variable fees on students and institutions.

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1 All applicants and entrants

UCAS collects and publishes detailed information on students whose applications they process. This includes home and overseas students applying for full-time and sandwich higher education courses in the UK. A number of these changes in the coverage of UCAS

have occurred over time, but, as comparisons are only made by UCAS for the following year only, these are not taken account of in this note.

There have been underlying increases in applicants and acceptances (averaging 3.5% and 3.6% a year respectively) since the mid-1990s. These have been ‘interrupted’ by peaks immediately before the 1998 and 2006 tuition fee changes and dips in the years themselves. The number of *applicants* fell for three years after the introduction of tuition fees in 1998, acceptances fell for just one year. The falls in applicants and acceptances following the (2006) introduction of variable fees were greater than those seen in 1998, but, the increases in 2007 took both figures to new record levels which were subsequently broken in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011.

The table opposite summarises trends since UCAS was created following the reform of the sector. The same data is illustrated in the chart below.

2008 saw the largest ever absolute and percentage increases in applicants and acceptances. However, it included applicants to ex Nursing Midwifery admission Service courses for the first time. If these are excluded then the rise in acceptances was 7.0% rather than 10.4%. This was still the second largest increase over this period. There are other smaller changes to the coverage of UCAS courses during this period, but none of them are adjusted.

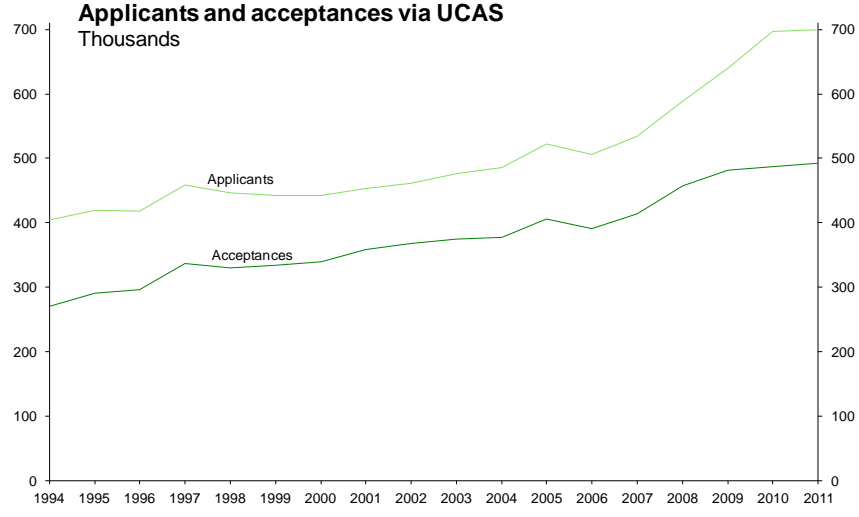
Summary of applications via UCAS

Thousands		
	Applicants	Accepted applicants
1994	405	271
1995	419	291
1996	418	296
1997	459	336
1998	446	330
1999	443	335
2000	442	340
2001	454	358
2002	461	368
2003	476	374
2004	486	378
2005	522	405
2006	506	391
2007	534	413
2008	589	457
2009	640	482
2010	697	487
2011	700	492

Note: Figures not adjusted for the changes in the courses covered by UCAS

Sources: UCAS annual datasets; Final end of year figures for 2011, UCAS

Since 2008 then the number of acceptances has generally increased at a slower rate than applicants. The 2011 increase in applicants at 0.4% and acceptances at 1.0% were the lowest since 2006. 70% of applicants were accepted on to a course in 2010, the lowest level since 1995. There was a small increase in the acceptance rate in 2011, but at just over 70% it was the second lowest during this period.



It is likely that much of the pattern seen around the times when student finance changed was the result of prospective students starting their courses earlier than they might otherwise have done so to avoid paying (higher) tuition fees. Most students who could bring their course forward would be older –not new school leavers. This led to a greater increase in the year before the changes and meant that there were fewer prospective students in the following year. The resumption of earlier trends supports this, as does an analysis of trends by age (see next section). Applications in 2011 show a different pattern than before earlier changes to student finance.

One important reason for the underlying increase in *applicants* since 2009 is the recession and its aftermath. In 2010 the number of home applicants aged 21-24 increased by 9% and

the number aged 25 and over by 13%.¹ It is these age groups who have more flexibility in when they start in higher education. If (good) jobs are scarce then it makes higher education more attractive. It is also possible that the prospect of a higher cap on variable fees in the future had already brought forward applications among potential mature students. The increases in applicants for nursing (+39%) and social work (+33%) suggest an element of retraining for new careers.² Applications in 2011 show a somewhat different pattern with a fall in older applicants, continued large increases in applications for nursing (47%), but a fall in applicants for social work.³

Places in higher education were tighter in 2009 than for many years and this has had a knock-on impact on applications in later years due to increases in numbers reapplying. In 2010 57,000 home applicants from 2009 who did not get a place (for various reasons) reapplied; up by 24% on 2009.⁴ The number of home applicants who reapplied increased by more than one-third to 75,000 in 2011. It was only this increase in reapplicants that increased the number of home applicants in 2011. The number of first time home applicants fell by 4% in 2011.⁵ Although the cumulative 'population' of unsuccessful applicants is increasing the changes to student finance in 2012 may mean that the number reapplying falls in 2012.

