

# Qualifications Gained at UK Higher Education Institutions: Northern Ireland Analysis 2018/19



This statistical bulletin provides information on qualifications gained by Northern Ireland (NI) students at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and all students at NI HEIs.

**Published by:** Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)

Department for the Economy, 39-49 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8FD

**Date of Publication:** 20 February 2020

**Theme:** Children, Education and Skills

**Contact:** Conor Gallagher

**Telephone:** 028 9025 7825

**E-mail:** [conor.gallagher@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:conor.gallagher@economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Frequency:** Annual



## READER INFORMATION

Purpose	Monitor and report on 1) NI domiciled Qualifiers from Higher Education Institutions in the United Kingdom, and 2) All Qualifiers from NI Higher Education Institutions.
Authors	Conor Gallagher, Kerry McColgan, Michael MacNeill.
Publication Date	Thursday 20th February 2020
Reporting Period	Academic Years 2009/10 to 2018/19
Publication Issue	23
Statistical Quality	Information detailed in this release has been quality assured with the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) prior to release.
Target audience	Department for the Economy (DfE), Directors of HE Institutions in Northern Ireland, Board members of HE Institutions, educational professionals, academics, media and members of the public interested in the HE sector.
Detailed Tables	All tables referenced in the publication are available in <a href="#">Excel</a> and <a href="#">Open Data</a> format.
Further copies from	<a href="mailto:analyticalservices@economy-ni.gov.uk">analyticalservices@economy-ni.gov.uk</a>
Internet address	<a href="https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics">https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics</a>
Price	Free
Copyright	This publication is Crown copyright and may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3. Any material used must be acknowledged, and the title of the publication specified.
Feedback	<p>As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to:</p> <p>Michael MacNeill – <a href="mailto:Michael.MacNeill@economy-ni.gov.uk">Michael.MacNeill@economy-ni.gov.uk</a> (Tel: 028 90 2 57897)</p> <p>Conor Gallagher – <a href="mailto:Conor.Gallagher@economy-ni.gov.uk">Conor.Gallagher@economy-ni.gov.uk</a> (Tel: 028 90 2 57825)</p> <p>Kerry McColgan – <a href="mailto:Kerry.McColgan@economy-ni.gov.uk">Kerry.McColgan@economy-ni.gov.uk</a> (Tel: 028 90 2 57753)</p>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<a href="#">Reader Information</a> .....	Page 2
<a href="#">Table of Contents</a> .....	Page 3
<a href="#">List of Figures</a> .....	Page 4
<a href="#">Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)</a> .....	Page 5
<a href="#">Key Statistics</a> .....	Page 6
<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	Page 8
<a href="#">Structure of Report</a> .....	Page 12
<b><a href="#">Section 1: Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining Higher Education qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions</a></b> .....	Page 13
<a href="#">1.1 Change over the last 10 years</a> .....	Page 13
<a href="#">1.2 Breakdown of qualifications gained</a> .....	Page 14
<a href="#">1.3 NI Multiple Deprivation Measure quintiles</a> .....	Page 17
<a href="#">1.4 Subject of study</a> .....	Page 17
<a href="#">1.5 Classification of first degree</a> .....	Page 19
<b><a href="#">Section 2: Students gaining Higher Education qualifications at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions</a></b> .....	Page 20
<a href="#">2.1 Change over the last 10 years</a> .....	Page 20
<a href="#">2.2 Breakdown of qualifications gained</a> .....	Page 21
<a href="#">2.3 Subject of study</a> .....	Page 24
<a href="#">2.4 Classification of first degree</a> .....	Page 25
<a href="#">2.5 Institutional breakdown</a> .....	Page 26
<a href="#">2.6 UK comparison</a> .....	Page 28
<a href="#">Notes and Definitions</a> .....	Page 29
<a href="#">List of Tables (available at link below)</a> .....	Page 35
<a href="#">Detailed Excel Tables (External link)</a>	

## LIST OF FIGURES

<a href="#">Figure 1</a> : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs - 2009/10 to 2018/19.....	Page 13
<a href="#">Figure 2</a> : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by location of study and level of qualification - 2018/19 .....	Page 15
<a href="#">Figure 3</a> : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study and Multiple Deprivation Measure quintile – 2018/19 .....	Page 17
<a href="#">Figure 4</a> : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by sex and subject area - 2018/19 .....	Page 18
<a href="#">Figure 5</a> : NI domiciled students gaining first degree qualifications at UK HEIs by classification - 2018/19 .....	Page 19
<a href="#">Figure 6</a> : Qualifications gained at NI HEIs - 2009/10 to 2018/19 .....	Page 20
<a href="#">Figure 7</a> : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification and sex - 2018/19 .....	Page 22
<a href="#">Figure 8</a> : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by subject and level of qualification - 2018/19 .....	Page 24
<a href="#">Figure 9</a> : Students gaining first degree qualifications from NI HEIs by classification and sex - 2018/19 .....	Page 25
<a href="#">Figure 10</a> : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by year and institution - 2017/18 to 2018/19 .....	Page 26
<a href="#">Figure 11</a> : Percentage change in qualifications gained at UK HEIs by level of qualification and location of institution - 2017/18 to 2018/19.....	Page 28

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) colleges across Northern Ireland (NI) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) focused on NI HEIs and NI domiciled students in attendance at any UK HEI. Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic individual level administrative systems.

The Head of the Branch is the Principal Statistician, Brian French. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the Economy Committee, FE colleges, universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the DfE, other educational organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations, as well as the general public.

The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the Higher Education (HE) and FE sectors, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, departmental research projects, development of service frameworks as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a high volume of Assembly questions and ad hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications, including: HE enrolments; HE qualifications; Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE); FE activity; and Essential Skills enrolments and outcomes.

A detailed list of these publications is available from:

**Website:** <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-and-further-education-and-training-statistics>

## KEY STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND DOMICILED QUALIFIERS FROM UK HEIs

<p>The number of NI domiciled qualifiers has increased over the decade.....</p>	<p>Although fluctuating over the past ten academic years, the number of NI domiciled qualifiers from UK HEIs has increased by a net 7.0%, from 17,740 in 2009/10 to a new high of 18,985 in 2018/19 (Tables 1a and 1b).</p>
<p>...and particularly over the year.</p>	<p>At 18,985, the number of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2018/19 has increased by 6.8% since 2017/18 (17,780). This is the largest annual increase in the last ten years and is mainly due to a 20.2% increase in those qualifying with a postgraduate degree (4,450 to 5,345); which may be explained by the introduction of postgraduate loans the previous year (Tables 1d and 1f).</p>
<p>The vast majority of qualifications gained by NI domiciles are from full time courses.....</p>	<p>Over three-quarters (76.5%) of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2018/19 have been through full time study. Over the past 10 years, the number of full-time qualifications gained has risen by a net 16.1% (12,515 to 14,530), in contrast to a 14.7% decrease in those gained through part-time study (5,225 to 4,455) (Tables 1a, 1b and 2f).</p>
<p>....with more qualifying at Postgraduate level.</p>	<p>'Postgraduate' qualifications gained have experienced the largest percentage increase (34.4%) among NI domiciled students over the past ten years (3,975 to 5,345), while 'first degree' qualifications gained have increased by 9.2% (10,970 to 11,975). In contrast, the number who qualify with 'other undergraduate' degrees has decreased by 40.5% (2,795 to 1,665) (Tables 1d and 1e).</p>
<p>More females qualifying than males among NI domiciled students.....</p>	<p>In 2018/19, of the 18,985 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications, almost three-fifths (59.6%) were female (Table 2e).</p>
<p>.....and there is variation by sex, in terms of the course subject area.</p>	<p>Females accounted for 84.3% of qualifications gained by NI domiciles in 'subjects allied to medicine', 74.5% of those gained in 'education' and 74.5% of those gained in 'veterinary science' in 2018/19. Male-dominated subject areas included 'engineering and technology' (78.9%), 'computer science' (75.6%) and 'architecture, building and planning' (69.3%) (Table 4c).</p>
<p>A higher proportion of NI domiciled males qualify in a STEM subject.....</p>	<p>During 2018/19, 46.6% of qualifications gained by NI domiciles were in a Broad STEM related subject. A higher proportion of males (50.8%) than females (43.7%) gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject. Almost a quarter (23.6%) of qualifications gained were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Males (35.8%) were more than twice as likely as females (15.3%) to gain their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject (Tables 4b and 4d).</p>
<p>.....but a higher proportion of females graduate with a first class or second class upper degree.</p>	<p>In 2018/19, four-fifths (80.0%) of NI domiciled first degree graduates from UK HEIs achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree, a new high. Females (82.5%) were more likely than males (76.6%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 5b).</p>

