



Department  
for Education

**Widening Participation in Higher Education, England,  
2016/17 age cohort**

# Technical Note

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# 1. Progression to Higher Education by Pupil Characteristics

The main release covers progression to HE by free school meal status. In addition the new experimental text covers further pupil characteristics including gender, ethnicity, first language, Special Educational Need (SEN) status and POLAR disadvantage. More information about these additions is available in the **Changes** document accompanying this release.

For the most recent data, the denominator used for these measures covers pupils aged 15 in 2012/13 in English state-funded schools and special schools (including non-maintained special schools). This denominator is broken down by the pupil characteristics identified above.

The numerator is calculated by identifying pupils who progressed to UK Higher Education (HE) in either 2015/16 at age 18, or in 2016/17 at age 19.

HE students are those on programmes of study for which the level of instruction is above that of level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework, e.g. courses leading to the Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education (GCE A-levels), the Advanced Level of the Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE A-levels) or the Advanced Higher Grade and Higher Grade of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Advanced Highers/Highers).

The measures are calculated using matched data. This matches the National Pupil Database to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Individualised Learner Record and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record. This allows pupils to be tracked from English schools at age 15 to higher education (HE) by age 19. The measures cover HE courses at both UK Higher Education Institutions and English Further Education Colleges. It must be noted, due to the matching procedures deployed, all figures in this publication should be treated as estimates, and may include a small amount of double counting where pupils attend more than one school. Further details of the matching procedure can be found in Section 6.

The following table helps to demonstrate how the cohort is tracked through to HE entry.

Academic Year	Age at start of academic year	Stage of Education
2012/13	15	GCSEs or equivalent (Key Stage 4)
2013/14	16	AS Levels or equivalent (Key Stage 5)
2014/15	17	A Levels or equivalent (Key Stage 5)
2015/16	18	Entry to HE
2016/17	19	Entry to HE (following a gap year)

Free school meals may be claimed if parents receive any of the following:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue & Customs) that does not exceed £16,190
- Working Tax Credit 'run-on' - the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit

### Caveats

1. There may be pupils who are eligible for FSM but do not claim for a number of reasons. Such pupils will not be classified as in receipt of FSM for the purposes of this measure.
2. Pupils may have claimed FSM in earlier school years, but not when age 15. Such pupils will not be recorded as in receipt of FSM in this measure.
3. These measures only track entry to HE by age 19. A number of pupils may enter HE at a later age and are not included in these measures.
4. Prior attainment is not accounted for in these measures. Many pupils will not continue their education; therefore will not hold the qualifications to progress to HE.
5. Due to the matching procedures deployed, all figures in these measures should be treated as estimates.

## 2. Progression to Higher Education/Most Selective Higher Education by school type

**The estimated percentages of A level and equivalent students, by school and college type, who progressed to higher education and the most selective higher education institutions by age 19**  
Covering Section 3 of the release.

For the most recent data, the denominator is defined as pupils aged 17 in 2014/15 who were entered for A levels or equivalent level 3 qualifications at English schools and colleges. This denominator is broken down by the school/college type: state, selective state or independent.

The numerator is calculated by identifying the pupils who progress to UK HE in 2015/16 at age 18, or in 2016/17 at age 19, and of those, which pupils progress to the most selective Higher Education Providers (HEPs). Alternative Providers are not currently covered in the main publication, however some experimental statistics are included on the impact of incorporating these providers in future.

HE students are those students on programmes of study for which the level of instruction is above that of level 3 of the National Qualifications Framework, e.g. courses leading to the Advanced Level of the General Certificate of Education (GCE A-levels), the Advanced Level of the Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE A-levels) or the Advanced Higher Grade and Higher Grade of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Advanced Highers/Highers). This measure only covers HE courses at UK Higher Education Institutions and excludes HE courses at English Further Education Colleges.

This measure is calculated using matched data. This matches the National Pupil Database to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Individualised Learner Record and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record. It must be noted, due to the matching procedures deployed, all figures in this measure should be treated as estimates. Further details of the matching procedure can be found in Section 6.