1.1 2012

Applicants

The UCAS deadline for equal consideration for applications to most higher education courses starting in 2012 was 15 January 2012. At that time the overall drop in applicants was 7.4%. Since then monthly data on applicant numbers has shown larger falls, but with many fewer applying after the January deadline the impact is quite small. By the 30 June deadline the total number of applicants was 7.7% lower than at the equivalent point in the 2011 application cycle. Applications can still be made after 30 June, but they automatically go through clearing. There is now little scope for the pattern of *applications* to change. The change in the number and patterns of *accepted applicants* could be different from the applicant data. The number of accepted applicants is affected by the total supply of places (which is covered in the next section) and potentially by changes in student number controls introduced this year.

The total number of applicants to UK universities was down by 7.7% or almost 52,000, compared to the same period in 2011. There were larger percentage falls in groups directly affected by the fee increase; particularly among students from England, EU students and across all applicants to institutions in England. Applications from outside the EU were up by 8.5% but these students are not affected by the 2012 changes. The smallest decline by age (from all domiciles) was among 18 year olds, although the decline among home 18 year

Summary of applications for university in 2012 received by UCAS

30 June each year			
	Thousands		percentage
	2011	2012	change
Total	670.0	618.2	-7.7%
<i>Age</i>			
18 and under	282.0	275.0	-2.5%
17 and under	14.1	14.2	+0.2%
19-20	213.8	188.7	-11.7%
21-24	86.6	76.7	-11.4%
25 and over	87.7	77.8	-11.3%
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	378.1	351.4	-7.1%
Male	291.8	266.9	-8.6%
<i>Domicile</i>			
UK	566.0	515.7	-8.9%
England	478.6	430.8	-10.0%
Northern Ireland	20.0	19.1	-4.5%
Scotland	43.4	42.5	-2.1%
Wales	23.9	23.2	-2.9%
Other EU	47.7	41.5	-12.9%
Non EU	56.3	61.0	+8.5%
<i>Country of Institution^a</i>			
England	604.2	552.3	-8.6%
N. Ireland	22.2	22.3	+0.3%
Scotland	104.8	104.9	+0.1%
Wales	75.0	67.5	-9.9%

¹ UCAS annual datasets

² Nursing figures exclude 6,915 applications previously processed by CATCH (Centralised Applications to Nursing and Midwifery Training Clearing House).

³ Final end of year figures for 2011, UCAS

⁴ UCAS media release 16 July 2010, *Variety of factors behind 11.6% rise in applications to UK higher education*

⁵ End of cycle report 2010/2011, UCAS

(a) Applicants can count once in more than one country, hence the sum is greater than total applicants

Source: UCAS media release 9 July 2012, 2012 applicant figures - 30 June deadline

olds was larger (3.7%) and this was larger still if only those from England were counted (4.1%).⁶ The estimated decline in the proportion of English 18 year olds applying is smaller and is looked at in the section on application rates. Older potential students had the opportunity to apply in earlier years and pay lower fees. There were falls of 10% plus in all these older age bands

The overall fall in applicants by the 30 June deadline took the 2012 total below the levels from the same period in the previous two applications cycle, but still well above the 2009 level.⁷ However the range of courses covered by UCAS expanded in 2010, so the 2009 and 2012 figures are not directly comparable.

Accepted applicants

UCAS has published data on the number of applicants who were accepted, including through clearing, up to 21 September 2012. By this date the total number of applicants had reached 646,700 or 6.9% below the equivalent for applicants in 2011. Acceptances had fallen from 487,200 to 459,000; a 5.8% drop. These figures are not broken down by type of student, only country of institution and the fall at English institutions was somewhat larger at 6.6%.⁸

All the earlier applicant figures look at the year when the application was made rather than when the potential student intends to start their course. In the large majority of cases they are the same year as most applicants do not apply for deferred entry. When the number of applicants for deferred entry remains broadly the same the change in the number of accepted applicants through UCAS is a good guide to the change in the number of new full-time undergraduate entrants. However, there was a sharp decline in applicants for deferred entry in the 2011 cycle. Home and EU students who applied in 2011 for entry in 2012 would face much higher fees than those who applied for entry in 2011. The number of deferred accepted applicants fell by just over 17,000 in 2011.⁹ This means even if accepted applicant numbers in the 2012 application cycle remained a 2011 levels there would be a substantial cut in new entrants in academic year 2012/13.¹⁰ In effect the changes to fees appear to have brought forward a large number of new entrants from 2012 to 2011. This effect can only be short lived and is likely to be reversed to some extent in 2013, but it is on top of the underlying drop in accepted applicants. This explains why the data set out below suggests falls in new entrants which are so much larger than the headline drop in accepted applicants.

The UCAS analysis looked at accepted home and EU applicants up to 13 September 2012 by intended academic year of entry. This is said to be a '...better guide to the likely number of UCAS acceptances starting higher education in an academic year when there have been changing patterns of deferred acceptances'. Overall acceptances for entry in 2012 were 408,500 a fall of 56,500 or 12% acceptances for 2011 at the same point last year. The drop was larger in England at 14% and numbers were up by 2% in both Scotland and Northern Ireland. While there was a large increase in acceptances for 2011, the 2012 total was still 6% below the 2009 entry figure (the earliest year given). UCAS has also analysed these data by student number control categories for English institutions. The fall was slightly larger still (15%) for courses subject to funding council controls.¹¹

There is limited scope for final acceptance numbers to change as in the past 98-99% of acceptances made by mid-September. It should be noted that UCAS does not cover

⁶ UCAS media release 9 July 2012, *2012 applicant figures - 30 June deadline*

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *Applicant statistics 21 September 2012*, UCAS

⁹ *UCAS online data tables*

¹⁰ Assuming that patterns of deferred entry return to normal levels in 2012

¹¹ *Interim assessment of UCAS acceptances by intended entry year, country of institution and qualifications held*, UCAS

part-time student numbers and the analysis by year of entry does not include non-EU students. Applicants from this latter group were up so they may offset the fall in full-time home and EU entrants to some extent.

