



Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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SKILLS
TO SUCCEED

Consultation on part-time and postgraduate student finance

Section 75 equality of opportunity screening template

This form should be completed when considering options for a new policy, service or programme, or changing an existing policy, service or programme. Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The template will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will be included in the quarterly Screening Report which is published on the Department's website.

Please complete the Cover Sheet Table below

Policy Title (in full):	Consultation on Student Finance for Part-time and Postgraduate Students
Policy Aim	To ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all levels and modes of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay.
Decision (delete as appropriate)	Policy screened out without mitigation or an alternative policy adopted
Business Area:	Higher Education Division – Future Policy
Contact:	Laura Irvine
Date of form completion:	23 April 2015

For Equality Unit Completion:

Date received:	
Amendments requested?	Yes/ No
Date returned to Business Area:	
Date final version received:	
Date placed on S75 Screening Webpage:	

Screening flowchart and template

(taken from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for public authorities April 2010 (Appendix 1)).

Introduction

PART 1. Policy scoping – asks public authorities to provide details about the policy, procedure, practice and/or decision being screened and what available evidence you have gathered to help make an assessment of the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

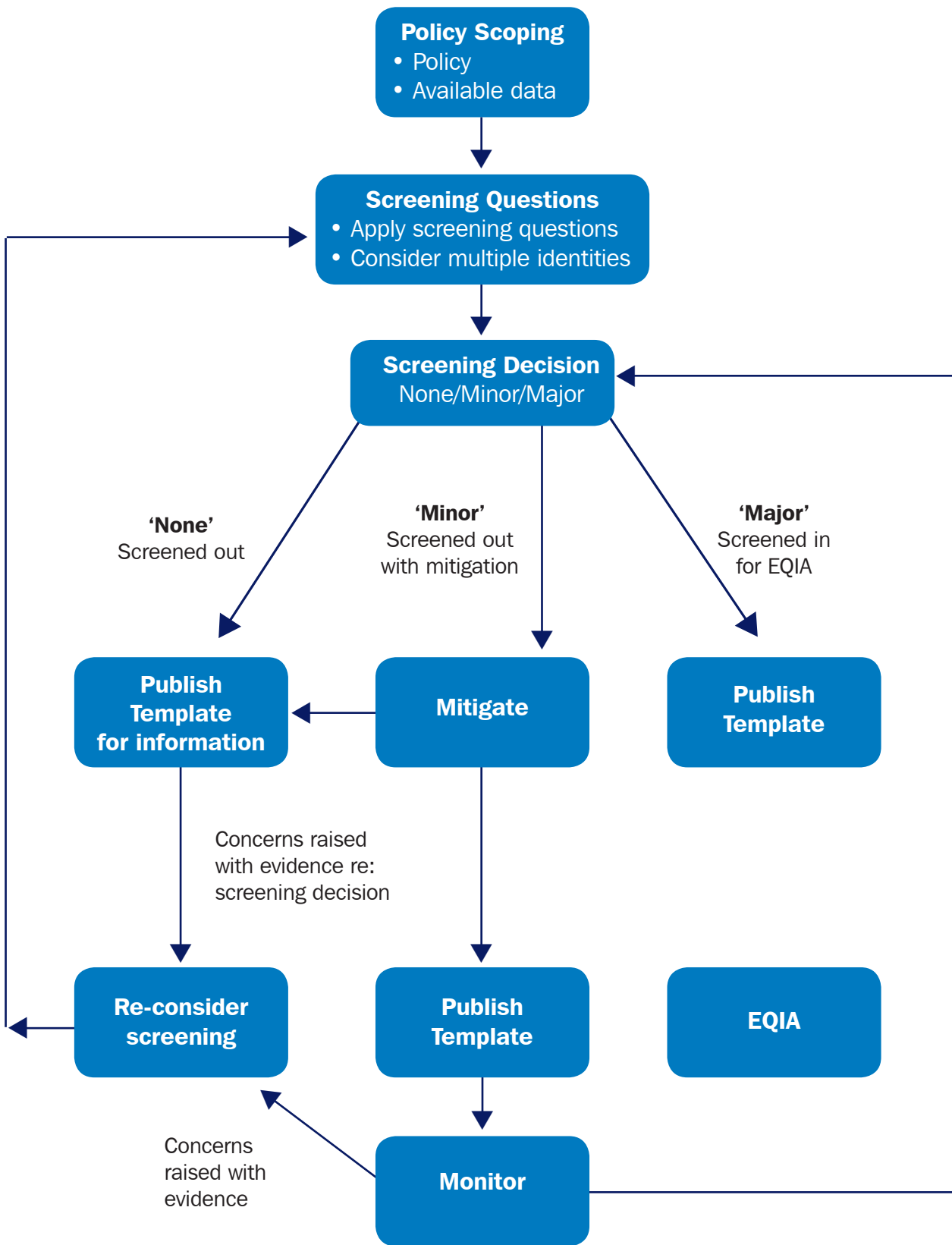
PART 2. Screening questions – asks about the extent of the likely impact of the policy on groups of people within each of the Section 75 categories. Details of the groups consulted and the level of assessment of the likely impact. This includes consideration of multiple identity and good relations issues.

PART 3. Screening decision – guides the public authority to reach a screening decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA), or to introduce measures to mitigate the likely impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

PART 4. Monitoring – provides guidance to public authorities on monitoring for adverse impact and broader monitoring.

PART 5. Approval and authorisation – verifies the public authority's approval of a screening decision by a senior manager responsible for the policy.

A screening flowchart is provided opposite.



Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Part 1. Policy scoping

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Consultation on Student Finance for Part-time and Postgraduate Students

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

Revised

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

To ensure student support funding supports the needs of the economy, the higher education sector, and students in Northern Ireland, and to ensure access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?

If so, explain how.

Age: The existing higher education system is open to people of all ages from 18 onwards. However, this policy is designed to ease access to particular modes and levels of study which older students are demonstrably more likely to utilize and need. Therefore older age groups are expected to benefit from this policy.

Dependents: The current system makes provision to support students with childcare and adult dependent responsibilities. The policy is designed to ease access to more flexible forms of study, on which students with dependents often rely. Therefore people with dependents are likely to benefit from this policy.

Marital Status: Students of a non single marital status are more likely to be mature students and have dependents. Therefore students of a marital status other than single are also more likely to avail of more flexible forms of study. People of a marital status other than single are likely to benefit from this policy.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The policy was initiated by the Minister for Employment and Learning as part of the implementation of Graduating to Success, a Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland. The review has been led by the Department's Higher Education Division, headed by Sian McCleave.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The policy will be implemented by the Department's Higher Education Division, the Student Loans Company, and the Education Authority. It is owned by the Department for Employment and Learning.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/ outcome of the policy/decision?

If yes, are they:

- financial
- legislative
- other - please specify

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon?

- staff
- service users
- other public sector organisations
- voluntary/community/trade unions
- other - please specify

Part 1. Policy scoping

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

- what are they?
- who owns them?

Various policies emanating from the Northern Ireland Executive, such as the Innovation Strategy commitment to double the number of awards for postgraduate students, will have a bearing on this policy.

Various policies within the Department will impact upon this policy, including in particular the implementation of the Skills Strategy and the Higher Education Strategy.

Student finance policies elsewhere in the UK and Ireland, owned by the respective governments there, will also have a bearing on this policy.

Budgeting policies by Her Majesty's Treasury will have an impact on this policy.

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

The following data sources have been used to inform this equality screening:

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

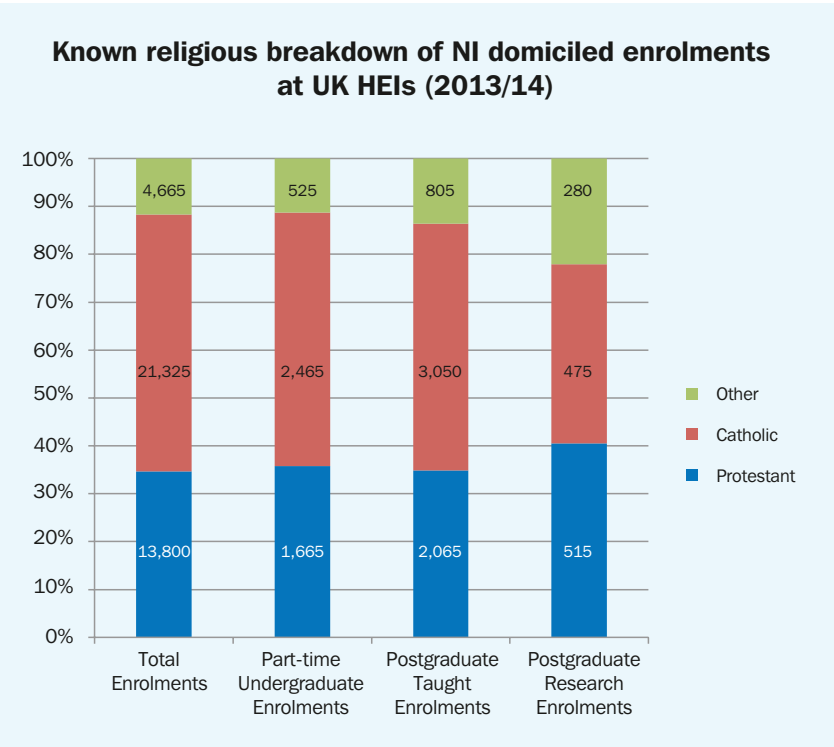
Religious belief

Details of evidence/ information

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of religious belief.