## KEY STATISTICS FOR QUALIFIERS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND HEIs

<p>The number of qualifiers from NI HEIs has increased since 2017/18...</p>	<p>At 17,275, the number of qualifications gained by students from NI HEIs in 2018/19 has increased by 11.4% since 2017/18 (15,500), the largest annual increase over the last decade (Tables 6a and 6c).</p>
<p>...largely due to an increase in those qualifying with postgraduate degrees.</p>	<p>Postgraduate qualifications gained by students from NI HEIs rose by 30.1% (4,695 to 6,110) between 2017/18 and 2018/19; this may be partly explained by the introduction of postgraduate loans in 2017/18 (Tables 6d and 6f).</p>
<p>The vast majority of qualifications gained at NI HEIs are through full-time courses.....</p>	<p>Of the 17,275 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 70.2% were through full-time study. Over the last 10 years, the number of full-time qualifications gained has risen by 28.3% (9,445 to 12,120), whereas the number of part-time qualifications gained has decreased by 10.7% from 5,770 to 5,155 (Tables 6a, 7 and 7f).</p>
<p>....and at 'First Degree' level.</p>	<p>Of the 17,275 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 9,385 (54.3%) were a 'first degree' qualification, 1,780 (10.3%) an 'other undergraduate' qualification and 6,110 (35.4%) a postgraduate qualification (Table 6d).</p>
<p>More females qualifying than males at NI HEIs.....</p>	<p>In 2018/19, three-fifths (60.0%) of students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs were female. Almost three-quarters (74.0%) of male students gaining a qualification had studied full-time, compared with 67.6% of female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).</p>
<p>.....and there is variation by sex in terms of choice of subject area.</p>	<p>Females accounted for 83.9% of qualifications gained in 2018/19 at NI HEIs in 'subjects allied to medicine', 75.0% of those gained in 'education' and 70.1% of those gained in 'languages' in 2018/19. Male-dominated subject areas included 'engineering and technology' (77.7%), 'computer science' (74.9%) and 'architecture, building and planning' (66.8%) (Table 8c).</p>
<p>A higher proportion of males qualified in a STEM subject AT NI HEIs.....</p>	<p>During 2018/19, 46.6% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Broad STEM related subject. A higher proportion of males (49.9%) than females (44.5%) gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject. Almost a quarter (22.4%) of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Males (34.2%) were more than twice as likely as females (14.4%) to gain their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject (Tables 8b and 8d).</p>
<p>.....but a higher proportion of females graduated with a first class or second class upper degree.</p>	<p>In 2018/19, 80.6% of 'first degree' graduates at NI HEIs achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree, a new high. Females (82.8%) were more likely than males (77.7%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 9b).</p>

### Coverage

This statistical bulletin has been produced by the Department for the Economy (DfE) and presents information on Higher Education (HE) qualifications gained by Northern Ireland (NI) domiciled students at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK in the 2017/18 academic year, and by all students at NI HEIs in the same time period. The statistics presented in this bulletin cover a range of topics, including changes over the last ten years, mode and level of study, subject of study and classification of first degree.

### National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (the Authority) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice](#) for Statistics.

National Statistics status means that Official Statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All Official Statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are well explained and readily accessible; are produced according to sound methods; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. It is DfE's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

### Policy and Operational Context

There continues to be a lot of media interest in the HE sector and HE statistics. With changes in fee regimes throughout the UK, the effect of the economic recession and the potential impact of EU exit, the demand for HE is often in the spotlight. The Department for the Economy is responsible for formulating policy and administering funding to support education, research and related activities in the Northern Ireland higher education sector. This bulletin forms parts of the evidence base used to evaluate and shape the strategies and policies of DfE.

### Draft Programme for Government (PfG) Framework 2016-2021

The work of the Department is shaped by the draft Programme for Government (2016-2021) that sets the strategic direction of travel for the work of the Executive, expressed in terms of wellbeing-focused outcomes. The document identifies innovation, research

and development, and skills and employability as the key drivers of achieving a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy. Higher education has a pivotal role in supporting this aspiration, especially with regard to increasing the skills levels of the Northern Ireland workforce and increasing the proportion of local graduates from local institutions in professional and management occupations, or indeed further study. The PfG consultation document and its related Outcomes Delivery Plan can be found at the link below:

<https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/programme-governmentoutcomes-delivery-plan>

### **Maximum Student Number (MaSN)**

Before higher education became a devolved matter, the UK Government introduced an annual cap on the number of students each UK HEI could enrol. Following devolution in 1998, the cap (known as the Maximum Student Number (MaSN)) was maintained in Northern Ireland and is still in use today.

The MaSN applies primarily to full-time home and EU domiciled undergraduates enrolled in Northern Ireland. It does not curtail the recruitment of part-time or postgraduate students (with the exception of PGCE students). Nor does it curtail the recruitment of GB or international (non-EU) students.

Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, both approved to deliver full-time undergraduate provision, receive an annual MaSN allocation from the Department. St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College are not subject to MaSN as the Department of Education sets the numbers required for initial teacher training. The OU is also not subject to MaSN given its wholly part-time offering.

### **New Policy: Introduction of Part-Time and Postgraduate Student Loans**

From the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year. DfE extended its student support package, with tuition fee loans being made available for part-time undergraduate and full-time distance learning study students, and postgraduate students studying certain courses.

Northern Ireland students studying part time undergraduate (or full time distance learning) courses in Northern Ireland, England, Wales or Scotland could apply for a tuition fee loan of up to £3,120 for the 2018/19 academic year. Those starting Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma, or Taught or Research Master's courses in Northern Ireland, England, Wales or Scotland could apply for a loan of up to £5,500 per course to help with fee costs. For both types of loans, the fees are paid direct to the university to cover tuition fees.

### **Data Collection**

The information presented in this statistical bulletin is based on data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). HESA is the official agency for the collection of information on publicly funded UK HEIs. It was set up in 1993 following the White Paper 'Higher Education: a new framework', which called for more coherence in HE statistics. In this context, HEIs include all publicly-funded universities. The HESA statistics presented in this bulletin relate to students at UK HEIs and, therefore, do not include HE

qualifications gained at FE colleges in NI or GB, or at institutions in the Republic of Ireland (ROI).

## Rounding Strategy

To prevent the identification of individuals, figures throughout the report are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1, and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown. Percentages are based on unrounded figures. Percentages have also been rounded to one decimal place. More information on the rounding strategy can be found in the [notes and definitions](#) section.

## Data Quality

All information presented in this bulletin has been validated and quality assured by HEIs prior to publication. HEIs are given a set period of time to submit the information to HESA. Following submission, both HESA and DfE perform a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns. Trend analyses are used to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to HEIs for clarification and, if required, returns may be amended and/or re-submitted. Finally, prior to publication, the data are presented to HEIs for a final sign-off. More detail is available via the link [Quality of Higher Education Statistics](#).

## Who will be interested in this bulletin?

The information presented in this statistical bulletin will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example, the statistics within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by: DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for the Economy to discharge his or her duties; by the NI Assembly and its Committee for the Economy to scrutinise the HE sector; by other governments such as DoF as a key indicator in the education domain of the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM); by prospective students to inform their choices around HE; by local businesses to quantify the supply of graduates in their business area; and by researchers and academics to try and understand the underlying trends in HE. Further details about the uses made of HE statistics can be found in the [notes and definitions](#) section.

## Main Uses of HE statistics

The main uses of these statistics are to monitor HE qualifications and the characteristics of students qualifying both from NI and to NI HEIs. This helps in assessing HEI performance, corporate monitoring, informing and monitoring related policy, and responding to parliamentary/assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public.

DfE is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory HE sector. Analysis of data trends against key strategic priorities remain a crucial component of data development within DfE.

## 2019 Readership Survey – Acknowledgements, Analysis and Next Steps

Alongside this bulletin, we are publishing an analysis of the HEI Enrolments and Qualifications statistical bulletins readership survey we conducted in September 2019. We want to thank our readers for taking time to give constructive feedback and helpful

suggestions. We will give careful consideration to each response as we seek to improve the coverage and quality of our Higher Education statistics. We will discuss the feasibility of possible options with DfE policy colleagues, before drawing up an action plan for the 2019/20 editions.