1.2 'Squeeze' on places

2009

This large and continued increase in applicants is often contrasted with a relatively small increase in student numbers announced by the Government. This led many commentators to conclude that there would be a 'squeeze' on places in 2009 –with many more potential students not being accepted and a large cut in the numbers admitted through clearing¹².

The increase in applicants of 55,000 in 2009 was directly compared to the increased in places announced by the Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) of 10,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs).¹³ However, it is more complicated than this simple comparison and the actual shortfall in places was predictably smaller. When comparing the two figures it is important to realise that they are looking at different populations. Ucas covers home and overseas applicants to UK institutions for full-time courses. HEFCE only funds home and EU entrants to courses in England. Some courses, such as nursing and teaching are not directly funded by HEFCE in the same way and the Ucas figures exclude all part-time courses.

The Government sets HEFCE a figure for 'additional student numbers' each year. There was no fundamentally new system of capping numbers in 2009. If institutions recruit above this level they are not funded for the marginal cost. The difference for academic year 2009/10 was that the increase in student numbers was cut from 15,000 to 10,000, applications for places were up strongly and HEFCE was been told by the Government that over recruitment could lead to a cut in funding to cover additional student funding costs.¹⁴ In their 2009-10 grant letter to institutions HEFCE said:¹⁵

Our allocations for 2009-10 make provision for growth in the sector that is consistent with the Government's plans. To help manage the risk of over-recruitment beyond the growth already planned and in the system, we asked institutions to review their planned recruitment for 2009-10 in order to avoid any further increase in full-time undergraduate and Postgraduate/Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) entrants above the level of their actual admissions in 2008-09 plus any additional student numbers allocated to them for 2009-10.

...

We expect institutions to recruit responsibly in 2009-10, but do not propose to introduce any new kind of funding agreement target this year. Nevertheless, we may wish to take further action if individual institutions, or the sector as a whole, significantly over-recruit in 2009-10, and if DIUS were to reduce HEFCE grant in order to meet its additional student support costs.

The additional 10,000 FTE places in 2009-10 were on top of the whole funded student population in the previous year, not just additional new entrants. In past years this has meant a larger increase in the number of new entrants, in part due to drop outs. For instance the 'allowable' 20,000 increase in 2008-09 was a 2.1% increase over the previous FTE number,¹⁶

¹² Mainly for students who did not achieve the grades in their conditional offers.

¹³ Special funding for a further 10,000 places in science, technology, engineering and maths was announced in summer 2009. This is one-off and not paid through HEFCE. HC Deb 20 July 2009 c87-8WS

¹⁴ HEFCE circular letter 2008/32 [Higher education finances for 2009-10 and 2010-11](#)

¹⁵ *Recurrent grants for 2009-10*, HEFCE

¹⁶ *2008-09 recurrent grant letters and templates*, HEFCE

but accepted home applicants to English institutions increased by 7.2% if we exclude nursing/midwifery and education.¹⁷

According to HEFCE there was an increase of 15,000 in full-time undergraduate entrants in England in 2009-10. This was said to be consistent at the sector level with limits set out by the Government. Overall funded student numbers increased by 52,000 FTE.¹⁸ While the sector as a whole was said to have met the 'cap' on numbers, some institutions did not and HEFCE's teaching funding has been cut accordingly. It has been directed to cut funding for the relevant institutions at a rate of £3,700 per full-time undergraduate –the average cost of providing student support. The Secretary of state has reiterated that this will happen again in 2010-11 and in future years.¹⁹

2010 and beyond

Additional student numbers in 2010-11 were 10,000. Again these had been cut from their original level which was 25,000. As the reduction of 5,000 in 2009-10 is effectively carried through to later years the *total* cut compared to earlier plans is 20,000. While this is another increase in student numbers the number of applicants has grown at a much faster rate. When combined with the tight funding settlement for 2010-11 and evidence that the Government will penalise over-recruitment this could make institutions less likely to offer additional places and mean the predicted squeeze on places is much more real in the coming year.

In Budget 2010 the former Labour Government announced funding to support an additional 20,000 places through a one off University Modernisation Fund. These were to be across a range of modes, full-time, part-time and foundation degrees and in the subjects that were most in demand from business and employers.²⁰ These would be one-off entrants as their numbers would not be included in the baseline for the next year's additional student numbers. The current Government announced on 24 May 2010 that as part of £6 billion in savings across Government £200 million would be cut from higher education in 2010-11. This includes reducing the additional places for students in 2010 from 20,000 to 10,000.²¹ The net effect is still that student numbers have been increased, but by considerably less than the maximum planned totals.