Information on religious belief is only collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in respect of Northern Ireland (NI) domiciled students studying in NI; Great Britain (GB) institutions do not collect this information. Moreover, it is important to note that religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and it can have a high non response rate. The question also offers only three choices: 'protestant', 'catholic' and 'other'.

As shown below, the known¹ religious composition of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate students and of NI domiciled postgraduate taught and research students is not dissimilar from the religious composition of the total NI student population.



1 Enrolments of an unknown religious affiliation have been excluded

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

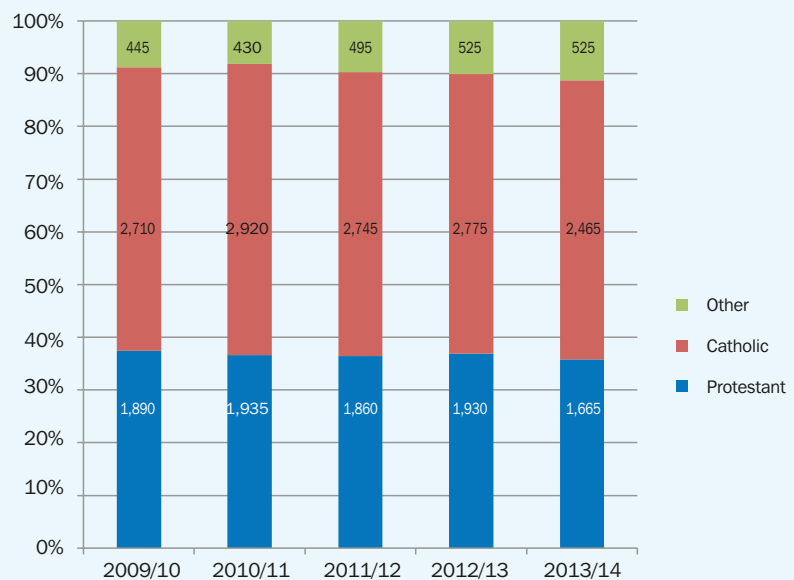
Religious belief

Details of evidence/ information

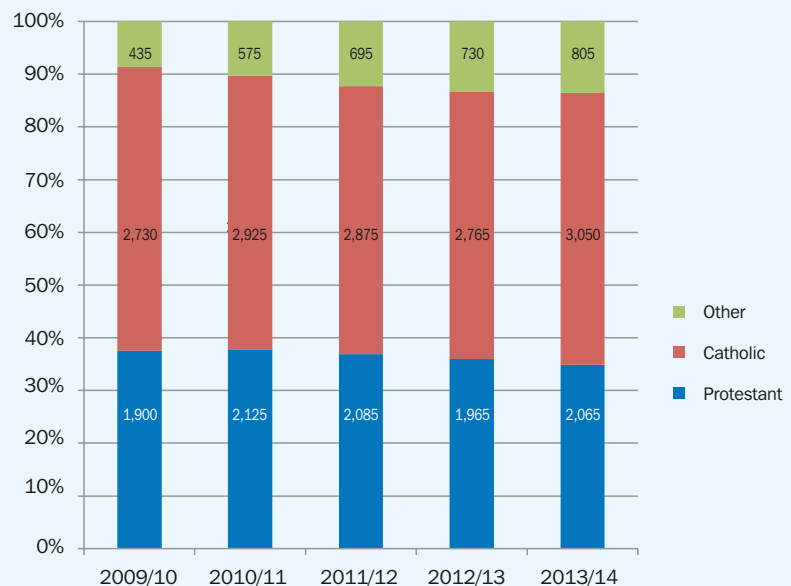
Of those enrolments whose religious affiliation is known, the split between 'protestant' and 'catholic' is broadly similar across all student types.

These trends have not changed significantly over the past five years.

Known religious breakdown of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate enrolments at UK HEIs over last five years



Known religious breakdown of NI domiciled postgraduate taught enrolments at UK HEIs over last 5 years

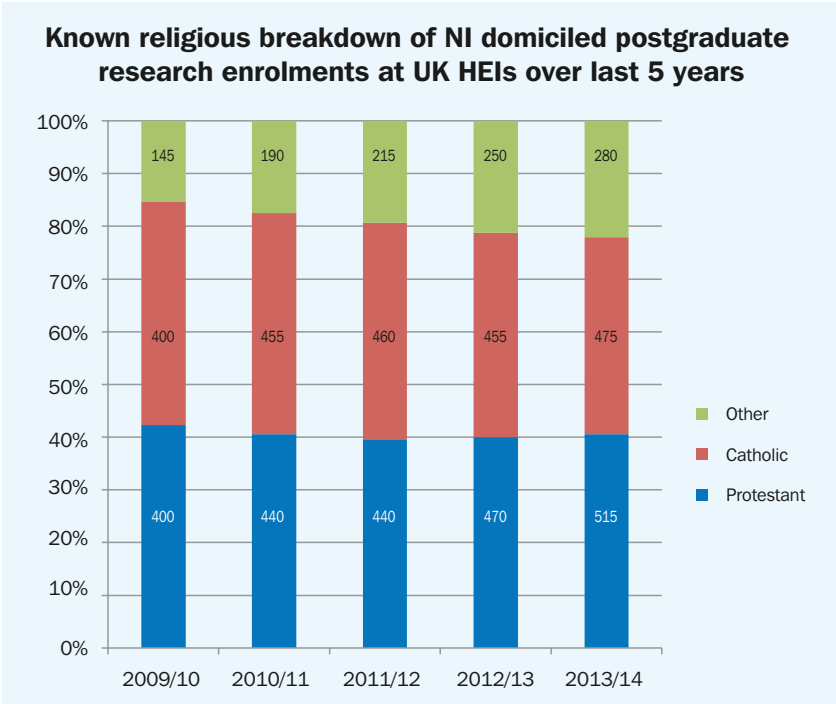


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Religious belief



The available evidence therefore does not suggest that any religious grouping in particular is more likely to utilise or need part-time or postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Political opinion

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of political opinion.

Information on political opinion is not collected by HESA. There is however a strong correlation between religious belief and political opinion in Northern Ireland and on that basis the evidence pertaining to religious belief could be broadly taken to apply here also.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

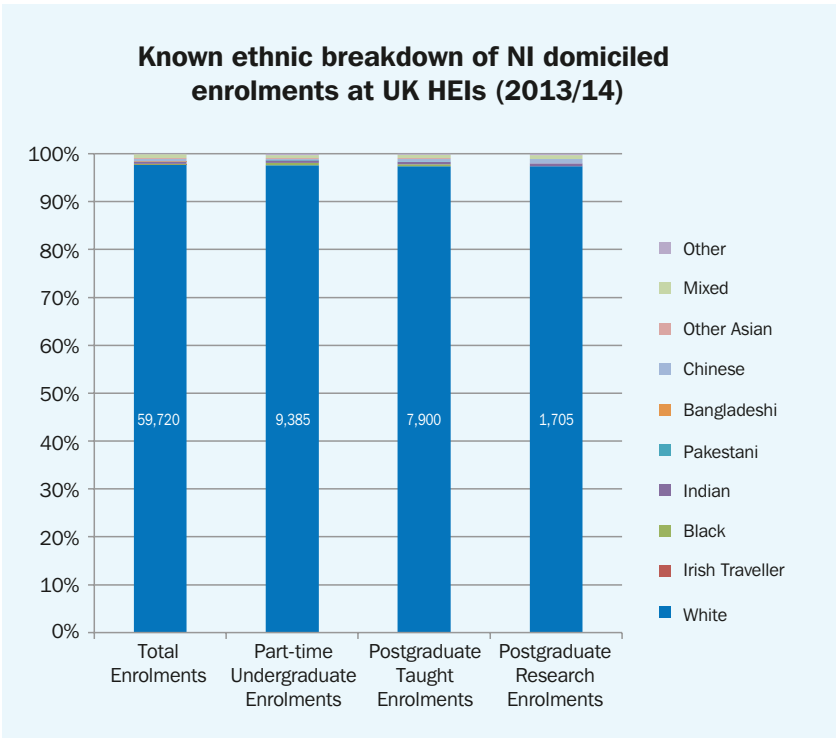
Racial Group

Details of evidence/ information

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of racial group.

HESA collects information on ethnicity of student enrolments, which is closely linked to racial grouping. This information is collected on the basis of a student's self assessment.

As shown below, the known² ethnic composition of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate students and of NI domiciled postgraduate taught and research students is not dissimilar from the known ethnic composition of the total NI student population. White is by far the most prevalent grouping in all categories, reflective of the ethnic composition of Northern Ireland's total population.



These trends have not changes significantly over the past five years.