### HE Activity Elsewhere in the UK

Summary figures for the four UK administrations were published by HESA in their Statistical First Release on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

This statistical first release can be viewed at the following page -

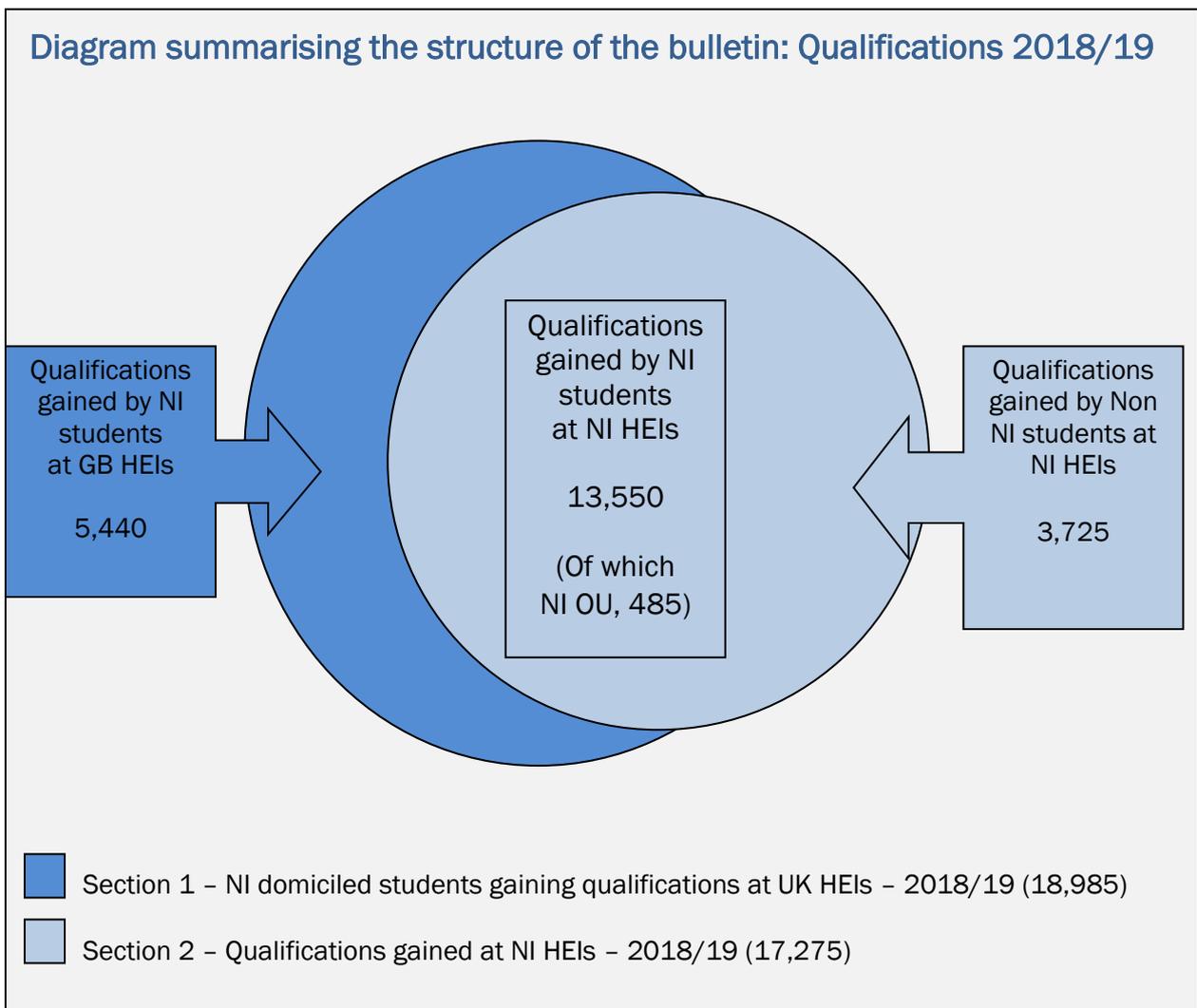
<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-01-2020/sb255-higher-education-student-statistics>

HESA's [Higher Education Student Data 2018/19](#) open data release was published by HESA on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020. This provides more detailed information about students in higher education in the UK.

## STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The bulletin is divided into two sections. Section 1 focuses on NI domiciled students gaining qualifications at HEIs in NI, England, Scotland or Wales. Section 2 concentrates on all students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs. This division into two sections reflects the two distinct policy and operational responsibilities of the Department. Furthermore, it is clear from customer feedback, the nature of questions on HE asked in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and coverage of HE issues in the local media, that these two aspects are of key interest to readers.

It is worth noting that there is a large overlap between Section 1 and Section 2, namely qualifications gained by NI students enrolled at NI HEIs are included in both sections of the bulletin. See the diagram below for details:



**Section 1: Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining Higher Education qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions (Tables 1 to 5b)**

**1.1 Change over the last 10 years – 2009/10 to 2018/19 (Tables 1 to 1f, Figure 1)**

Although fluctuating over the past ten academic years, the number of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs has increased by a net 7.0%, from 17,740 in 2009/10 to 18,985 in 2018/19. The number of qualifications gained reached a new peak in 2018/19, the largest annual rise in the last 10 years (Tables 1a, 1b and 1c, Figure 1). This was mainly due to an increase in those qualifying with a postgraduate degree following the introduction of postgraduate loans.

**Figure 1 : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs - 2009/10 to 2018/19**



The number of qualifications gained by NI students at NI HEIs (excluding the OU) has increased by a net 6.8% over the last 10 years (12,235 to 13,065), although this has been subject to some fluctuation. The number of NI students gaining qualifications at GB HEIs has increased by a net 12.6% over the last 10 years (4,830 to 5,440). In contrast, the number of qualifications gained by NI students through the OU has decreased by 28.2%, from 675 to 485 over the 10-year period (Tables 1a and 1b).

There has been a 1.4 percentage point net increase in the proportion of NI students gaining qualifications at GB HEIs, from 27.2% (4,830) in 2009/10 to 28.6% (5,440) in 2018/19. Recent increases in this proportion may have occurred as a result of interaction between several factors, including changes to tuition fees, the gradual lifting of the MaSN cap in England, increased application and offer activity during clearing, widening participation initiatives and a prolonged ‘demographic dip’ among 18-year olds in both NI and GB. The net effect has been increased competition between providers for a smaller pool of students, increased scope to make ‘lower tariff’ offers and increased opportunities to attend university (Table 1a).

In terms of the level of qualification gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs, 'postgraduate' qualifications have experienced the largest percentage increase (34.4%) over the last ten years, from 3,975 to 5,345. 'First degree' qualifications, have seen a smaller increase by 9.2%, from 10,970 to 11,975 over the same period. In contrast, the number of qualifications gained by students enrolled on 'other undergraduate' courses (such as foundation degrees, diplomas, HNDs and HNCs) has fallen by 40.5%, from 2,795 in 2009/10 to 1,665 in 2018/19. This drop is due to a fall in the number studying part-time 'other undergraduate' courses (Tables 1d and 1e).

There was a particularly large percentage increase in NI domiciled students at UK HEIs gaining 'postgraduate' qualifications between 2017/18 and 2018/19, rising 20.2% from 4,450 to 5,345. 'First degree' qualifications saw a smaller increase by 2.4%, from 11,700 to 11,975 over the same period; as did 'other undergraduate' courses (such as foundation degrees, diplomas, HNDs and HNCs), increasing by 1.9%, from 1,635 to 1,665. The large increase in those qualifying with a 'postgraduate' degree may be explained by the introduction of postgraduate loans for students enrolling in 2017/18 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Over three-quarters (76.5%) of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2018/19 have been through full-time study. Over the past 10 years, the number of full-time qualifications has risen by 16.1%, from 12,515 to 14,530, in contrast to a 14.7% decrease in qualifications gained through part-time study (5,225 to 4,455). The drop in part-time qualifications is mainly related to the decrease in the number enrolled in part-time 'other undergraduate' courses over the last decade (Table 1a and 1b).

## **1.2 Breakdown of qualifications gained – 2018/19 (Tables 1f to 2f, Figures 1 and 2)**

### **All Higher Education Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 18,985 qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; a 6.8% increase from 17,780 in 2017/18 (Tables 1a and 1c).

Mode of study – Of the 18,985 qualifications gained in 2018/19, 76.5% were through full-time study (Table 2f).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining qualifications increased by 3.5%, from 14,035 to 14,530. The number of part-time qualifiers increased by 19.0%, from 3,745 to 4,455, over the same period (Tables 1a and 1c).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 18,985 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications, almost three-fifths (59.6%) were female. This is broadly reflective of the sex breakdown in NI domiciled enrolments<sup>1</sup> at UK HEIs. Almost four-fifths (79.2%) of the 7,665 male students gaining a qualification had studied full-time, compared with 74.7% of the 11,320 female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

Around two-thirds (65.9%) of males qualifying in 2018/19 gained a 'first degree', while 7.8% gained an 'other undergraduate' qualification and 26.2% obtained a 'postgraduate' qualification. This compares with 61.1%, 9.4% and 29.4% respectively for female students (Table 2d).