Early data for 2010-11 from HEFCE shows an increase in full-time equivalent student numbers of 24,000. Most of this increase was in full-time undergraduates. This was said to be consistent with the growth in funded places.^{22 23}

The Government has said there will be no additional student numbers in 2011-12 and the 10,000 places funded by the University Modernisation Fund will not be repeated in future years.²⁴ This suggests no increase in the number of entrants in 2011 and a fall in 2012, unless additional student numbers are supported by the Government. It is important to realise that while there is a large overlap between acceptances via UCAS and HEFCE funded places there are some important differences. These means that, for instance, the number of HEFCE funded places could remain constant or fall, while acceptances via UCAS could increase. The main differences are that HEFCE covers England only and it does not

¹⁷ Ucas statistical enquiry tool

¹⁸ HEFCE circular letter 02/10 [Funding for universities and colleges in 2010-11](#)

¹⁹ *Higher Education Funding 2010-11*, Secretary of State's Grant Letter 22 December 2009.

²⁰ BIS press release 24 March 2010. *New modernisation fund to provide and support 20,000 extra higher education places, while driving up efficiency in universities and colleges.*

²¹ *Speech by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Rt Hon David Laws MP, announcing £6.2 billion savings*, 24 May 2010

²² 20,000 consisting of the 10,000 'standard' additional student numbers plus the 10,000 revised total under the University Modernisation Fund.

²³ *Funding for universities and colleges for 2010-11 and 2011-12*, HEFCE circular letter 05/2011

²⁴ *Higher education funding for 2011-12 and beyond*, BIS (20 December 2010)

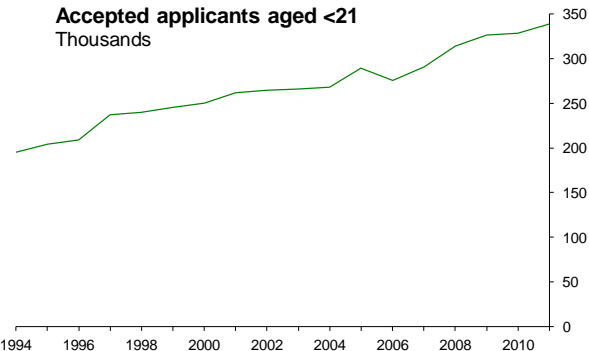
fund places for students from outside the EU. Some courses, such as teaching and nursing and midwifery receive public funding from the relevant Government departments, not HEFCE and UCAS does not cover part-time applicants.

In its 2012-13 funding letter to HEFCE the Department for Business Innovation and Skills kept funded student numbers at earlier levels. It instructed HEFCE to cut its student number control total by 5,000 because this had in the past been set above the funded student total to account for under recruitment at some institutions. The letter stated that this was not a cut in the number of students they expect to fund in 2012-13, but because of strong demand for places there was no need for the extra 'headroom' HEFCE had previously allowed.²⁵ It amounts to a cut in the number of places that will be funded by HEFCE, but only because student numbers were above the total assumed for public spending purposes in earlier years.

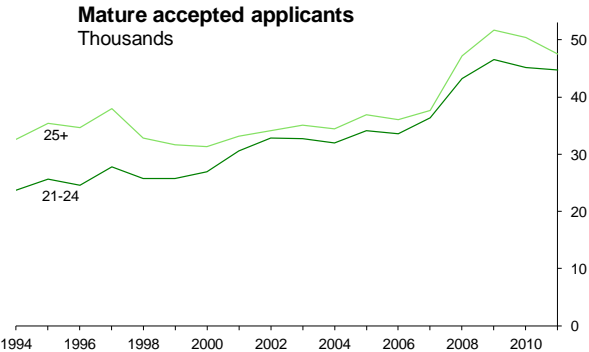
2 Trends by age

Table 1 at the end of this note summarises trends in home accepted applicants by broad age group.

Trends in young accepted applicants are shown opposite. This age group saw the largest increases in 1997 and 2006 (14% and 8%). There was no post-peak fall in 1998, but a 5% fall in 2006. The 2006 total was still above that seen in 2004. These figures cover home students only. There have been record numbers in this age group in each year since 2007.



The trends among older age groups have been more varied. The 21-24 age group saw a larger overall increase and recovered relatively quickly from the 1998 dip. The 1997 peak in the 25 and over age group was more noticeable and the following dip more sharp. Numbers in this age group only surpassed their 1997 peak in 2008. The fall in acceptances seen in 2006 in both groups of mature students was smaller than that seen among the under 21s. 2007 data for all students showed a continuation of earlier trends. There was a noticeable jump in acceptances from both age groups in 2008 as the post-fees recovery was faster than that seen after 1998. This continued into 2009, but was reversed in 2010 and numbers fell further in 2011 despite the prospect of much higher fees in the following year. The decline in acceptance rates has been larger among older prospective students.



2.1 Demographic change and application rates

The earlier analysis has looked at absolute numbers of applicants or acceptances by age. The size of the population cohort of different ages changes over time and this affects the potential pool of applicants. Changes in absolute numbers may therefore not always accurately reflect the underlying likelihood that people will apply to university. Application rates can be calculated to give a better indication of this. Between 2007 and 2010 the

²⁵ Higher education funding 2012-13, BIS

application rate among UK 18 year olds increased from just over 25% to 30%. Rates among 19 year olds went from 10% to 14% and for 20 year olds from 4% to 6% over the same period.²⁶ UCAS analysis suggests this pattern continued into 2011.²⁷

The estimated number of 18 year olds in the UK fell in 2010 and is projected to continue falling for the rest of this decade. The number in 2019 is expected to be 16% below the 2009 total. The number of 19 year olds will broadly follow this trend one year later.²⁸ There is uncertainty about the precise changes in this cohort, but the overall trends are not in doubt. This age group dominates university entry and the projected decline over the next decade is a reversal of the earlier trend and would mean that if application rates remained the same the number of home applicants would decline. Alternatively it means that even with no increase in the number of 'funded' places in university over the next few years the proportion of school leavers starting higher education could increase.