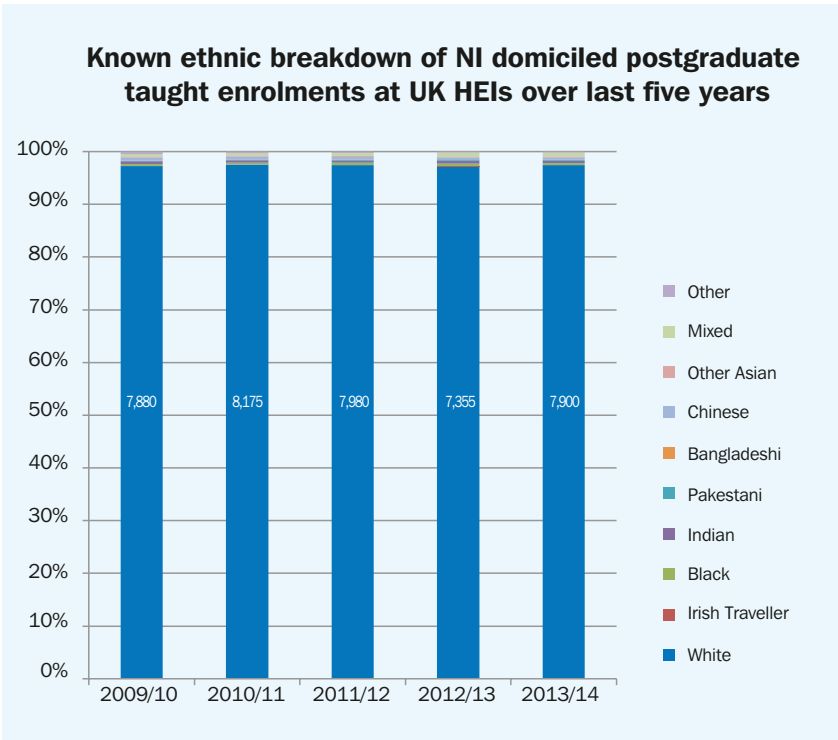
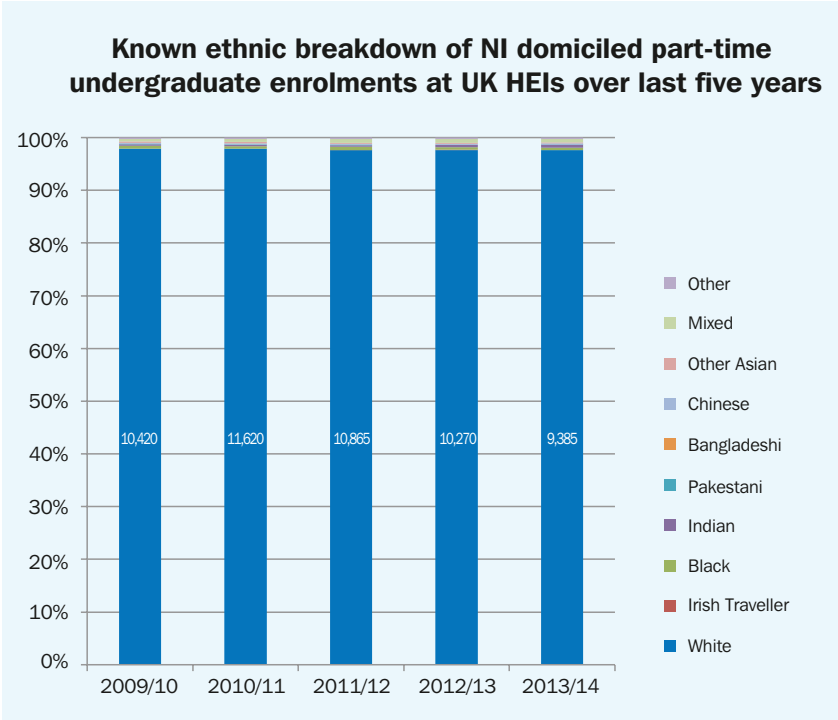
2 Unknowns have been excluded

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Racial Group

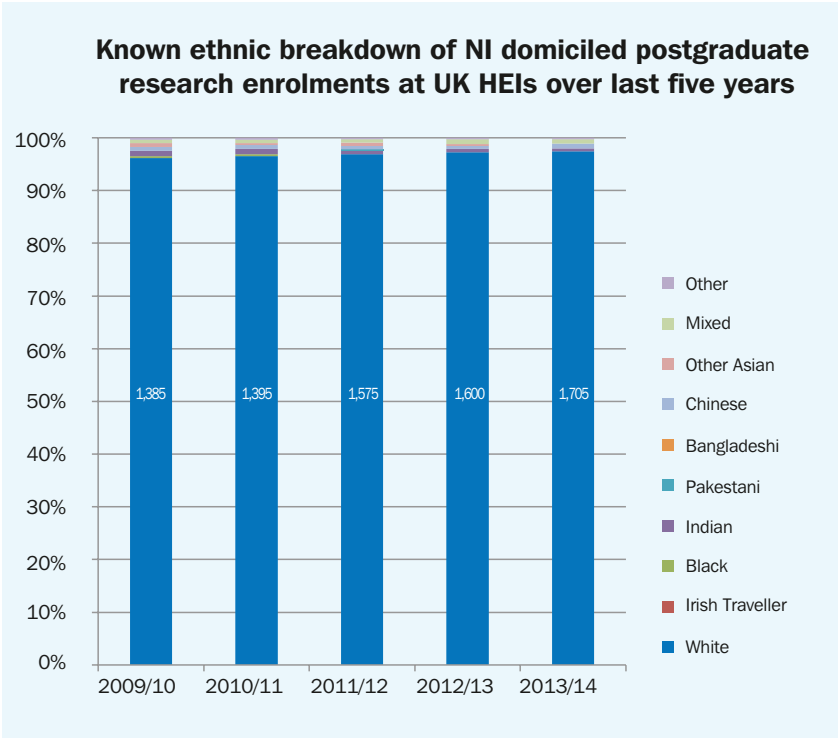


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Racial Group



The available evidence therefore does not suggest that any racial grouping in particular is more likely to utilize or need part-time or postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

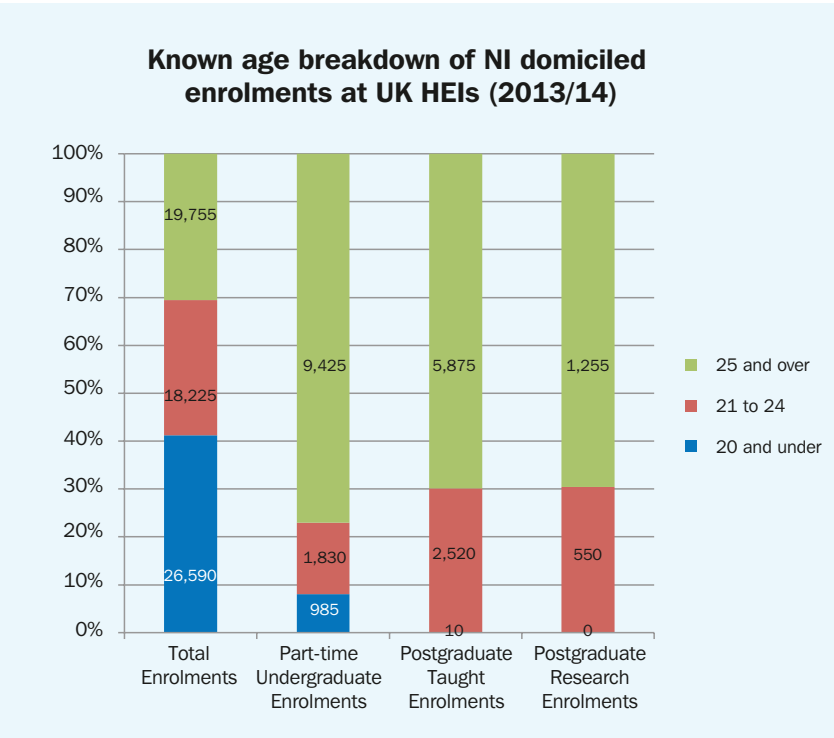
Age

Details of evidence/ information

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of age.

HESA collects information on the age of enrolments, with categories ranging from 20 and under, 21 to 24, and 25 and over.

As shown below, the known age composition of part-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research enrolments is significantly different from that of the total NI student population.