The following school types make up the state school/college group in this measure:

- Academy – Sponsor Led
- Community
- Voluntary aided
- Voluntary controlled
- Foundation
- City Technology College
- Community special
- Foundation special
- Further Education
- Academy – Special
- Academy – Converter

- Free School – mainstream
- Special Free School
- Converter Special Academy
- Free School – UTC
- Free School – Studio School
- Free School – 16-19

Independent schools include the following school types:

- Non-maintained special
- Independent School approved to take pupils with Special Educational Needs
- Independent
- Independent special

#### **Caveats**

1. Prior attainment is not accounted for in this measure. Many pupils may not achieve the required Level 3 qualifications to progress to HE.
2. Due to the matching procedures deployed, all figures in this measure should be treated as estimates.

#### **Most Selective HE**

The “most selective” Higher Education Providers (HEPs) are defined as the top third of HE providers when ranked by mean UCAS tariff score from the top three A level grades of entrants.

This measure is calculated using matched data from the DfE National Pupil Database and the Higher Education Statistics Agency Student Record. It uses pupils aged 17 studying A levels at schools and colleges in England, who have progressed to UK HEPs by age 19. It excludes HE courses at Further Education colleges. It takes the mean UCAS tariff score from the top three A levels of these entrants to each HEP. Students with no A level points recorded on the database are excluded from the calculations that identify the most selective group of HEPs.

This is a way of grouping HEPs for statistical purposes using available information. It does not cover all students and all qualifications and is not intended as a comprehensive measure of qualifications on entry to Higher Education. Users should be aware that the Higher Education sector has a diverse mix of institutions and courses, so any grouping of HEPs has limitations as an indicator of quality.

The HEPs included in this group change every year; although only a small number of HEPs move in or out of the top third group each year. The calculation is restricted to the top three A level attainment; pupils who study other qualifications at Key Stage 5 will be excluded.

Institutions with a considerable proportion of entrants who studied a combination of A levels and other qualifications may appear to have low scores. As the analysis covers students from schools and colleges in England, some institutions in other UK countries have scores based on small numbers of students. As this measure uses matched data, all figures should be treated as estimates.

The UCAS points used in the calculation of most selective HE are shown below:

A level Grade	UCAS points
A*	140
A	120
B	100
C	80
D	60
E	40

Note these relate to the pre-2017 UCAS tariff points.

More details on tariff points and the changes from September 2017 are available on the UCAS website:

[UCAS undergraduate tariff points](#)

### **New Measure for Most Selective HE**

A new measure has been proposed to identify the most selective institutions that aims to remove some of the volatility of the current measure. The new measure is calculated using total UCAS tariff points rather than just the top three A levels. This means that the measure can be calculated based on a wider range of students and the average tariff scores should better reflect the selective status of the institutions attended.

More information on the new measure can be found in the **Changes** document accompanying this release.

## **3. Graduate outcomes by social background**

### **Graduates in full-time employment six months after graduating: Estimated proportions of young graduates in different occupational classifications by social background on entry to Higher Education.**

Covers Section 4 in the release.

Figure 10 covers English domiciled first degree graduates who studied full-time, were aged 20 to 22 at the start of their last academic year in UK Higher Education Institutions and were in full-time employment (paid or unpaid) six months after graduating. Data is taken from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student Record, and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. Only those with Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) information in both sources are covered.

The Figure shows the SOC groups on entry to Higher Education and in employment, split two ways into the “top three” group and the others. The background SOC on entry to Higher Education will often reflect the occupation of the student’s parents, while the employment SOC will reflect the occupation of the graduate.

The table below gives the description of the SOC groups.

<b>SOC Major Group</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Managers, directors and senior officials
2	Professional occupations
3	Associate professional and technical occupations
4	Administrative and secretarial occupations
5	Skilled trades occupations
6	Caring, leisure and other service occupations
7	Sales and customer service occupations
8	Process, plant and machine operatives
9	Elementary occupations

SOC Codes 1 to 3 are a widely used approximation of graduate level occupations.

The figures express the number of employed graduates in different occupation groups as a percentage of the total number of graduates who were in full-time employment and therefore depend on the number of leavers in each graduating cohort that were in full-time employment six months after graduation. The

number of employed leavers from DLHE fluctuates year-on-year depending on the overall size of the graduating cohort, survey response rate, economic and other factors.

The 2014/15 graduating cohort was much smaller than the 2013/14 cohort, which is explained by there being fewer entrants in 2012/13 who would typically have finished their studies by 2014/15. The number of employed leavers in 2015/16 was relatively smaller than in previous years and a larger share of graduates had entered further study (rather than employment) than in previous years. In 2016/17 this increased back to a similar level to 2014/15.