Application rates in 2012

UCAS has responded to the large amount of interest in the applications data by publishing additional data this year. [How have applications for full-time undergraduate higher education in the UK changed in 2012?](#) looks at patterns of application rates -applicant data as a proportion of the relevant population cohort – since 2004. The 2012 data is up to 24 March and is compared to equivalent dates in earlier years. Between 2008 and 2011 application rates from home students increased overall and for across many different sub-groups including all of the home countries, all bands of local area deprivation, and all ages under 20. UCAS estimated in 2012:

- The application rate among 18 year olds in England fell by around one *percentage point* to around 34%. The average annual increase over the previous five years was around one percentage point. There was no real change in young applicants from across the rest of the UK for destinations where tuition fees remain the same (generally their home country).
- The fall in England is estimated to be equivalent to 15,000 fewer applicants aged 18.
- The application rate among 18 year olds from areas with the lowest levels of past HE participation²⁹ (said to be considered the 'most disadvantaged') fell by 0.1-0.2 percentage points. The relative decline among those from areas with the highest levels of participation was greater.
- Since 2006 young application rates have increased more rapidly in the more 'disadvantaged' areas and the 2012 falls against this *trend* were said to be 'more similar' across backgrounds.
- There was a very similar pattern when applications are analysed by the level of deprivation in the local area³⁰ these 18 year olds came from. There was no real change among applicants from the most deprived fifth of areas and the largest decline (three points) was among those from the least deprived fifth of areas. The 2012 falls against the underlying trends were, again, similar across all these groups.
- The application rate among older age groups from England did not increase appreciably in 2011, there were relatively large increases in 2009 and 2010. The decline in the application rate among applicants aged over 18 was around three times greater than the decline in the rate among 18 year olds. The 2012 falls equate to around 30,000 fewer applicants from these age groups.

²⁶ UCAS statistical enquiry tool; *Mid-year population estimates*, ONS

²⁷ *End of cycle report 2010/2011*, UCAS

²⁸ *National Population Projections, 2010-based projections*, ONS

²⁹ Local areas are classified into 20% bands according to their past levels of higher education participation among young people. Trends in participation rates across these groups can give useful information about access and widening participation. Lower levels of past participation can be seen as a rough proxy for levels of disadvantage or deprivation, but as it is not directly based on applicant's circumstances it will only ever be approximate.

³⁰ Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) quintile groups

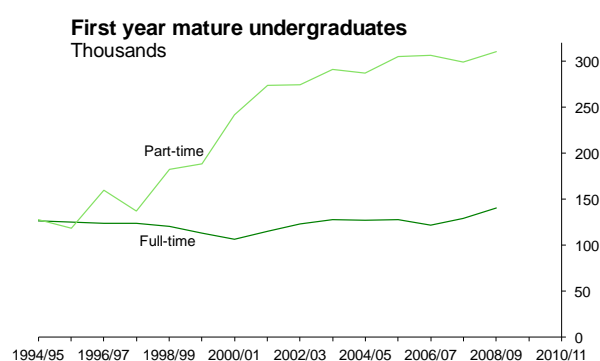
- Most applications from England were for courses with fees of £9,000. The authors found no evidence of a substantial shift in applications connected to the fee levels in 2012, although the average course fee applied for was somewhat lower for older applicants.
- There was no evidence that young people from 'disadvantaged areas' were any more or less likely to apply to the most selective institutions compared to 2011. Similarly there was no evidence of any increase in the proportion of applicants intending to live at home.

The Higher Education Policy Institute look at the potential impact of demographic change in more detail in their report [Higher Education Supply and Demand to 2020](#).

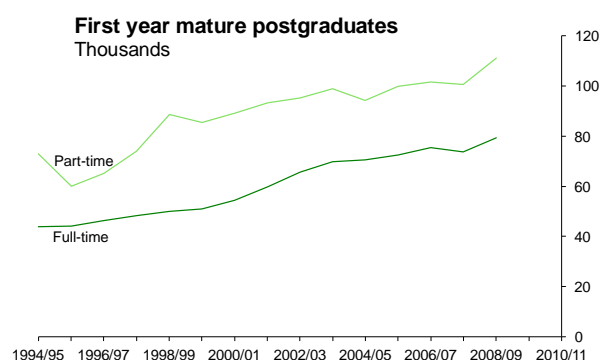
2.2 All mature students

All the previous figures cover applications to full-time and sandwich students only, and exclude applications to part-time courses that account for more than half of all mature undergraduate students.³¹ Table 2 at the end of this note summarises mature student enrolments in higher education since 1994/95. These are also shown in the next two charts.

The number of full-time mature undergraduate entrants (aged 21+) has varied little over this decade; virtually all the growth in the number of mature students starting undergraduate courses has been in part-time study. The number of part-time entrants increased from around 180,000 in 1998/99 to 270,000 in 2001/02 and more than 300,000 in 2008/09. Much of this increase has been in non-degree courses. The total number of mature first year undergraduates has been above 400,000 since 2003/04.