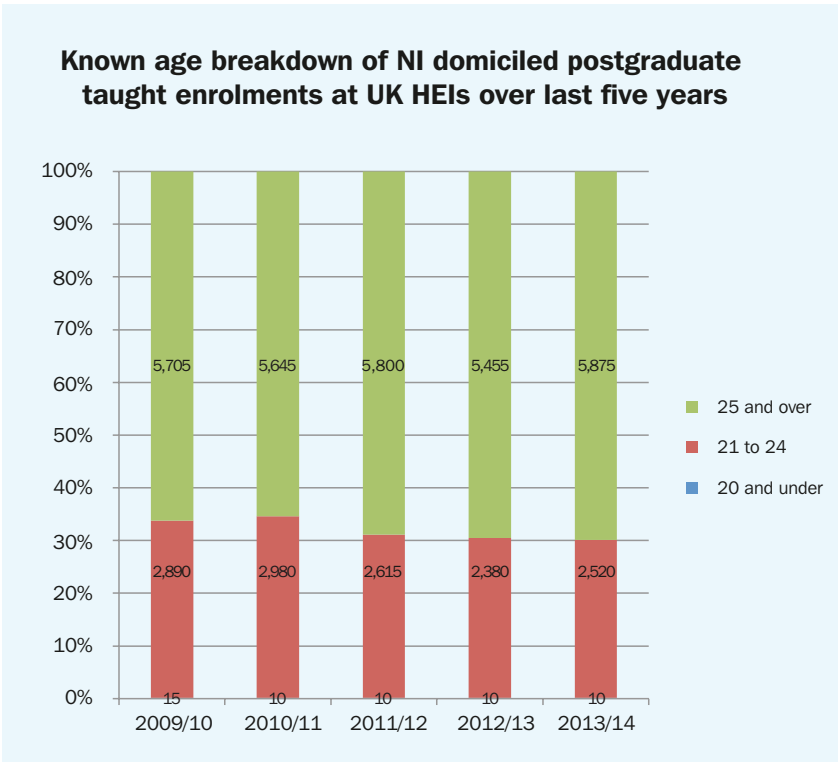
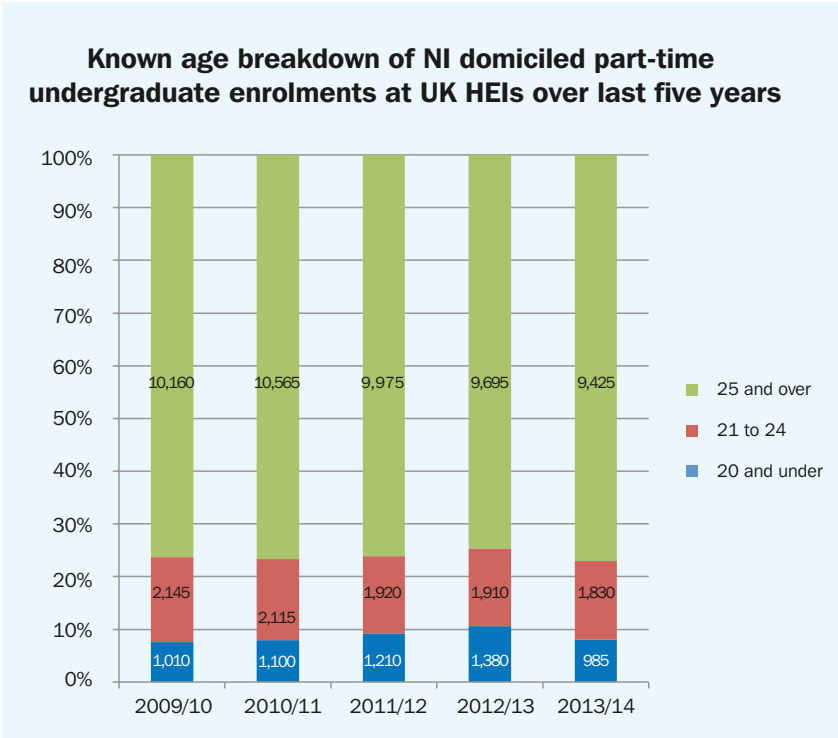
Older students are therefore much more likely to utilise and need part-time provision, and are more likely to be studying at the postgraduate level. Age trends have not changed significantly over the past five years.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Age

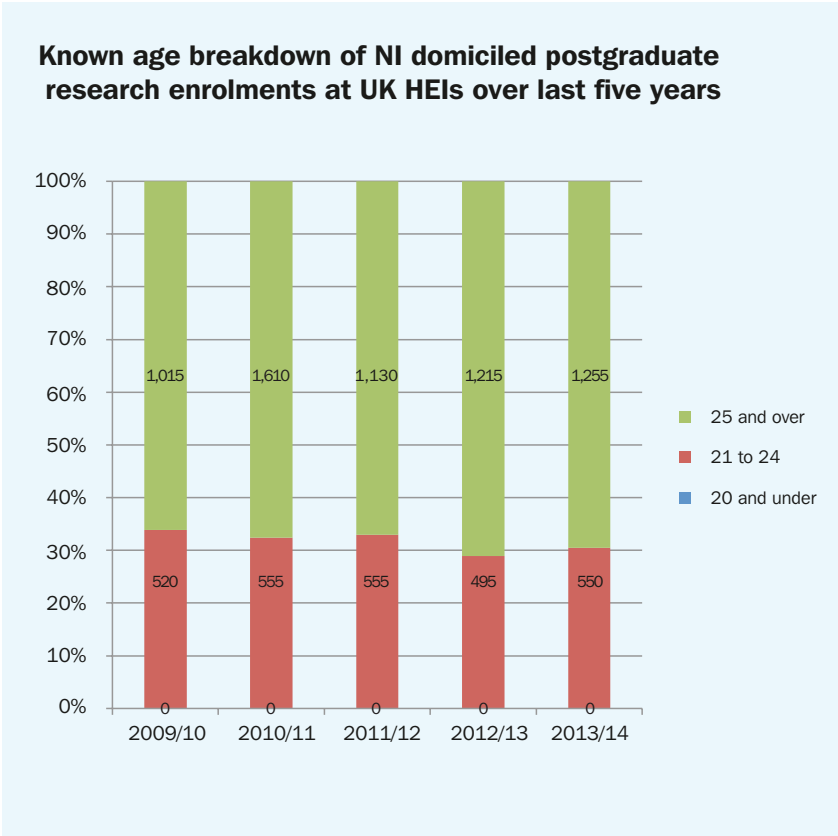


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Age



The available evidence therefore suggests that older people are more likely to utilise and need part-time and postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

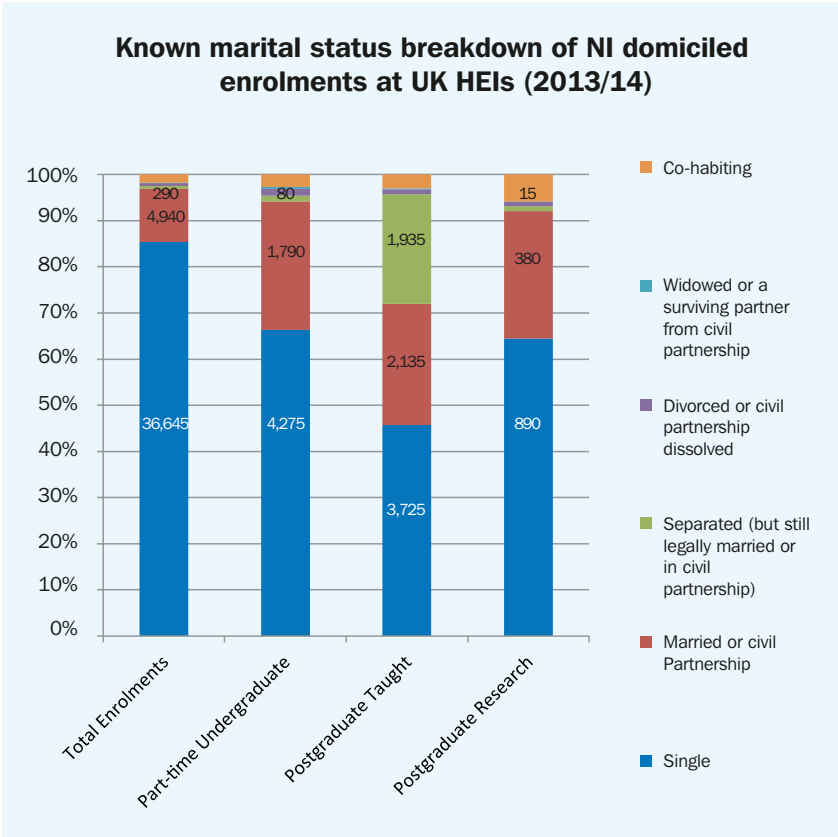
Details of evidence/ information

Marital status

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of marital status.

Information on marital status is only collected by HESA in respect of NI domiciled students studying in NI HEIs; GB HEIs do not collect this information.

As shown below, the known marital status composition of part-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research enrolments is significantly different from that of the total NI student population.



These trends have not changed significantly over the past five years. The most notable changes have been the increase in single part-time undergraduates and the increase in married taught postgraduates.

