

Performance Indicators in Higher Education: Student Retention

Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time 2015/16 entrants and part-time 2014/15 entrants

For this indicator, a value lower than the benchmark indicates that an institution is performing better than comparable institutions. Benchmarks are calculated for each institution, but not at a country level (see Contextual Information document).

(a) Percentage of full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in Higher Education (HE) in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16 (Table 1, Figure 1).

The Open University (OU) does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2015/16 were part-time.

Young¹ Entrants

Collectively, Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions (NI HEIs) had a lower non-continuation rate than the UK average of 6.4%, with 4.6% of young full-time first degree students no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16.

On the same basis, Ulster University (5.7%), Stranmillis (3.6%) and St Mary's (2.2%) outperformed their respective benchmarks (7.2%, 5.0% and 4.5%), although not significantly so; Queen's University Belfast (QUB) had a non-continuation rate of 3.7%, similar to its benchmark of 3.8%.

Table 1: Percentage of full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16

	Young Entrants		Mature Entrants		All Entrants	
	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark
UK	6.4		11.6		7.5	
NI	4.6		6.9		5.1	
QUB	3.7	3.8	7.1	9.6	4.3	4.9
St Mary's	2.2	4.5	..	..	3.6	5.1
Stranmillis	3.6	5.0	3.3	10.4	3.5	6.3
UU	5.7	7.2	6.6 +	12.7	5.9	8.6

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

¹ See [Contextual Information document](#) point 6.

Mature¹ Entrants

Collectively, NI HEIs had a lower non-continuation rate than the UK average of 11.6%, with 6.9% of mature full-time first degree students no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16.

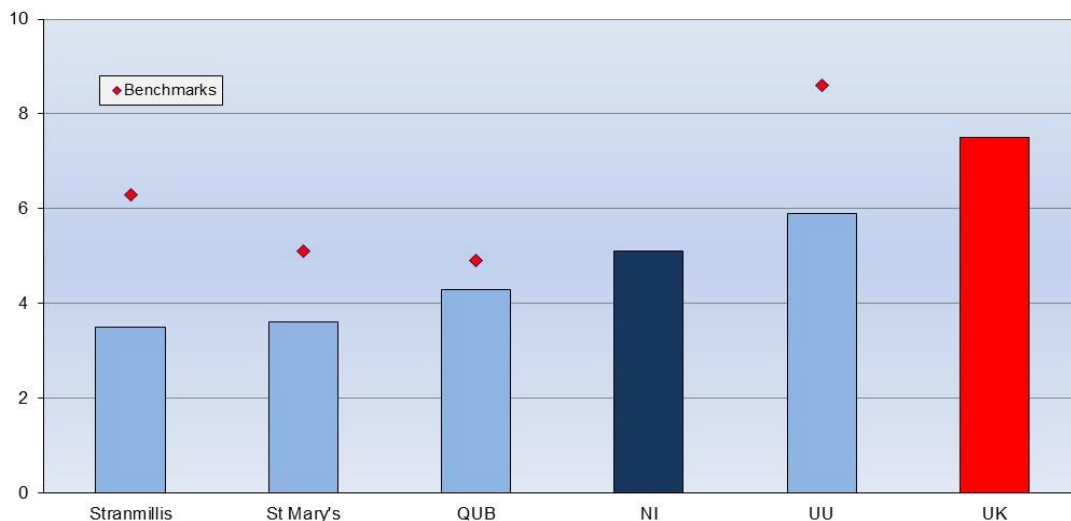
On the same basis, Ulster University (UU) performed significantly better than its benchmark (12.7%) with a non-continuation rate of 6.6%. Stranmillis (3.3%) and QUB (7.1%) also had lower non-continuation rates than their respective benchmarks (10.4% and 9.6%), although not significantly so. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's.

All Entrants

For all full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs, 5.1% of students were no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16; lower than the UK average of 7.5%.

On this basis, QUB (4.3%), St Mary's (3.6%), Stranmillis (3.5%) and UU (5.9%) out-performed their respective benchmarks (4.9%, 5.1%, 6.3% and 8.6%), although not significantly so.

Figure 1: Percentage of all full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16



(b) Percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16.

This indicator looks at the percentage of entrants who come from low participation neighbourhoods. This indicator is not applicable in NI due to the methodological issues around the calculation of low participation areas at the NI institutional level (further information on this is available in the 'Contextual Information' document, which is published alongside this factsheet on the DfE website).

(c) Percentage of mature full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16 (Table 2).