Trends have been more consistent among mature postgraduate entrants (aged 25+). The proportionate increase has been greater for full-time students due to a sharp fall in part time entrants in 1995/96. The total number of mature first year post graduates increased from 117,000 in 1994/95 to 191,000 in 2008/09.



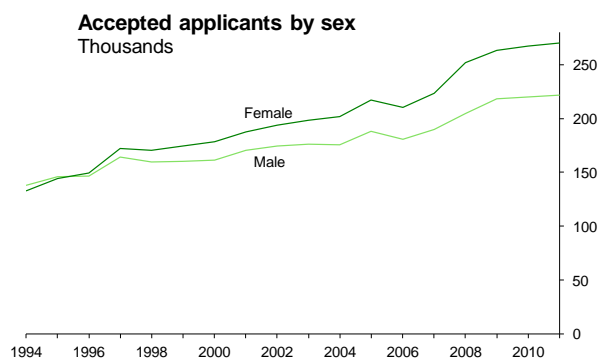
The Higher Education Statistics Agency has not updated these figures since 2008/09.

³¹ HC Deb 12 March 1999 c431-2w

3 Trends by sex, ethnicity and subject

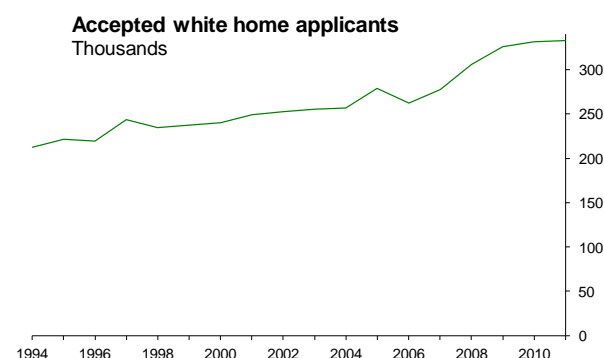
3.1 Sex

In 1994 there were 5,000 more men than women accepted via UCAS. Since then the underlying increase for women has been greater, they surpassed the number of men accepted in 1996 and in 2011 the difference was just over 48,000. Table 1 at the end of this note gives the underlying data.



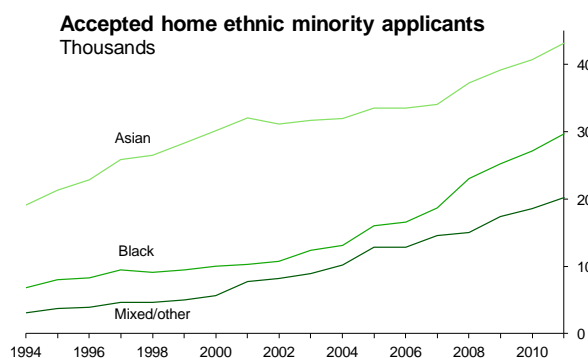
3.2 Ethnic group

The underlying increase in the number of accepted white applicants was less than that for other ethnic groups and overall. The average annual growth rate was 2.7%, compared to 3.3% for all home acceptances.



The number of accepted Asian applicants increased at its fastest rate during the first half of this period, while acceptances from the black and mixed/other groups saw faster growth in the second half. There was a change in the categories used for mixed/other from 2000, so

the series may not be entirely consistent. The average growth rates for the whole of the period were 4.9% and 9.0% for the Asian and Black groups respectively. In the past there have been significant numbers of applicants with an 'unknown' ethnic origin. This number has fallen consistently in the past few years and this will have had an impact on trends rates by ethnicity. Table 1 at the end of this note summarises this data. In addition the population of most minority ethnic groups has increased over this period and the increases in the proportion of applicants shown here are likely to overestimate any increases in participation rates.



4 Subject

A new subject classification system was introduced by UCAS in 2002. This limits any analysis of trends over time. When analysed by subject group the largest increases between 2002 and 2010 in accepted applicants were in subjects allied to medicine (150%)³², combined social sciences (58%), Education (55%) and architecture, building and planning (50%). The largest falls were in non-European languages (-34%) and mathematical and computer science (-8%). The top three subject groups in 2009 were business & admin studies (59,400), creative arts & design (51,700) and subjects allied to medicine (50,000³³).³⁴

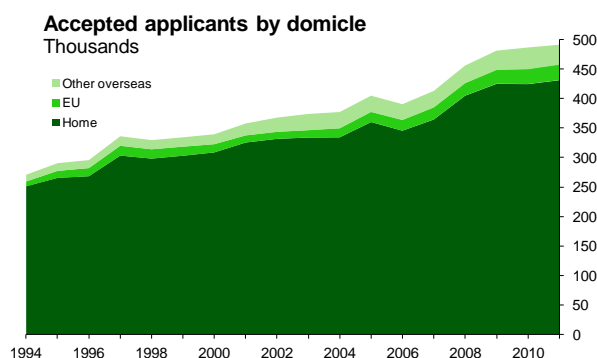
³² Includes acceptances to ex-NMAS courses from 2008

³³ Includes acceptances to ex-NMAS courses

5 Domicile

5.1 Home and overseas students

The chart opposite and Table 1 look at trends in acceptances by domicile. The inclusion of overseas students in these figures has relatively little impact on overall trends for most of this period. The total number of accepted home applicants fell in 2010 while those from overseas continued to increase. Overseas students made up 12% of all accepted applicants via UCAS in 2011. Acceptances to overseas students have grown at a faster rate than for home students. The average annual increase since 1994 has been 3.2% for home students and 6.9% for students from overseas.