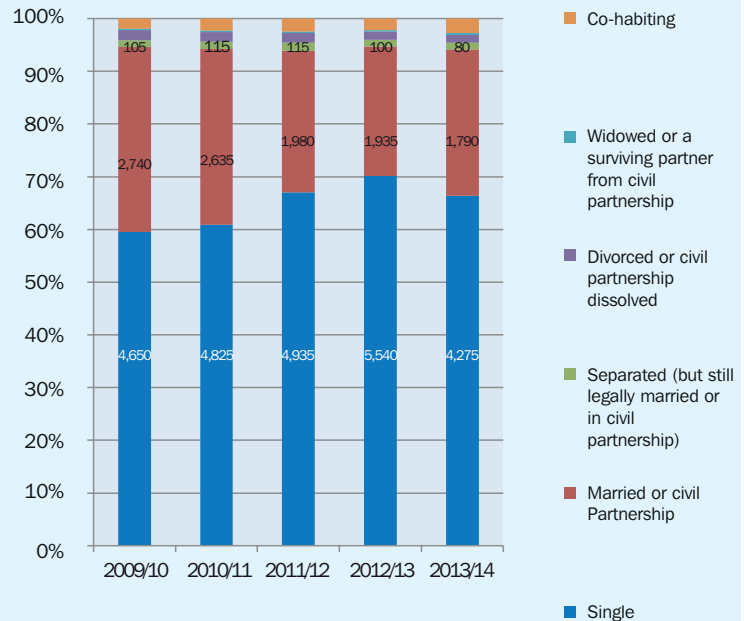
Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Marital status

Known marital status breakdown of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate enrolments at UK HEIs (2013/14)



Known marital status breakdown of NI domiciled postgraduate taught enrolments at UK HEIs over last five years

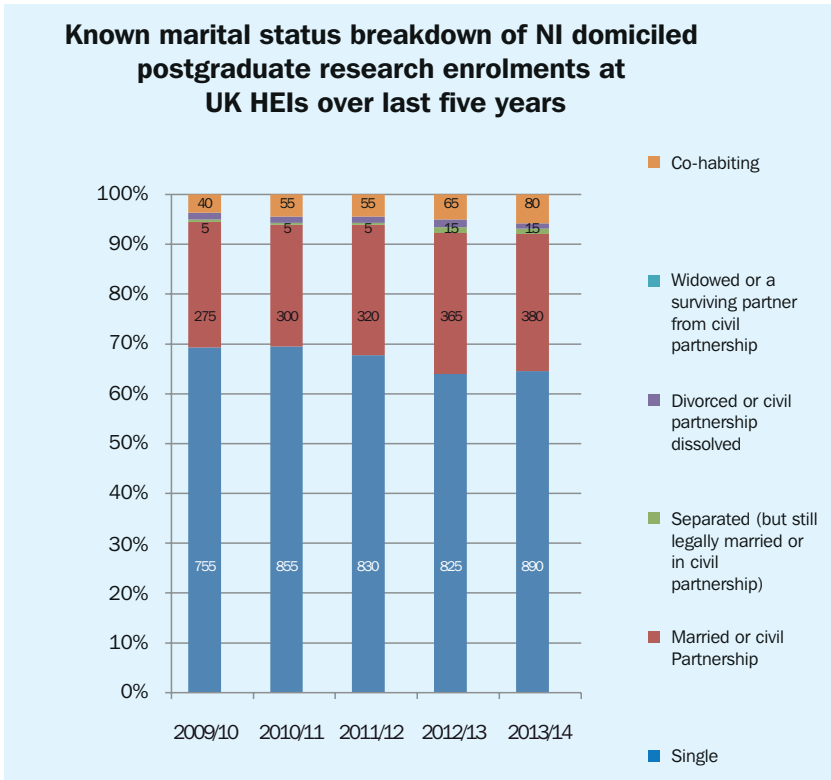


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Marital status



The available evidence therefore suggests that people of a marital status other than single are more likely to utilise and need part-time and postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Sexual orientation

Details of evidence/ information

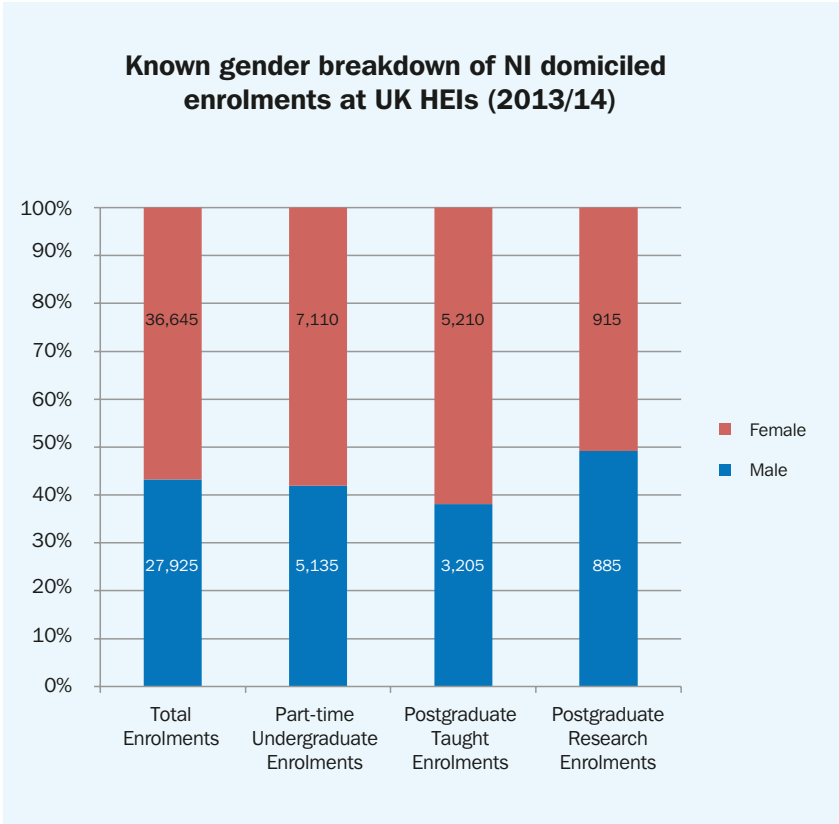
The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of sexual orientation.

Data on the sexual orientation of enrolled students in UK HEIs or graduates in the labour market is not available.

Men and women generally

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of gender.

As shown below, the gender composition of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate students and of NI domiciled postgraduate taught and research students is not dissimilar from the gender composition of the total NI student population.



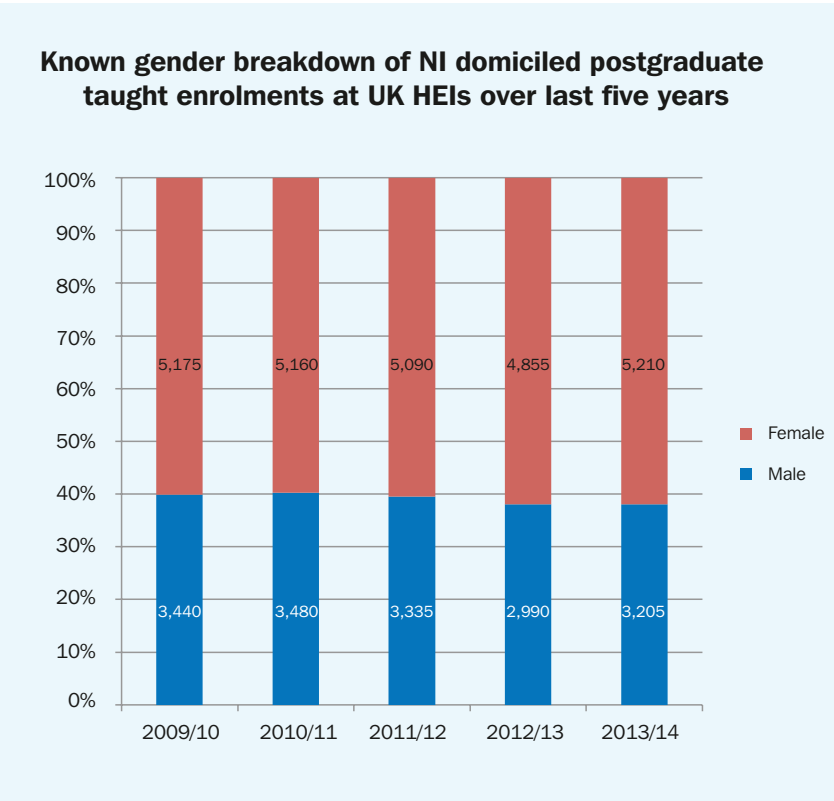
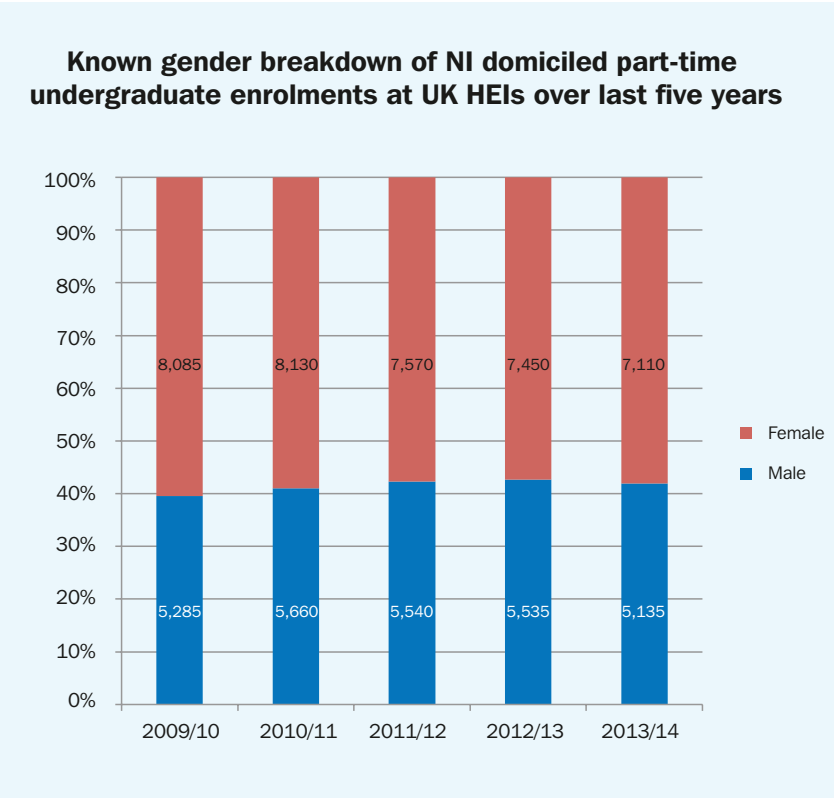
Across all groups female enrolments outweigh male, with an overall ratio of 57:43 in 2013/14. These trends have not changed significantly over the past five years.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Men and women generally