This section disaggregates mature full-time first degree entrants into (i) those with a previous HE qualification and (ii) those with no previous HE qualification.

OU does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2015/16 were part-time.

(i) Mature Full-time First Degree Entrants with previous HE qualification

For this category, the collective non-continuation rate for NI HEIs was lower than the UK average of 10.4%, with 5.7% of mature full-time first degree entrants with a previous HE qualification no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16.

UU (5.2%) performed significantly better than its benchmark of 11.9%. QUB (6.4%) and Stranmillis (2.6%) out-performed their respective benchmarks (8.3% and 8.8%), although not significantly so. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's.

(ii) Mature Full-time First Degree Entrants with no previous HE qualification

In respect of this category, NI HEIs collectively performed better than the UK average of 12.3%, with 8.0% of mature full-time first degree entrants with no previous HE qualification no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16.

UU (8.1%) performed significantly better than its benchmark of 13.3%. QUB (7.9%) and Stranmillis (4.3%) out-performed their respective benchmarks (10.9% and 12.9%), although not significantly so. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's.

Table 2: Percentage of mature full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16

	Previous HE qualification		No previous HE qualification	
	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark
UK	10.4		12.3	
NI	5.7		8.0	
QUB	6.4	8.3	7.9	10.9
St Mary's	..	..	..	..
Stranmillis	2.6	8.8	4.3	12.9
UU	5.2 +	11.9	8.1+	13.3

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

(d) Percentage of full-time other undergraduate entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16 (Table 3).

Collectively, NI HEIs had a lower non-continuation rate than the UK average of 13.4%, with 13.0% of full-time other undergraduate entrants no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16. Although none of the differences were statistically significant, Stranmillis (15.9%) and UU (25.9%) both performed worse than their respective benchmarks (11.7% and 9.5%), whereas QUB had no full-time undergraduate entrants failing to continue in HE.

Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's. OU does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2015/16 were part-time.

Table 3: Percentage of full-time other undergraduate entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2015/16

	No longer in HE (%)	Bench-mark
UK	13.4	
NI	13.0	
QUB	0.0	7.2
St Mary's	..	..
Stranmillis	15.9	11.7
UU	25.9	9.5

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

(e) Percentage of part-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2014/15 (Table 4).

The part-time non-continuation indicator differs from the full-time indicators in that it looks at continuation two years following entry. It is further restricted to only include those students studying at least 30% of a full-time equivalent course and excludes students who are recorded as being registered on multiple courses and those registered on a first degree programme the year before they entered.

Entrants aged 30 and Under

The collective non-continuation rate for NI HEIs was similar to the UK average of 34.2%, with 34.3% of part-time first degree entrants aged 30 and under no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2014/15.

Stranmillis (6.0%) and UU (17.7%) performed significantly better than their respective benchmarks (24.8% and 29.0%). In contrast, OU (47.7%) performed significantly worse than

its benchmark of 39.2%. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for QUB or St Mary's.

Entrants aged over 30

At NI HEIs, 38.5% of part-time first degree entrants aged over 30 were no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2014/15, compared with the UK average of 32.7%. UU (16.1%) performed significantly better than its benchmark of 29.7%, whereas OU (50.3%) performed significantly worse than its benchmark of 36.6%. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for QUB, St Mary's or Stranmillis.

All Entrants

Collectively, the non-continuation rate for NI HEIs was above the UK average (33.5%), with 36.2% of part-time first degree entrants no longer in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2014/15. Stranmillis (5.1%) and UU (17.1%) performed significantly better than their respective benchmarks (24.4%. and 29.3%). QUB (7.1%) also performed better than its benchmark of 28.0%, although not significantly so. In contrast, OU (48.9%) performed significantly worse than its benchmark of 38.1%. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's.

Table 4: Percentage of part-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2016/17, following entry in 2014/15

	Aged 30 and under		Aged over 30		All Entrants	
	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark	No longer in HE (%)	Benchmark
UK	34.2		32.7		33.5	
NI	34.3		38.5		36.2	
QUB	..	..	..	..	7.1	28.0
St Mary's	..	..	..	..	..	..
Stranmillis	6.0 +	24.8	..	..	5.1 +	24.4
UU	17.7 +	29.0	16.1 +	29.7	17.1 +	29.3
OU	47.7 -	39.2	50.3 -	36.6	48.9 -	38.1