---

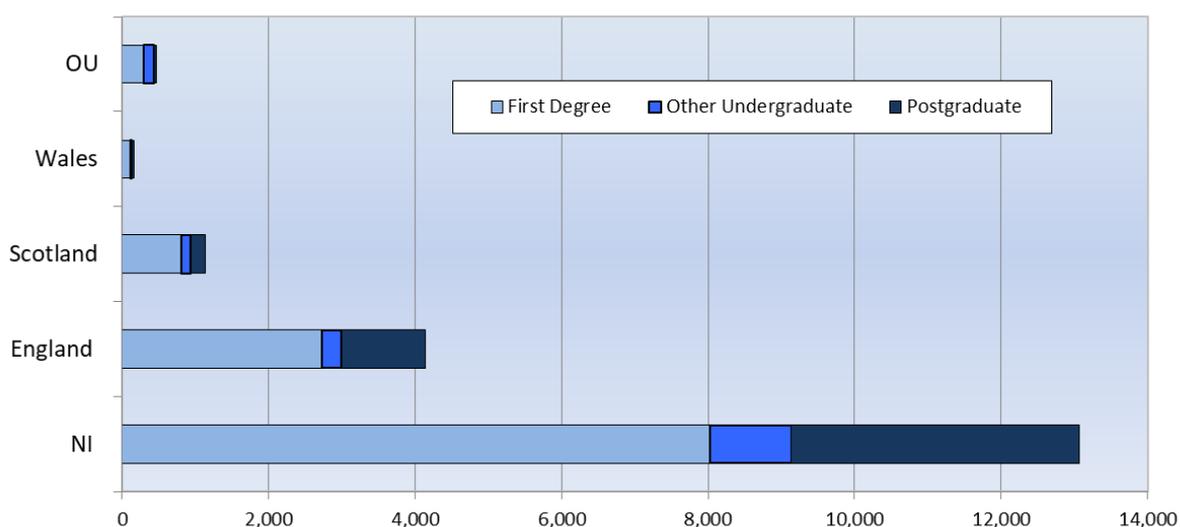
<sup>1</sup> See [2018/19 Higher Education Enrolments bulletin](#)

Location of study – In 2018/19, of the 18,985 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications, 68.8% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 28.6% at GB HEIs and 2.6% locally through the OU. In total, 71.4% of NI domiciled students gaining qualifications had done so at NI HEIs (including 2.6% studying locally at the OU) (Tables 1a and 2c and Figure 2).

Of the 13,065 NI students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 74.2% were through full-time study; this compares with 88.9% of the 5,440 qualifying from GB HEIs. All qualifications gained at the OU were through part-time study (485) (Table 2b).

Level of Qualification - Of the 18,985 qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs, 11,975 (63.1%) were ‘first degree’ qualifications, 1,665 (8.8%) were ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 5,345 (28.2%) were ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Table 1d).

**Figure 2 : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by location of study and level of qualification - 2018/19**



### **‘First Degree’ Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 11,975 ‘first degree’ qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; an increase of 2.4% from the 2017/18 figure of 11,700 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Mode of study – Of the 11,975 ‘first degree’ qualifications gained in 2018/19, 92.5% were through full-time study and 7.5% through part-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining ‘first degree’ qualifications increased by 1.6%, from 10,900 to 11,075. Part-time numbers increased by 12.7%, from 800 to 905 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 11,975 NI domiciled students gaining ‘first degree’ qualifications, 57.8% were female. Of the 5,055 male students gaining a ‘first degree’ qualification, 91.9% had studied full-time. Similarly, of the 6,920 female students gaining a ‘first degree’ qualification, 92.9% had studied full-time (Tables 2e and 2f).

Location of study – In 2018/19, of the 11,975 NI domiciled students gaining ‘first degrees’ at UK HEIs, 67.1% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 30.5% at GB HEIs and 2.4% locally through the OU (Table 2c).

Of the 8,030 NI students gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 93.4% had studied full-time; this compares with 97.8% of the 3,655 qualifying from GB HEIs. All those gaining ‘first degrees’ locally through the OU had studied part-time (290) (Table 2b).

### **‘Other Undergraduate’ Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 1,665 ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; an increase of 1.9% from the 2017/18 figure of 1,635 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Mode of study – Of the 1,665 ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications gained in 2018/19, 58.0% were through part-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications decreased by 0.4%, from 705 to 700, while part-time numbers increased by 3.7%, from 930 to 965, over the same period (Tables 1d and 1f).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 1,665 NI domiciled students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications, 64.1% were female. Over half (56.0%) of the 600 male students gaining an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification had studied full-time, compared with 34.2% of the 1,065 female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

Location of study – In 2018/19, of the 1,665 NI domiciled students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at UK HEIs, 66.4% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 24.7% at GB HEIs and 8.9% locally through the OU (Table 2c).

Of the 1,105 NI students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 64.3% had studied part-time; this compares with 25.8% of the 410 qualifying from GB HEIs. All those gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications locally at the OU had studied part-time (150) (Table 2b).

### **‘Postgraduate’ Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 5,345 ‘postgraduate’ qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; an increase of 20.2% from the 2017/18 figure of 4,450 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Mode of study – Of the 5,345 ‘postgraduate’ qualifications gained in 2018/19, 51.6% were through full-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications increased by 13.3% from 2,435 to 2,755, while part-time numbers increased by 28.6% from 2,015 to 2,590 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 5,345 NI domiciled students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications, 62.3% were female. Of the 2,010 male students gaining ‘postgraduate’

qualifications, 54.3% had studied full-time, compared with 49.9% of the 3,335 female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

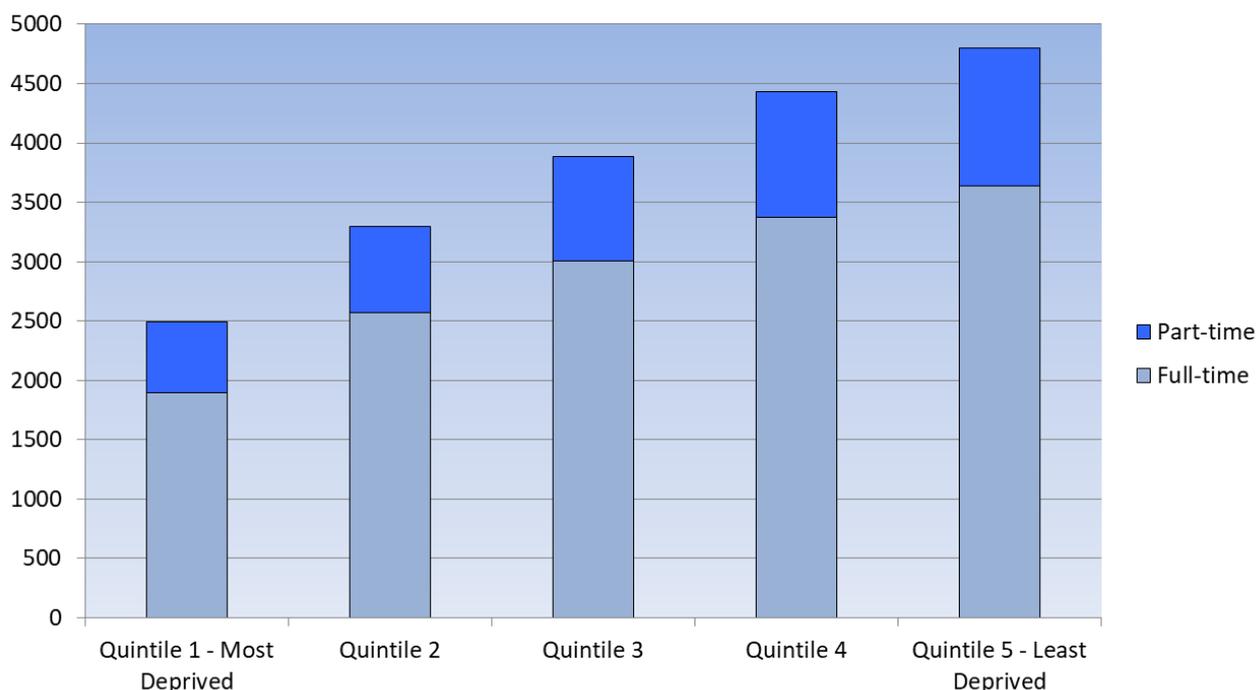
Location of study – In 2018/19, of the 5,345 NI domiciled students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at UK HEIs, 73.4% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 25.7% at GB HEIs and 0.9% locally through the OU (Table 2c).

Of the 3,925 NI students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 54.2% had studied part-time; this compares with 30.2% of the 1,370 qualifying from GB HEIs. Those gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications locally at the OU had all studied part-time (50) (Table 2b).

### 1.3 NI Multiple Deprivation Measure quintiles 2018/19 (Tables 3 and 3a, Figure 3)

Of the 18,915 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs in 2018/19 for whom a Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM) quintile could be assigned, over a quarter (25.4%) were from the least deprived quintile (Quintile 5 in Figure 3), while the lowest proportion (13.2%) were from the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1 in Figure 3) (Tables 3 and 3a).

**Figure 3: NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study and multiple deprivation measure quintile - 2018/19**



### 1.4 Subject of Study 2018/19 (Tables 4 to 4d, Figure 4)

The most popular subject groups for NI students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs in 2018/19 were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (15.4%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (11.7%) and ‘education’ (11.2%) (Table 4a).