Details of evidence/ information

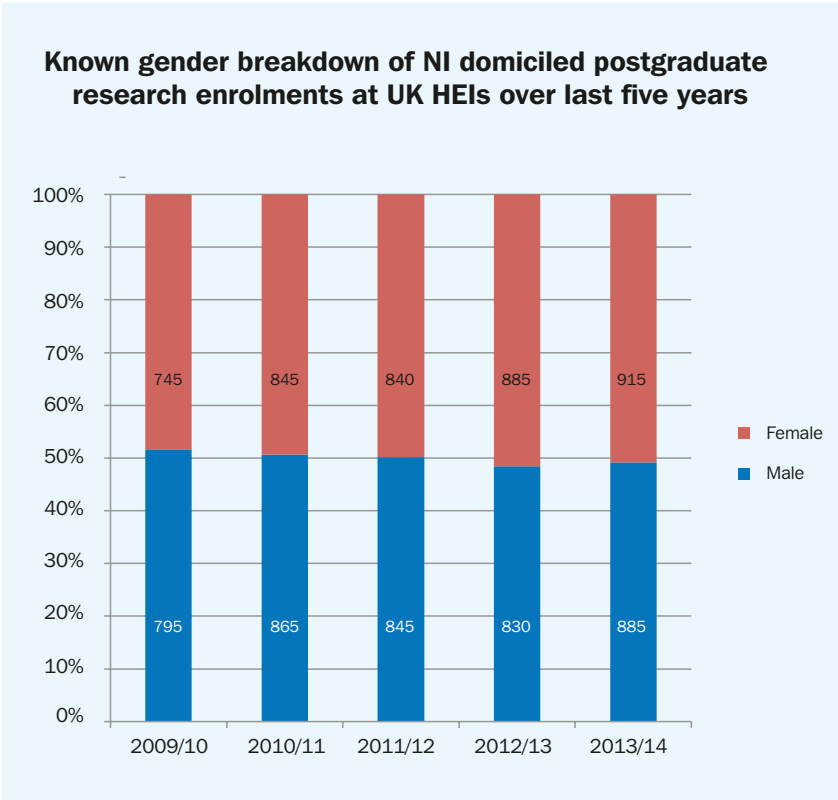


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Men and women generally



The available evidence therefore does not suggest that any gender grouping in particular is disproportionately more likely to utilise or need part-time or postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

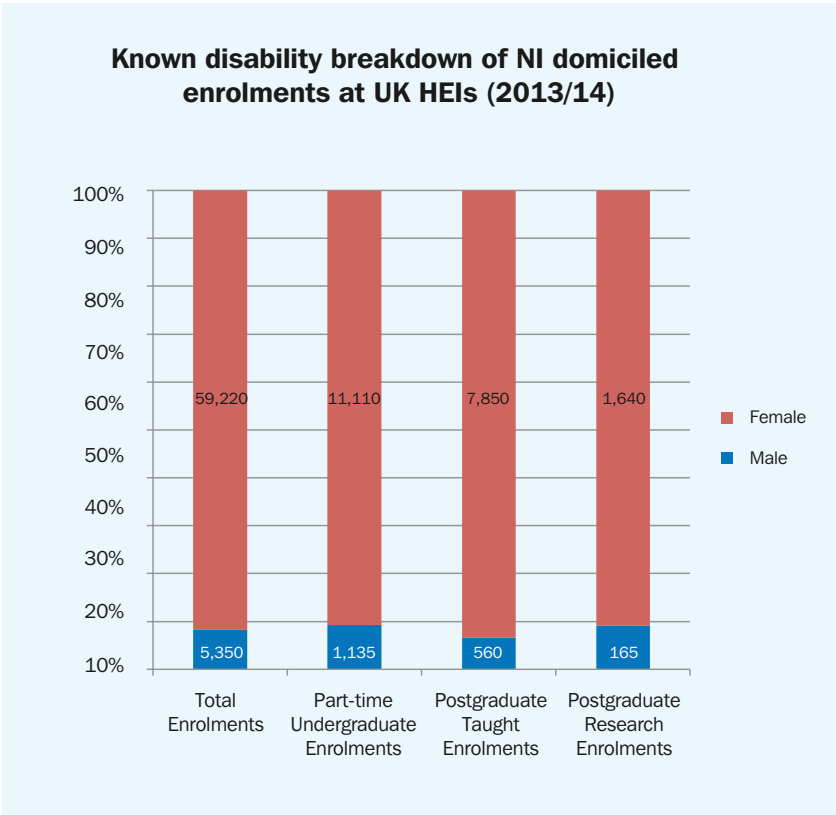
Details of evidence/ information

Disability

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of whether they have a disability or not. A range of added support measures are in place to support students with disabilities to access higher education.

HESA collects information on whether students are disabled or not. Information on disability is collected on the basis of a student's self assessment.

As shown below, the disability profile of part-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research enrolments is not significantly different from that of the total NI student population.



These trends have not changed significantly over the past five years.

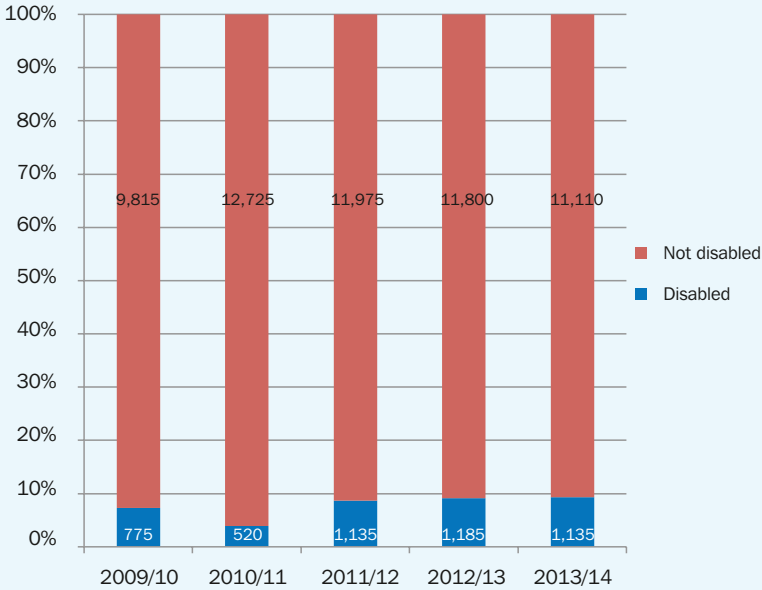
Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

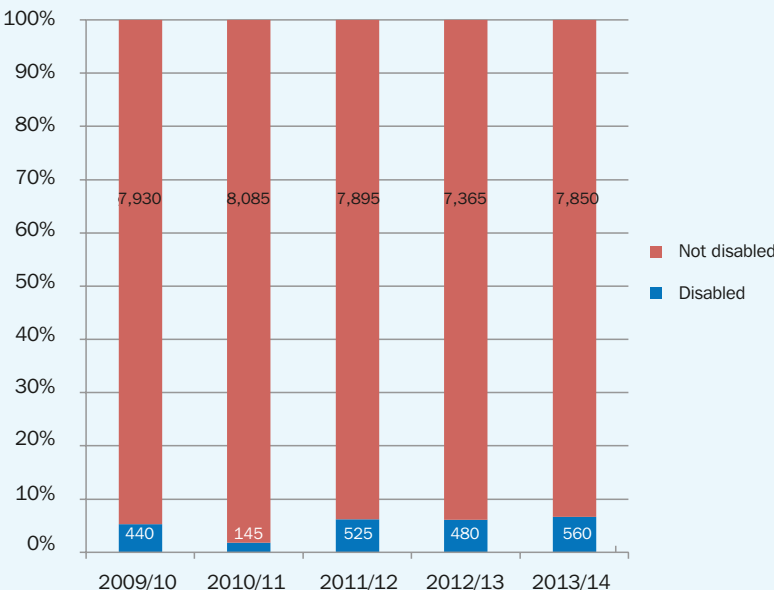
Details of evidence/ information

Disability

Known disability breakdown of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate enrolments at UK HEIs over last five years



Known disability breakdown of NI domiciled postgraduate taught enrolments at UK HEIs over last five years