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

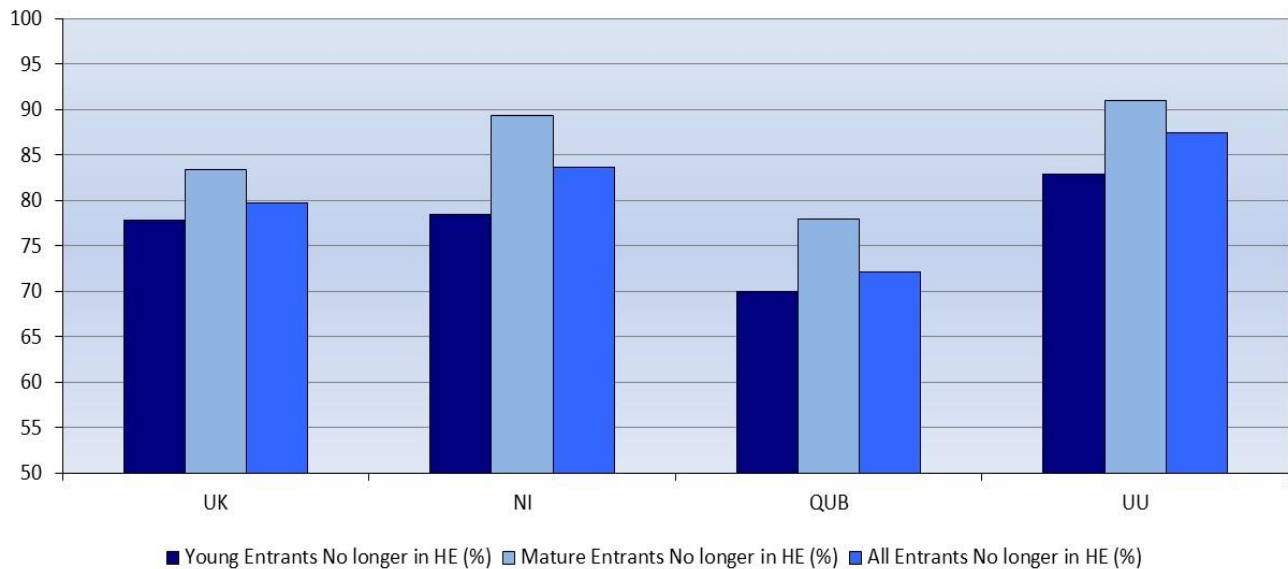
A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

Resumption of study in 2016/17 after a year out in 2015/16 (2014/15 entrants)

There are no benchmarks associated with this indicator, as the student's decision to return to study was not considered as an appropriate benchmark for comparing UK HEIs.

(a) Full-time first degree entrants (Table 5, Figure 2)

Figure 2: Percentage of full-time first degree entrants in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16 and were no longer in HE in 2016/17



OU does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2014/15 were part-time.

Young Entrants

Of all young full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16, 78.5% did not return to HE in 2016/17. This figure was higher than the UK average of 77.8%.

At QUB, 70.0% of all young full-time first degree entrants in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16 did not return in 2016/17; this compares with 82.9% at UU. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's or Stranmillis.

Mature Entrants

Of all mature full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16, 89.4% did not return to HE in 2016/17. This figure was higher than the UK average of 83.4%.

At QUB, 78.0% of all mature full-time first degree entrants in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16 did not return in 2016/17; this compares with 91.0% at UU. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's or Stranmillis.

All Entrants

Of all full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16, 83.7% did not return to HE in 2016/17. This figure was higher than the UK average of 79.7%.

At QUB, 72.2% of all full-time first degree entrants in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16 did not return in 2016/17; this compares with 87.4% at UU. Again, due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's or Stranmillis.

Table 5: Percentage of full-time first degree entrants in 2014/15 who took a year out in 2015/16 and were no longer in HE in 2016/17.

	Young Entrants	Mature Entrants	All Entrants
UK	77.8	83.4	79.7
NI	78.5	89.4	83.7
QUB	70.0	78.0	72.2
St Mary's	..	..	..
Stranmillis	..	..	..
UU	82.9	91.0	87.4