In 2018/19, females accounted for 84.3% of qualifications gained in ‘subjects allied to medicine’, 74.5% of those gained in ‘education’ and 74.5% of those gained in ‘veterinary science’. In contrast, males accounted for 78.9% of qualifications gained in ‘engineering

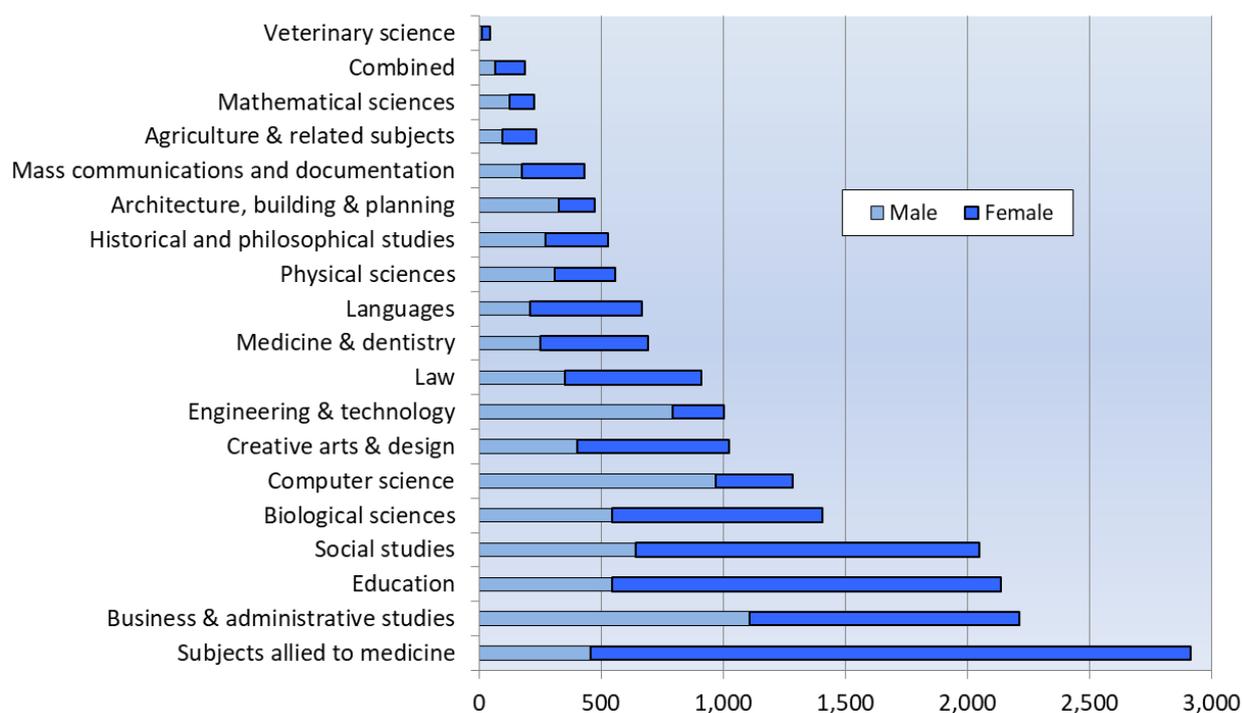
and technology’, 75.6% of ‘computer science’ qualifications and 69.3% of ‘architecture, building and planning’ qualifications (Table 4c and Figure 4).

The most popular subject groups for those NI students attaining a ‘first degree’ qualification at UK HEIs in 2018/19 were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (15.0%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (13.2%) and ‘social studies’ (10.0%) (Table 4a).

For NI students attaining an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification at UK HEIs in 2018/19, the three most popular subject groups were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (28.7%), ‘education’ (17.6%) and ‘business and administrative studies’ (10.0%) (Table 4a).

For those NI domiciled students attaining a ‘postgraduate’ qualification at UK HEIs in 2018/19, the three most popular subject groups were ‘education’ (22.3%), ‘social studies’ (13.5%) and ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (11.9%) (Table 4a).

**Figure 4 : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by sex and subject area - 2018/19**



In 2018/19, 46.6% of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Broad STEM<sup>2</sup> related subject. A higher proportion of males than females gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject; 50.8% compared with 43.7%. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 49.8% were in Broad STEM related subjects, compared with 47.9% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 38.9% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 4b and 4d).

In 2018/19, 23.6% of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Males (35.8%) were more than twice as likely as females (15.3%) to gain their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject. Of ‘first degree’

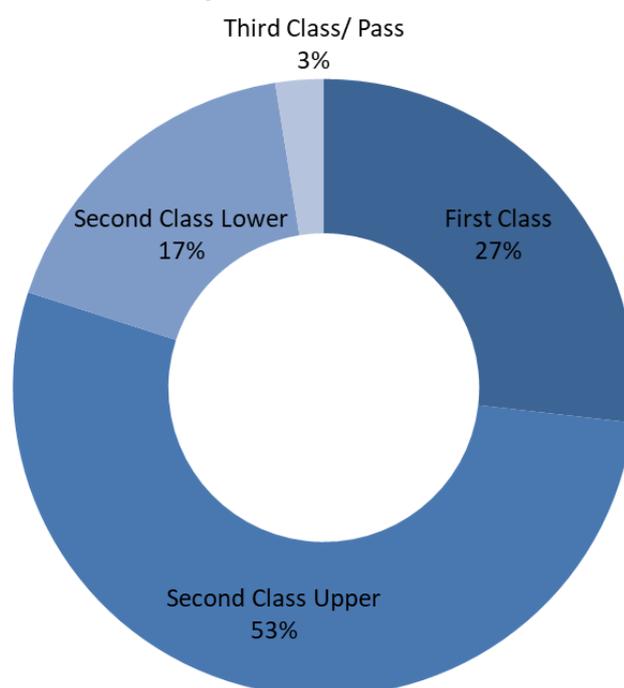
<sup>2</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – see notes to readers for full description.

qualifications gained, 27.5% were in Narrow STEM related subjects, compared with 18.0% for 'other undergraduate' qualifications and 16.7% for 'postgraduate' qualifications (Tables 4b and 4d)

### 1.5 Classification of first degree<sup>3</sup> (Tables 5 to 5b, Figure 5)

In 2018/19, 80.0% (9,135) of NI domiciled 'first degree' graduates (excluding those 555 attaining an unclassified 'first degree') achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree. Females (82.5%) were more likely than males (76.6%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 5a and 5b).

**Figure 5: NI domiciled students gaining first degree qualifications at UK HEIs by classification - 2018/19**



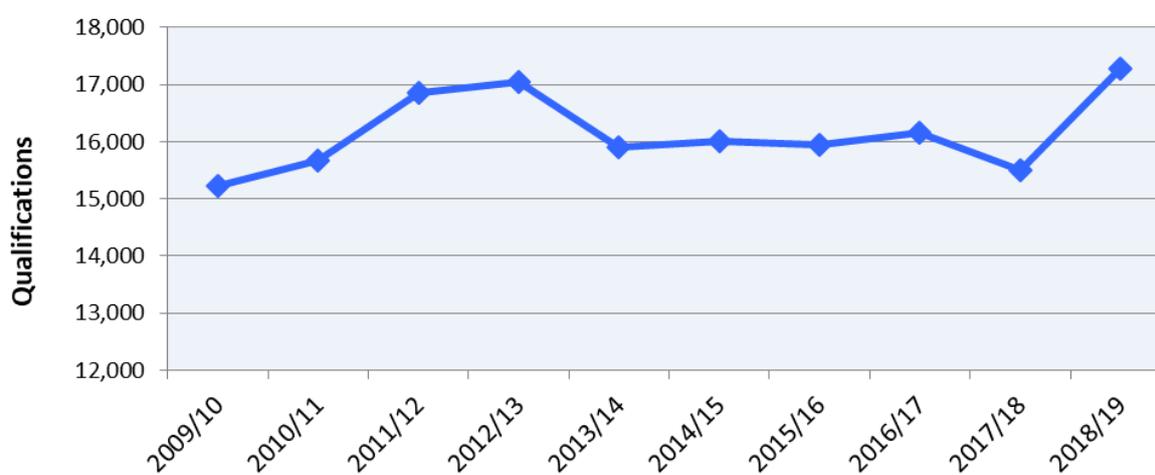
<sup>3</sup> See [notes and definitions](#) point 16

## Section 2: Students gaining Higher Education qualifications at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions (Tables 6 to 11b)

### 2.1 Change over the last 10 years – 2009/10 to 2018/19 (Tables 6 to 6f, Figure 6)

The number of qualifications gained has increased by a net 13.5% over the past 10 years, from 15,215 in 2009/10 to 17,275 in 2018/19; although this has been subject to fluctuation. 2018/19 saw the largest annual rise in those gaining qualifications in the last 10 years, up to a peak of 17,275 (Tables 6a, 6b and 6c, Figure 6).

**Figure 6 : Qualifications gained at NI HEIs - 2009/10 to 2018/19**



Although the absolute number of qualifications gained by students from NI has increased, these now make up a smaller proportion of the total number of qualifications gained at NI HEIs than they did 10 years ago. In 2009/10, qualifications gained by students from NI accounted for 84.8% (12,910) of the total number of qualifications gained at NI HEIs; by 2018/19, this proportion has decreased to 78.4% (13,550). Over this period, NI HEIs have seen a 61.4% increase in qualifications gained by students from outside NI, from 2,305 in 2009/10 to 3,725 in 2018/19. This is broadly reflective of the enrolment<sup>4</sup> breakdown at NI HEIs, with a higher proportion from outside NI in 2018/19 than in 2009/10 (Tables 6a and 6b).