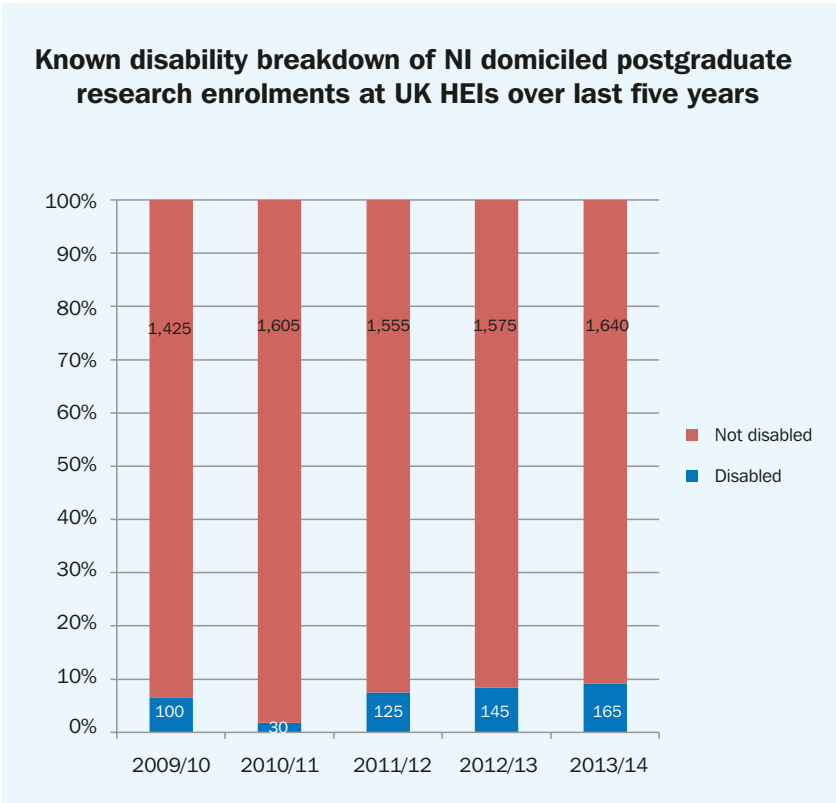


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Disability



The available evidence therefore does not suggest that any disability grouping in particular is disproportionately more likely to utilise or need part-time or postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

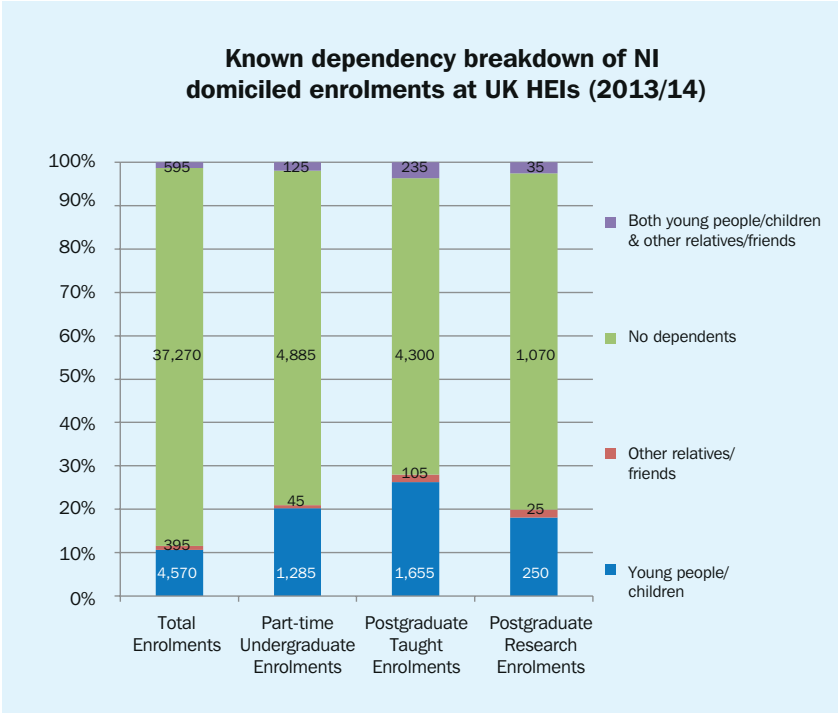
Dependants

Details of evidence/ information

The current higher education funding system does not exclude anyone on the basis of whether or not they have dependents. A range of measures are currently in place to support students with childcare and adult caring responsibilities.

Information on dependency is only collected by HESA in respect of NI domiciled students studying in NI HEIs; GB HEIs do not collect this information.

As shown below, the known dependency profile of part-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research enrolments is significantly different from that of the total NI student population.



Students with dependents, particularly young people/children, are therefore demonstrably more likely to utilise and need part-time provision, and are more likely to be studying at the postgraduate levels. These trends have not changed significantly over the past five years.

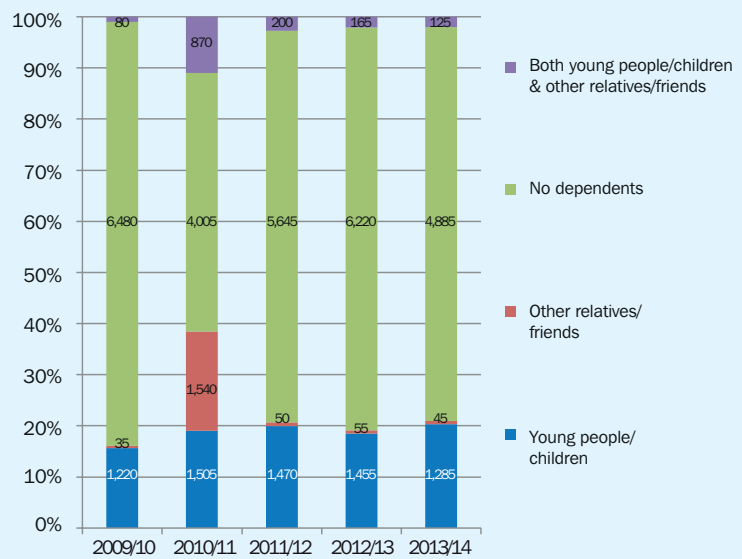
Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

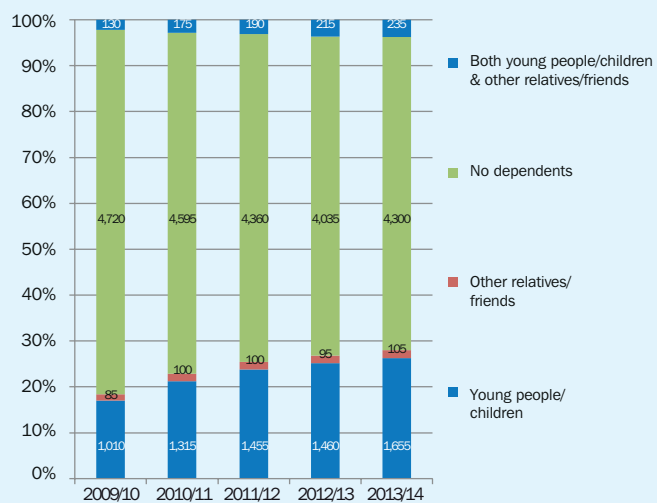
Details of evidence/ information

Dependants

Known dependency breakdown of NI domiciled part-time undergraduate enrolments at UK HEIs over last five years



Known dependency breakdown of NI domiciled postgraduate taught enrolments at UK HEIs over last five years

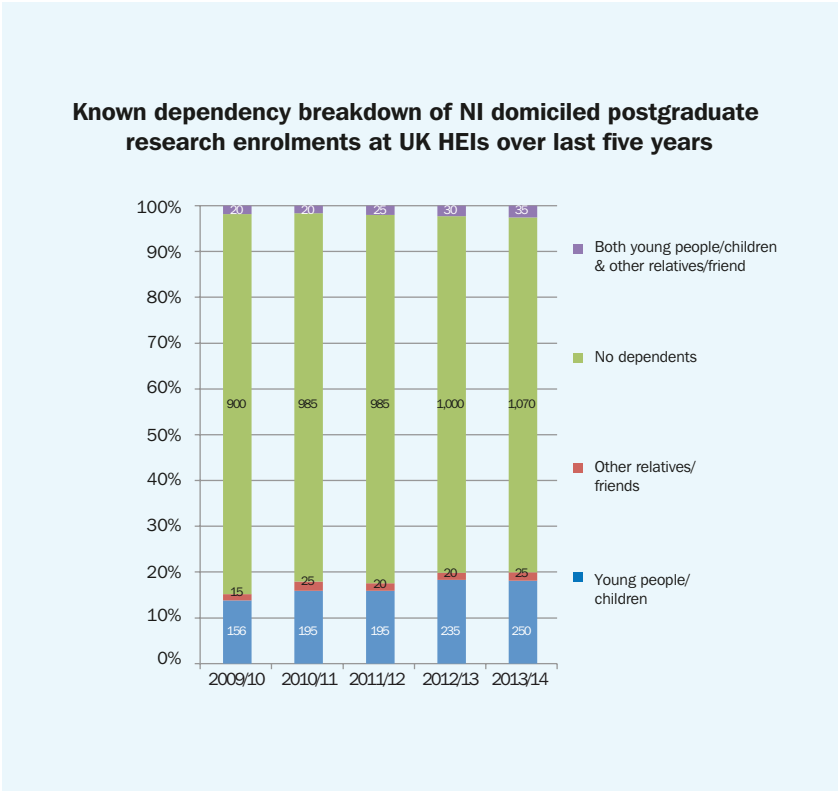


Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category

Details of evidence/ information

Dependants



The available evidence therefore suggests that people with dependents are more likely to utilise and need part-time and postgraduate study, which are the focus of this policy.