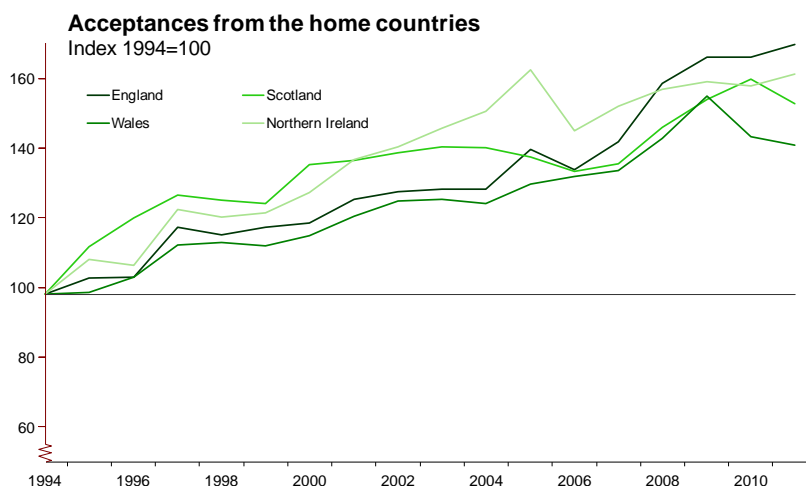


5.2 The home countries

Devolution of student finance has led to differences in arrangements and increased attention on trends in entrants in each home country. Institutions in England and Northern Ireland were allowed to charge variable tuition fees of up to £3,000 a year from 2006. Welsh institutions followed in 2007, although a grant offsetting some of these costs has been available for Welsh students studying.

The chart opposite plots index values of accepted applicants from the home countries. The main points to note are:

- Very similar overall proportionate increases in Wales and Scotland to 2009, noticeably higher in England
- Shallower 1997 peak in acceptances from Scotland
- Smaller changes in acceptances from Scotland since 2000.
- Scotland's 2010 total is boosted by the inclusion of nursing and midwifery courses for the first time. Excluding these their number dropped by 5.4%
- A clear 2005 peak and 2006 dip in England and Northern Ireland, with a recovery in England and an upturn in Northern Ireland in from 2007 onwards.
- Increases in acceptances of Welsh students up to 2010 had been the most consistent over time and continued in 1998 and in 2007 (when variable fees were introduced).



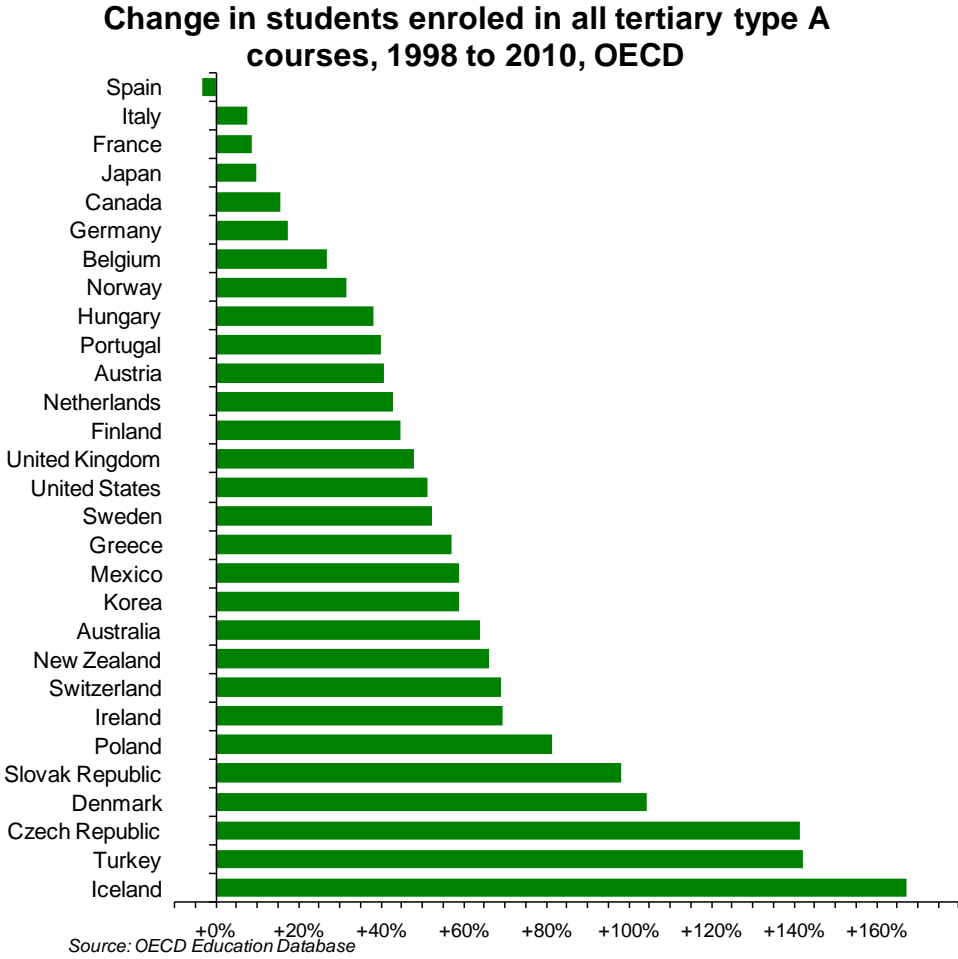
The figures above are based on student residence, but partially reflect the changes in acceptances by country of institution in 2006 as most applicants from England and Northern Ireland attend institutions within their home country. In 2006, the first year that variable fees were introduced, acceptances at institutions in Northern Ireland and England fell by 16.7% and 3.6% respectively. Numbers fell by 1.7% in Scotland and increased by 0.4% in Wales.³⁵ As these figures are presented in absolute numbers they will be affected by underlying demographics, especially changes in the size of the main university-attending age groups.