### English domiciled full-time first degree graduates aged 20-22 by graduation year

Year	Graduating cohort	DLHE employed leavers (full-time)
2011/12	192,060	77,175
2012/13	200,345	86,305
2013/14	213,460	95,725
2014/15	192,155	86,680
2015/16	198,485	84,035
2016/17	207,280	86,295

Source: DfE analysis of the HESA Student Record and DLHE survey

### SOC on entry to Higher Education

SOC data on entry to Higher Education is collected by UCAS and appears on the HESA Student Record. It is therefore not available for students who did not apply via UCAS or did not provide this information on their UCAS application. Around 80% of young entrants have SOC details recorded.

The occupation question on the UCAS form was changed for entrants in 2008/09 and changed back in the following year. It previously asked: *if you are under 21, please give the occupation of your parent, step-parent or guardian who earns the most. If he or she is retired or unemployed, give the most recent occupation. If you are 21 or over, please give your own occupation.* For 2008/09 the age criteria was replaced with whether the applicant was in full-time education. Young entrants not in full-time education would therefore give their own occupation in 2008/09, but a parent's occupation in other years. This may have caused a shift from high-skilled to medium and low-skilled SOC groups, distorting the trend. 2008/09 entrants completing 3 year courses graduated in 2010/11, those who deferred entry or completed 4 year courses graduated in 2011/12. For this reason figures on 2011/12 graduates are not comparable with other years.

For entrants in 2014/15 onwards, the SOC groups have been reported based on the SOC2010 rather than SOC2000 classification. The main change that distinguish SOC2010 from SOC2000 is a stricter definition of managers in SOC2010. The change implies that some managerial occupations that would have previously been included in SOC group 1 now fall in SOC group 4. This may cause a shift from most high-skilled to medium and low-skilled SOC groups going forward.

### SOC in employment

The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, used to derive Standard Occupation Classification in employment, has a response rate of around 80%. The SOC groups in the DLHE are reported based on the SOC2010 classification.

Not all graduates will be settled into their career path six months after graduating. Figures should be treated as estimates and considered to be broadly indicative rather than precise measures, due to data limitations.

## 4. POLAR Disadvantage

Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) was developed by HEFCE and classifies small areas across the UK into five groups according to their level of young participation in HE. Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people and are ranked from quintile 1 (Q1) (areas with the lowest young participation rates, considered as the most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 (Q5) (highest young participation rates, considered most advantaged). This has been updated over the years to POLAR2, POLAR3 and POLAR4. This publication presents information using POLAR3.

More information on POLAR can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/>

## 5. Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) was introduced to assess, recognise and reward high quality teaching and student outcomes in higher education. Universities are awarded a rating of Gold, Silver or Bronze taking into account factors such as student satisfaction, employment outcomes and retention rates.

In the TEF, a higher education provider is rated:

- Gold for delivering consistently outstanding teaching, learning, and outcomes for its students. It is of the highest quality found in the UK
- Silver for delivering high quality teaching, learning, and outcomes for its students. It consistently exceeds rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education
- Bronze for delivering teaching, learning, and outcomes for its students that meet rigorous national quality requirements for UK higher education

TEF is currently a voluntary scheme and so not all institutions participate. The awards relate to the rating held by institutions as at June 2018. A full list of institutions and their TEF rating can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/tef-outcomes/#/>

## 6. Details of the matching process

Sections 1, 2 and 3 use matched data from the DfE National Pupil Database, the HESA Student Record and the ESFA ILR.

The National Pupil Database (NPD) contains administrative data on all pupils in schools in England, collected by the Department for Education. Key Stage 5 (KS5) data and Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) records were matched to the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA) Student Record and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

The matching process allows for school pupils to be tracked through to Higher Education. The match achieved is called a "fuzzy match" where we rely on names, postcodes, dates of birth, etc and there is some potential for minor errors in the matching process. For this reason, the figures are deemed estimates due to the reliability of the matching procedure used and are subsequently rounded to allow for a small margin of error that arises as result of the matching procedure deployed.

The matching algorithm has been reviewed and revised to take account of additional data and to improve the quality of the match. More information on this can be found in the **Changes** document accompanying this release.

## 7. Changes from previous release

Changes since the previous release are outlined in the **Changes** document accompanying this release.





# Department for Education

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