In terms of level of qualification, 'Postgraduate' qualifications gained have increased by 47.5%, from 4,145 in 2009/10 to 6,110 in 2018/19, while 'first degree' qualifications gained have increased by 11.5%, from 8,415 to 9,385 over the 10 year period. In contrast, qualifications gained by students on 'other undergraduate' courses (such as foundation degrees, diplomas, HNDs and HNCs) have decreased by 33.0%, from 2,660 in 2009/10 to 1,780 in 2018/19 (Tables 6d and 6e).

The increase in students gaining 'postgraduate' qualifications was particularly large between 2017/18 and 2018/19, increasing by 30.1% from 4,695 to 6,110. This may be explained by the introduction of postgraduate loans for students first enrolling in 2017/18. A smaller increase was seen in those gaining 'first degree' qualifications

<sup>4</sup> See [2018/19 Higher Education Enrolments](#) bulletin Table 8a.

(2.1%, 9,185 to 9,385) and 'other undergraduate' qualifications (10.1%, 1,615 to 1,780) (Tables 6d and 6f).

The number of full-time qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs has increased by 28.3%, from 9,445 to 12,120, over the last 10 years, whereas part-time qualifications gained have decreased by 10.7%, from 5,770 to 5,155, over the same period (Tables 6a and 6b).

## **2.2 Breakdown of qualifications gained – 2018/19 (Tables 6a and 7f, Figure 7)**

### **All Higher Education Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 17,275 qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; an increase of 11.4% from the 2017/18 figure of 15,500 (Tables 6a and 6c).

Mode of study – Of the 17,275 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 70.2% were through full-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining qualifications increased by 5.8%, from 11,460 to 12,120, while part-time numbers increased by 27.5%, from 4,040 to 5,155, over the same period (Table 6a and 6c).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 17,275 students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs, 60.0% were female. This is broadly reflective of the sex breakdown in enrolments<sup>5</sup> at NI HEIs. Of the 6,915 male students gaining a qualification, 74.0% had studied full-time, compared with 67.6% of the 10,355 female students qualifying (Table 7e and 7f and Figure 7).

In 2018/19, the majority of males (58.5%) gained a 'first degree', while 9.2% gained an 'other undergraduate' qualification and 32.4% obtained a 'postgraduate' qualification. The equivalent breakdown for females was 51.5%, 11.1% and 37.4% respectively (Table 7d).

Domicile – In 2018/19, of the 17,275 students gaining a qualification at NI HEIs, 78.4% were from NI, 6.9% from GB, 5.0% from RoI, 0.9% from other EU countries and 8.8% from non-EU countries (Table 7c).

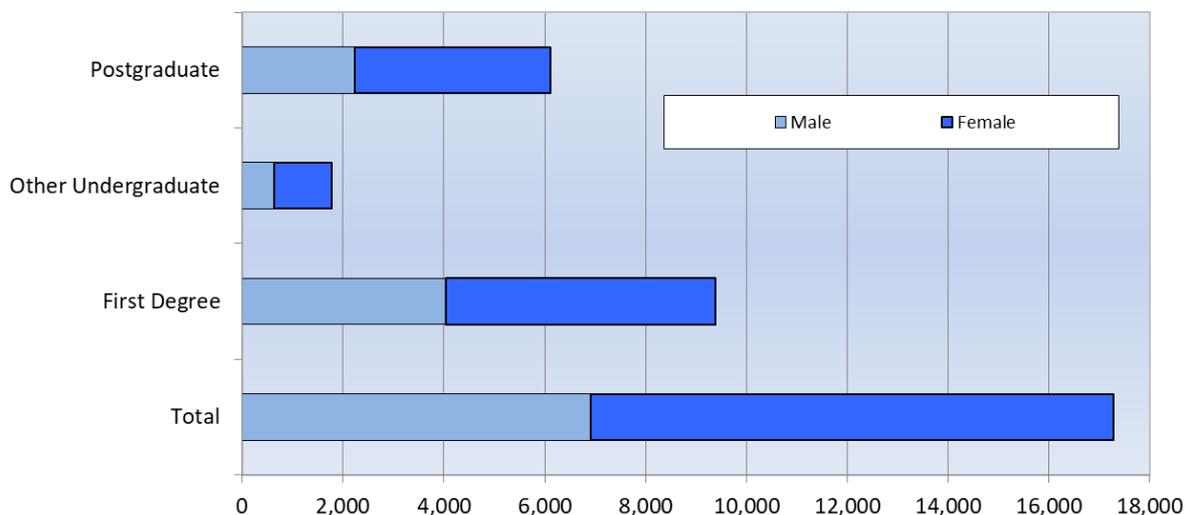
Of the 13,550 students from NI gaining qualifications at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 71.5% were full-time; this compares with 46.0% of the 1,190 students from GB, 42.5% of the 860 students from RoI, 80.9% of the 150 students from other EU countries and 91.3% of the 1,520 students from non-EU countries (Table 7b).

Level of Qualification - Of the 17,275 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 9,385 (54.3%) obtained a 'first degree' qualification, 1,780 (10.3%) an 'other undergraduate' qualification and 6,110 (35.4%) obtained a 'postgraduate' qualification (Table 6d).

---

<sup>5</sup> See [2018/19 Higher Education Enrolments](#) bulletin

**Figure 7 : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification and sex - 2018/19**



### **‘First Degree’ Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 9,385 ‘first degree’ qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; an increase of 2.1% from the 2017/18 figure of 9,185 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Mode of study – Of the 9,385 ‘first degree’ qualifications gained in 2018/19, 90.4% were through full-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining ‘first degree’ qualifications increased by 1.1%, from 8,385 to 8,480, while part-time numbers increased by 13.0%, from 800 to 905 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 9,385 students gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs, 56.9% were female. Of the 4,045 male students gaining a ‘first degree’ qualification, 89.9% had studied full-time, compared with 90.7% of the 5,340 female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).

Domicile – In 2018/19, of the 9,385 students gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs, 88.7% were from NI, 3.6% from GB, 2.3% from RoI, 0.5% from other EU countries and 4.8% from non-EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 8,320 students from NI gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 90.1% were full-time. This compares with 87.6% of the 340 students from GB, 85.5% of the 220 students from RoI, 98.0% of the 50 students from other EU countries and 98.2% of the 455 students from non-EU countries (Table 7b).

## **‘Other Undergraduate’ Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 1,780 ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; 10.1% higher than the 2017/18 figure of 1,615 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Mode of study – Of the 1,780 ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications gained in 2018/19, 69.2% were through part-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications decreased by 10.5%, from 610 to 550, whereas part-time numbers increased by 22.6%, from 1,005 to 1,230 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 1,780 students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 64.4% were female. Of the 635 male students gaining an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification, 40.9% had studied full-time, compared with 25.2% of the 1,145 female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).

Domicile – In 2018/19, of the 1,780 students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 70.4% were from NI, 11.3% from GB, 10.9% from RoI, 0.4% from other EU countries and 6.9% from non-EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 1,255 students from NI gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 68.5% were part-time. This compares with 87.6% of the 200 students from GB, 95.9% of the 195 students from RoI and 3.3% of the 120 students from Non-EU countries (Table 7b).

## **‘Postgraduate’ Qualifications**

In 2018/19, 6,110 ‘postgraduate’ qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; an increase of 30.1% from the 2017/18 figure of 4,695 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Mode of study – Of the 6,110 ‘postgraduate’ qualifications gained in 2018/19, 50.6% were through full-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of full-time students gaining a ‘postgraduate’ qualification increased by 25.7%, from 2,460 to 3,095, while part-time numbers increased by 34.9%, from 2,235 to 3,015 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Sex – In 2018/19, of the 6,110 students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 63.4% were female. Of the 2,240 male students gaining a ‘postgraduate’ degree, 54.6% had studied full-time, compared with 48.3% of the 3,870 female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).

Domicile – In 2018/19, of the 6,110 students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 65.0% were from NI, 10.6% from GB, 7.3% from RoI, 1.5% from other EU countries and 15.5% from non-EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 3,975 students from NI gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 54.7% were part-time. This compares with 65.3% of the 650 students from GB, 62.1% of the 450 students from RoI, 23.4% of the 95 students from other EU countries and 12.7% of the 945 students from non-EU countries (Table 7b).