³⁴ UCAS statistics www.ucas.ac.uk/about_us/stat_services/stats_online/

³⁵ UCAS statistics <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/figures/index.html>

6 International comparisons

The chart below summarises the change in the number of students on (academic rather than vocation) tertiary courses in OECD member states. This is a wider definition than that used for higher education for the rest of this note and hence the changes in numbers seen in the UK on this measure are smaller. This measure puts the increase in the UK at 48%. This increase was smaller than that seen in some other OECD member states, but close to or above increases from other western European nations.



7 Reference tables

Table 1

Summary of applicants and accepted applicants to higher education via UCAS

Thousands

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	% change 1994-2011	
Applicants																				
<i>Domicile</i>																				
Home	365	370	365	398	390	389	389	400	402	410	413	445	432	454	502	544	587	589	+61%	
EU	19	26	28	31	28	27	24	20	19	20	25	29	30	34	35	40	47	49	+166%	
Other overseas	21	24	26	30	29	28	29	34	40	46	47	49	44	47	52	56	63	62	+190%	
Total	405	419	418	459	446	443	442	454	461	476	486	522	506	534	589	640	697	700	+73%	
Acceptances																				
<i>Age (home accepted applicants only)</i>																				
Under 21	195	204	209	238	240	246	251	262	265	266	268	289	276	291	315	327	329	339	+74%	
21-24	24	26	25	28	26	26	27	31	33	33	32	34	34	36	43	47	45	45	+89%	
25+	33	35	35	38	33	32	31	33	34	35	34	37	36	38	47	52	50	48	+46%	
<i>Sex</i>																				
Female	133	144	149	172	170	174	178	188	194	198	202	217	210	224	252	264	267	270	+103%	
Male	138	146	146	164	159	160	161	170	174	176	176	188	181	190	205	218	220	222	+61%	
<i>Ethnicity (home applicants)</i>																				
White	213	221	219	244	235	237	240	249	253	256	257	279	263	278	306	326	331	333	+57%	
Asian	19	21	23	26	26	28	30	32	31	32	32	34	34	34	37	39	41	43	+126%	
Black	7	8	8	9	9	9	10	10	11	12	13	16	17	19	23	25	27	30	+334%	
Mixed	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	6	6	7	7	9	9	11	12	13	14	15	..	
Other	3	4	4	5	5	5	6	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	5	..	
Unknown	9	11	14	20	23	23	23	26	29	25	22	19	20	19	23	17	7	5	-48%	
<i>Domicile</i>																				
Home	251	266	268	303	298	303	309	325	332	334	334	360	346	365	405	425	425	431	+72%	
England	211	221	222	253	248	253	256	271	276	277	277	302	289	307	344	360	360	368	+75%	
Scotland	20	22	24	25	25	25	27	27	28	28	28	28	27	27	29	31	32	31	+57%	
Wales	13	13	13	15	15	15	15	16	16	16	16	17	17	17	19	20	19	18	+45%	
Northern Ireland	8	9	9	10	10	10	11	12	12	12	13	14	12	13	13	14	14	14	+66%	
EU	8	12	14	17	16	16	14	12	12	13	15	17	18	21	21	24	26	27	+224%	
Other overseas	11	13	14	16	16	16	17	20	24	28	28	28	27	28	30	33	37	34	+200%	
Total	271	291	296	336	330	335	340	358	368	374	378	405	391	413	457	482	487	492	+82%	

Source: UCAS Annual Datasets

Table 2

First year mature^(a) student at UK higher education institutions

Thousands

	Undergraduate			Postgraduate		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1994/95	126.0	127.6	253.6	43.8	73.0	116.8
1995/96	124.9	118.2	243.1	44.0	60.0	103.9
1996/97	123.3	159.4	282.7	46.3	65.1	111.4
1997/98	123.5	136.7	260.2	48.4	74.0	122.3
1998/99	120.3	182.4	302.7	49.9	88.6	138.5
1999/00	113.2	188.3	301.5	50.9	85.5	136.4
2000/01	105.9	241.8	347.7	54.5	89.2	143.7
2001/02	114.8	273.8	388.6	59.9	93.2	153.1
2002/03	123.2	274.6	397.9	65.5	95.3	160.9
2003/04	127.6	291.0	418.6	69.8	98.8	168.6
2004/05	126.7	287.2	413.9	70.4	94.4	164.8
2005/06	127.5	305.5	433.0	72.5	99.9	172.4
2006/07	121.9	306.3	428.2	75.5	101.7	177.2
2007/08	128.7	299.1	427.8	73.6	100.6	174.2
2008/09	140.3	310.9	451.2	79.4	111.3	190.6
2009/10	Information no longer published by HESA					
2010/11	Information no longer published by HESA					

(a) Defined as undergraduates aged 21 years or older and postgraduates aged 25 years or older

Note: Full-time includes full-time and sandwich students

Source: Higher education statistics for the United Kingdom 2008/09 and earlier years, HESA. Tables 9b and 9d