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

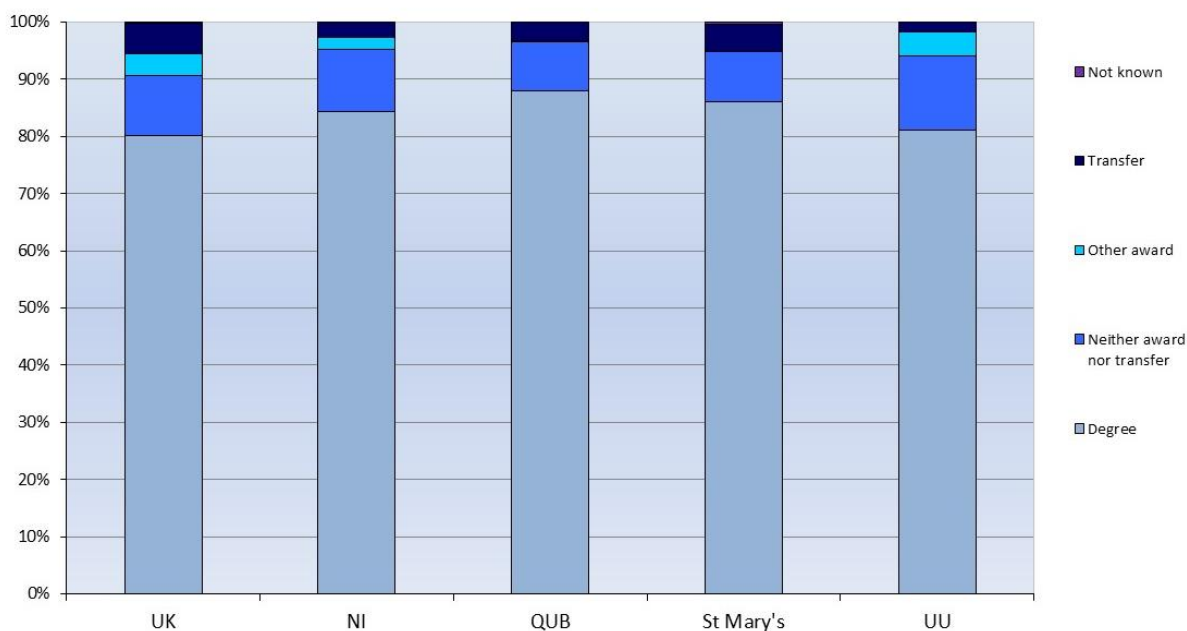
(b) Full-time other undergraduate entrants

For all full-time other undergraduate entrants who did not resume study in 2016/17 after a year out of HE in 2015/16, the UK average, was 86.8%. Due to small numbers, this indicator has not been produced for NI.

Projected learning outcomes: Full-time first degree entrants – 2015/16

Another way to look at non-continuation rates is to use information on current movements of students to project what would happen in the long term. Thus, this indicator projects what proportion of students will eventually gain a degree, what proportion will leave their current university or college and transfer into HE elsewhere, and what proportion will leave HE altogether without any qualification.

Figure 3: Projected learning outcomes - Full-time first degree entrants - 2015/16



Due to data coding issues relating to this indicator, Stranmillis has been excluded from this analysis. OU also does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2015/16 were part-time.

(a) Projected to attain a degree² (Table 6, Figure 3)

For this section, a value higher than the benchmark indicates that an institution is projected to perform better than comparable institutions.

Collectively, NI HEIs were projected to perform above the UK average of 80.1%, with 84.4% of full-time students starting first degree courses in 2015/16 expected to gain a degree.

QUB (87.9%) and UU (81.1%) were projected to perform above their respective benchmarks (85.9% and 78.9%) for full-time first degree entrants expected to gain a degree. In contrast, St Mary's (86.1%) was projected to perform below its benchmark (86.9%).

² See Contextual Information document point 4.

(b) Projected to finish without either gaining an award or transferring to another HEI (Table 6, Figure 3)

For this section, a value below the benchmark indicates that an institution is projected to perform better than comparable institutions.

Overall, NI HEIs were projected to perform similarly to the UK average of 10.5%, with 10.8% of full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2015/16 projected to finish without either gaining an award or transferring to another HEI.

On this basis, QUB (8.7%), St Mary's (8.7%) and UU (12.9%) were projected to perform worse than their respective benchmarks (6.9%, 6.5% and 11.8%), although not significantly so.

Table 6: Percentage of full-time first degree students expected to gain a degree or to gain neither an award nor transfer – 2015/16 entrants

	Obtain degree		No award nor transfer	
	Percentage	Benchmark	Percentage	Benchmark
UK	80.1		10.5	
NI	84.4		10.8	
QUB	87.9	85.9	8.7	6.9
St Mary's	86.1	86.9	8.7	6.5
UU	81.1	78.9	12.9	11.8

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

Due to data coding issues relating to this indicator, Stranmillis has been excluded from this analysis.