## 2.3 Subject of study (Tables 8 to 8d, Figure 8)

The most popular subject groups for students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs in 2018/19 were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (16.9%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (16.3%) and ‘social studies’ (10.7%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

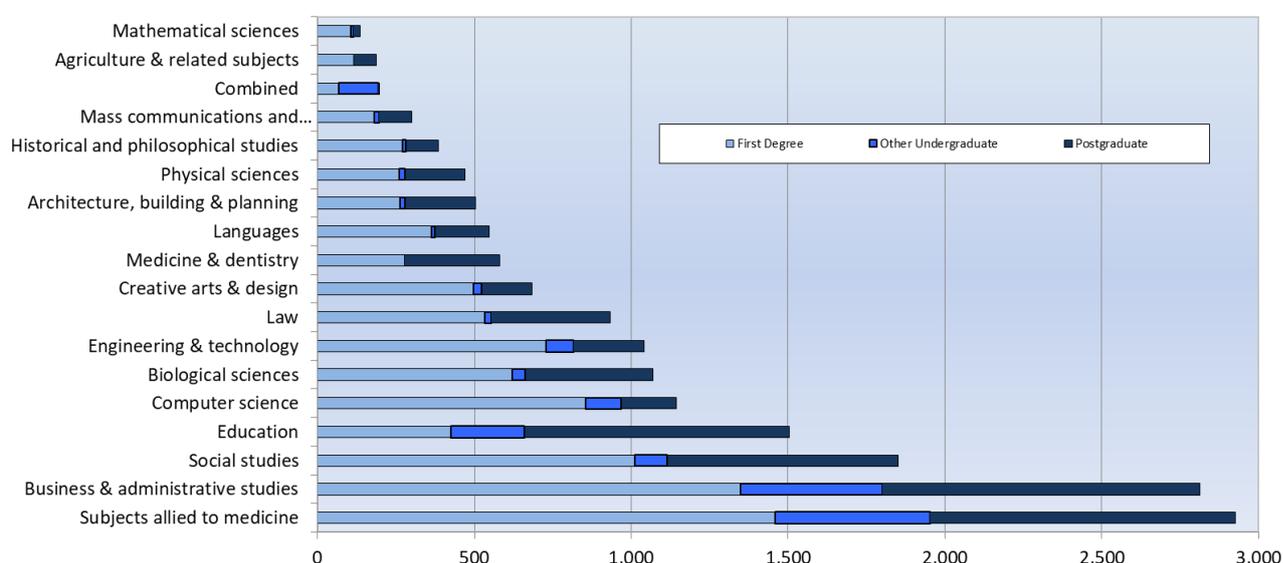
In 2018/19, females accounted for 83.9% of qualifications gained in ‘subjects allied to medicine’, 75.0% of those gained in ‘education’ and 70.1% of those gained in ‘languages’. In contrast, males accounted for 77.7% of qualifications gained in ‘engineering and technology’, 74.9% of ‘computer science’ qualifications and 66.8% of ‘architecture, building and planning’ qualifications (Table 8c).

The most popular subject groups for students attaining a ‘first degree’ qualification at NI HEIs in 2018/19 were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (15.5%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (14.4%) and ‘social studies’ (10.8%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

For students attaining an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification at NI HEI in 2018/19, the three most popular subject groups were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (27.8%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (25.4%) and ‘education’ (13.1%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

For those students attaining a ‘postgraduate’ qualification at NI HEIs in 2018/19, the three most popular subject groups were ‘business and administrative studies’ (16.6%), ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (15.9%) and ‘education’ (13.8%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

**Figure 8 : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by subject and level of qualification - 2018/19**



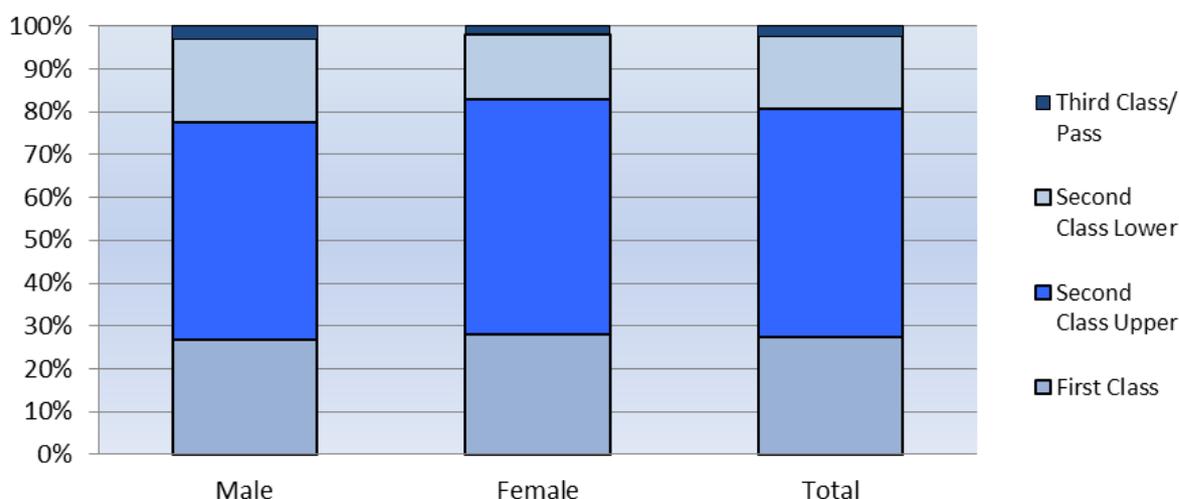
In 2018/19, 46.6% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Broad STEM<sup>6</sup> related subject. A higher proportion of males (49.9%) than females (44.5%) gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 50.0% were in Broad STEM related subjects, compared with 43.6% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 42.5% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 8b and 8d).

In 2018/19, 22.4% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Male students (34.2%) were more than twice as likely as female students (14.4%) to gain their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 27.4% were in Narrow STEM related subjects, compared with 14.9% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 16.7% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 8b and 8d).

## 2.4 Classification of first degree<sup>7</sup> (Tables 9 to 9b, Figure 9)

In 2018/19, 80.6% (7,325) of ‘first degree’ graduates from NI HEIs (excluding those 295 attaining an unclassified ‘first degree’) achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree. Females (82.8%) were more likely than males (77.7%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 9a and 9b and Figure 9).

**Figure 9 : Students gaining first degree qualifications from NI HEIs by classification and sex - 2018/19**



<sup>6</sup> Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – see notes to readers for full description.

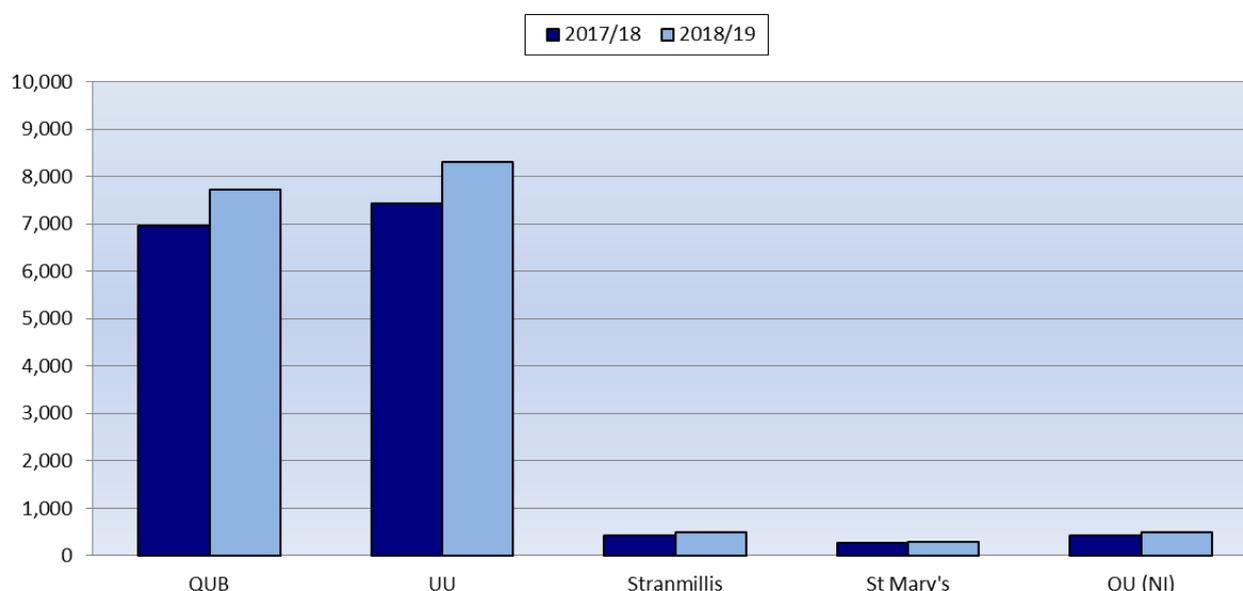
<sup>7</sup> See [notes and definitions](#) point 16.

## 2.5 Institutional breakdown (Tables 10 to 10c, Table 11, Figure 10)

Of all qualifications gained at NI HEIs in 2018/19, 48.1% were from Ulster University (UU), 44.7% from Queen's University Belfast (QUB), 2.8% from the Open University, 2.8% from Stranmillis University College and 1.6% from St Mary's University College (Table 10 and 10a).

The NI HEI with the greatest proportion of qualifications gained by students from outside NI was QUB (27.0%), followed by UU (19.6%). In contrast, very few non-NI students gained qualifications from the other three NI HEIs (Table 11 a).

**Figure 10 : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by year and institution - 2017/18 to 2018/19**



### Ulster University:

The number of students gaining qualifications from UU increased by 12.0%, from 7,425 in 2017/18 to 8,315 in 2018/19 (Table 10b and Figure 10).