Part 1. Policy scoping

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Religious belief	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of religious belief.</p> <p>Catholics do preponderate over protestants across Northern Ireland’s entire student population. However, the available evidence suggests that people of certain religious beliefs are not disproportionately more likely to study on a part-time basis or on postgraduate taught or research courses, which are the focus of this policy.</p> <p>The Department is also aware that some religious groupings may have difficulty with the current loans based system of student support, which the policy considers extending to a greater number of students. Islam in particular forbids ‘riba’, which is typically interpreted as (excessive) interest. Commercial interest rates have been attached to student loans elsewhere in the UK, compounding this issue.</p> <p>However, in Northern Ireland under the current system student loans do not bear commercial interest rates. Nor do the majority of policy options contained in the consultation precipitate their introduction. The one option which does consider commercial interest rates would introduce loans for a cohort of students with no access to any form of student finance at present whatsoever, and utilising the loans would be entirely optional.</p>

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Political opinion	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of political opinion.</p> <p>Given the strong correlation between religious belief and political opinion in NI, some of the issues raised in the religious belief category may be applied here also.</p>
Racial group	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of racial group.</p> <p>The available evidence does not suggest that certain racial groupings utilise or need certain modes or levels of study over others.</p>
Age	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of age.</p> <p>Students in younger age groups tend to require full-time study at the undergraduate level, having in the main entered higher education straight from school or after a gap year. A comprehensive support package is in place for this cohort of students to ensure finance is not a barrier to entry.</p> <p>Older age groups however tend to need greater flexibility in their studies. Often this is because they must balance study with work or caring commitments. They therefore have a greater dependence on part-time study. Similarly, older students are also more likely to study at the postgraduate level.</p> <p>The policy options within the consultation seek to improve access to these kinds of study through the introduction of additional forms of finance, better addressing the needs of older people.</p>

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
Marital status	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of marital status.</p> <p>Older students are more likely to be of a marital status other than single and so the issues raised under age may also be deemed relevant under this category.</p>
Sexual orientation	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate that people of different sexual orientation are more dependent on certain modes or level of study over others.</p>
Men and women generally	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of gender.</p> <p>The evidence reveals a clear gender gap in higher education but this does not begin at the point of entry; rather, it can be observed early on in the educational system. Girls are more likely to stay in full-time higher education at the age of 16, more likely to enter for A levels, more likely to pass them, and more likely to do better than boys. A range of other learning programmes are also in place which may be more suited to the needs of males. For example, males are more likely to participate in further education than females.</p> <p>While females are more likely to enter higher education than males, the evidence does not indicate that any gender group is disproportionately more likely to enter part-time or postgraduate study.</p>

Part 1. Policy scoping

Section 75 category	Details of needs/experiences/priorities
<p>Disability</p>	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of disability.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate that people with or without disabilities are more dependent on certain modes or level of study over others. Across all kinds of study students with disabilities will need additional help in the form of translators, specialist equipment, signers, etc. All of these types of support are made available as part of the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), which is available to students at all levels and modes of study.</p>
<p>Dependants</p>	<p>The options contained within the consultation are designed to ensure that access to higher education is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of dependency status.</p> <p>People with dependents to care for are demonstrably more likely to utilise and need flexible part-time study. Given the age profile of postgraduate students, they are also more likely to utilise and need postgraduate study. As the policy options considered within the consultation seek to aid access to these forms of study, they can be expected to have a positive impact on people with dependents.</p>

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 10-12 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;
- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

Part 2. Screening questions

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Part 2. Screening questions

Screening questions

1 What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? minor/major/none		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their religious beliefs.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different religious beliefs.</p>	None
Political opinion	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their political opinions.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different political opinions.</p>	None

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/ none
Racial group	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their racial groupings.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different racial groupings.</p>	None
Age	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their age.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered within the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on older people. This is because older people are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate provision. However, as the proposals within the review seek to improve access to these kinds of study, the impact is anticipated to be positive.</p>	Minor – positive

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/ none
Marital status	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their marital status.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered within the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on people of a marital status other than single. This is because these groups are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate provision. However, as the proposals within the review seek to improve access to these kinds of study, the impact is anticipated to be positive.</p>	Minor – positive
Sexual orientation	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their sexual orientation.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different sexual orientations.</p>	None

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/ none
Men and women generally	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their gender.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people of different genders.</p>	None
Disability	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have a disability.</p> <p>The available evidence does not indicate any disproportionate impacts for people with or without disabilities.</p>	None

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/ none
Dependants	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have dependents.</p> <p>The available evidence indicates that the policies considered within the consultation will have a disproportionate impact on people with dependents. This is because these groups are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate provision. However, as the proposals within the consultation seek to improve access to these kinds of study, the impact is anticipated to be positive.</p>	Minor – positive

Part 2. Screening questions

2 Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?		
Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief		The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their religious beliefs.
Political opinion		The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their political opinions.
Racial group		The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their racial groupings.

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Age	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their age.</p> <p>Older people are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate study than younger people. As the policies considered within the consultation are designed to ease access to these forms of study, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for people of different ages.</p>	

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Marital status	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their marital status.</p> <p>People of a marital status other than single are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate study than those of a single marital status. As the policies considered within the consultation are designed to ease access to these forms of study, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for people of different marital statuses</p>	
Sexual orientation		<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their sexual orientation.</p>

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Men and women generally		The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of their gender.
Disability		The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether or not they have disabilities.

Part 2. Screening questions

Section 75 category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Dependants	<p>The policies considered within the consultation are designed to ensure that student support funding reflects the needs of the Northern Ireland economy, the higher education sector and individual students, and to ensure that access to higher education at all modes and levels of study is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, irrespective of whether they have dependents or not.</p> <p>People with dependents are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate study than those of a single marital status. As the policies considered within the consultation are designed to ease access to these forms of study, it is anticipated that they will better promote equality of opportunity for people with dependents.</p>	

Part 2. Screening questions

3 To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? minor/major/none		
Good relations category	Details of policy impact	Level of impact? minor/major/none
Religious belief	The policies considered within the consultation will seek to ensure that access to higher education is open to all with the ability to learn, irrespective of financial means or religious beliefs. It is therefore anticipated that it will promote the continuation of existing good relations between people of different religious beliefs.	None
Political opinion	The policies considered within the consultation will seek to ensure that access to higher education is open to all with the ability to learn, irrespective of financial means or political opinions. It is therefore anticipated that it will promote the continuation of existing good relations between people of different political opinions.	None
Racial group	The policies considered within the consultation will seek to ensure that access to higher education is open to all with the ability to learn, irrespective of financial means or racial groups. It is therefore anticipated that it will promote the continuation of existing good relations between people of different racial groups.	None

Part 2. Screening questions

4 Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?		
Good relations category	If Yes, provide details	If No, provide reasons
Religious belief	While the policies considered within the consultation are not directly related to the promotion of good relations between people of different religious beliefs, it would be hoped that by helping to integrate more people into education and, beyond, sustained employment, a consequence would be to promote good relations.	
Political opinion	While the policies considered within the consultation are not directly related to the promotion of good relations between people of different political opinions, it would be hoped that by helping to integrate more people into education and, beyond, sustained employment, a consequence would be to promote good relations.	
Racial group	While the policies considered within the consultation are not directly related to the promotion of good relations between people of different racial groups, it would be hoped that by helping to integrate more people into education and, beyond, sustained employment, a consequence would be to promote good relations.	

Part 2. Screening questions

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(For example; disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

- Older people
- People with dependents
- People of a non-single marital status



It is anticipated that people falling within one or more of these groups will be advantaged through improved access to more flexible forms of study, on which they are typically more reliant.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

As shown above for each category individually, each of these categories are demonstrably more reliant on part-time and postgraduate study. As policies considered within the consultation seek to ease access to these types of study, a positive impact on people falling into one or more of these categories is anticipated.

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

The equality screening has identified a number of minor impacts of the policies under consideration for equality of opportunity for people of several Section 75 categories, as well as a number of opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.

However, all of the impacts identified are positive in nature, and so an equality impact assessment has not been deemed necessary.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced.

Mitigation or alternative policies are not required as all identified impacts are positive in nature.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

Part 3. Screening decision

Mitigation

When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, give the **reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/ amendments or alternative policy.

N/A – all minor impacts are positive

Part 3. Screening decision

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been ‘**screened in**’ for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion	Rating (1-3)
Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations	n/a
Social need	n/a
Effect on people’s daily lives	n/a
Relevance to a public authority’s functions	n/a

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority’s Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

If yes, please provide details

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

The review will be monitored throughout its further development and implementation to ensure any outcomes are identified and assessed for their impact on equality of opportunity and good relations.

Part 5. Approval and authorisation

Screened by:	Position/Job Title	Date
Alan Russell	Policy Officer	23/04/15
Approved by:		
Laura Irvine	Head of Higher Education Future Policy	23/04/15

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be ‘signed off’ and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority’s website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.



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