The number of UU students gaining qualifications through full-time study increased by 0.7%, from 5,325 in 2017/18 to 5,360 in 2018/19, while those qualifying through part-time study increased by 40.4%, from 2,100 to 2,950, over the same period (Table 10b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, 'first degree', 'other undergraduate' and 'postgraduate' qualifications gained from UU increased by 0.6%, 18.0% and 34.8% respectively. (Table 10c).

### Queen's University Belfast:

The number of qualifications gained by QUB students increased by 10.9%, from 6,955 in 2017/18 to 7,715 in 2018/19 (Table 10b and Figure 10).

Within this, the number of students gaining qualifications through full-time study increased by 10.4%, from 5,550 in 2017/18 to 6,130 in 2018/19, while those qualifying through part-time study increased by 12.9%, from 1,405 to 1,585, over the same period (Table 10b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, 'first degree' and 'postgraduate' qualifications gained from QUB increased by 2.9% and 26.9% respectively, whereas 'other undergraduate' qualifications gained decreased by 6.9% (Table 10c).

### Open University (NI):

All OU enrolments are part-time. The number of OU students gaining qualifications on this basis increased by 14.4%, from 425 in 2017/18 to 485 in 2018/19 (Table 10b and Figure 10).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, 'first degree', 'other undergraduate' and 'Postgraduate' qualifications gained locally from the OU increased by 8.2%, 21.3% and 37.1% respectively (Table 10c).

### Stranmillis University College:

The number of students gaining qualifications from Stranmillis University College increased by 14.8%, from 420 in 2017/18 to 480 in 2018/19 (Table 10b and Figure 10).

Within this, the number of Stranmillis students gaining qualifications through full-time study increased by 8.4%, from 345 in 2017/18 to 375 in 2018/19, while those qualifying through part-time study increased by 43.4%, from 75 to 110 (Table 10b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of 'first degree', 'other undergraduate' and 'postgraduate' qualifications gained increased by 7.8%, 19.0% and 52.8% respectively (Table 10c).

### St Mary's University College:

The number of students gaining qualifications from St Mary's University College increased by 1.5%, from 275 in 2017/18 to 280 in 2018/19 (Table 10b and Figure 10).

Within this, the number of St Mary's students gaining qualifications through full-time study increased by 6.7%, from 240 in 2017/18 to 255 in 2018/19, while those qualifying through part-time study decreased by 33.3%, from 35 to 25 (Table 10b).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of 'first degree' qualifications gained increased by 6.3%, while the number of 'postgraduate' qualifications gained decreased by 18.9% (Table 10c).

## 2.6 UK comparison (Tables 12 to 12b, Figure 11)

The number of students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs increased by 3.1%, from 777,005 in 2017/18 to 801,135 in 2018/19 (Table 12a).

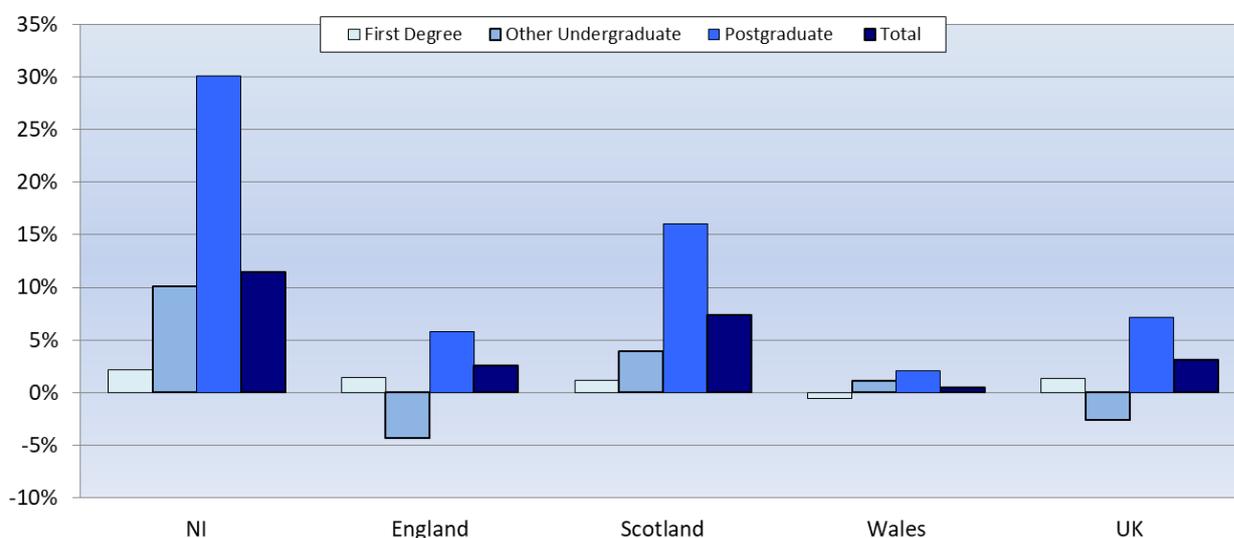
Qualifications gained at NI HEIs increased by 11.4% (15,500 to 17,275), those at English HEIs increased by 2.6%, from 644,275 to 660,780, those at Scottish HEIs increased by 7.4% (76,595 to 82,240), while Welsh HEIs experienced an increase of 0.5% (40,635 to 40,840) (Table 12a and Figure 11).

NI, England and Scotland each experienced an increase in ‘first degree’ qualifications gained between 2017/18 and 2018/19 (NI 2.1%, England 1.5% and Scotland 1.1%), whereas Wales experienced a 0.5% decrease (Table 12b and Figure 11).

NI, Wales and Scotland experienced an increase in ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications gained between 2017/18 and 2018/19 (NI 10.1%, Scotland 4.0% and Wales 1.1%), whereas England experienced a 4.3% decrease (Table 12b and Figure 11).

Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, all UK countries experienced increases in ‘postgraduate’ qualifications gained (NI 30.1%, England 5.8%, Scotland 16.1% and Wales 2.1%) (Table 12b and Figure 11).

**Figure 11 : Percentage change in qualifications gained at UK HEIs by level of qualification and location of institution - 2017/18 to 2018/19**



Between 2017/18 and 2018/19, the number of qualifications gained through full-time-time study increased by 5.8% (11,460 to 12,120) in NI, 2.8% (536,655 to 551,940) in England, 8.1 % in Scotland (65,290 to 70,545) and 2.2% (33,335 to 34,080) in Wales (Table 12a and Figure 11).

The number of qualifications gained through part-time-time study increased by 27.5% (4,040 to 5,155) in NI, 1.1% (107,620 to 108,845) in England and 3.4 % in Scotland (11,305 to 11,695). However, Wales saw a decrease of 7.4% (7,300 to 6,760) (Table 12a and Figure 11).

## NOTES

1. The statistics presented in this bulletin are based on data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). HESA is the official agency for the collection of information on publicly funded Higher Education (HE) institutions in the UK. It was set up in 1993 following the White Paper 'Higher Education: a new framework', which called for more coherence in HE statistics. HE institutions include all publicly-funded universities. The HESA data presented in this bulletin relate to students at UK HEIs and, therefore, do not include HE qualifications gained at FE colleges in NI or GB, the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) or at institutions in the Republic of Ireland.
2. The Department for the Economy (DfE) also publishes information on HE qualifications gained at FE colleges in NI in its Further Education Activity statistical bulletin:  
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/further-education-college-statistics>
3. Further statistics on the Northern Ireland HE sector, including qualifications gained, graduate destinations and various higher education fact sheets can be downloaded from the Department's website:  
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics>
4. HESA releases separate publications providing information on HE Student Enrolments and Qualifications obtained at HEIs for the whole of the UK. A notable difference between the HESA publications and those released by the Department for the Economy (DfE) is that from 2014/15, HESA uses revised data returns for the time series figures, whereas DfE does not. Consequently, historical figures for the number of enrolments and qualifications at UK HEIs published by DfE may differ from those in HESA's publications. Further information on this can be found in the '[Notes](#)' section of HESA's Student Statistics Bulletin 2018/19.
5. **Change to HESA Methodology** - From 2013/14, HESA has changed the allocation of Open University (OU) students to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Previously, all OU enrolments and qualifications were counted as being within England, where the OU has its administrative centre. HESA has decided from its 2013/14 release onwards that enrolments and qualifications registered at one of the OU's national centres in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will contribute to the totals of those countries where statistics are shown by country of provider. Please note that all non-UK domicile OU students and those who study at postgraduate research level are registered to the OU administrative centre in England.

A full public consultation of NI users of HEI statistics was undertaken by DfE (formerly DEL) in 2015 on this change to the method for allocating OU students, which showed full support. This new allocation method for OU was adopted for all NI HEI statistics publications going forward from 2014/15.

6. **Further statistics** on the Northern Ireland HEI sector, including enrolments, graduate destinations and various HEI fact sheets can be downloaded from the Department's website: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics>
7. **Guidance on the production of HEI statistics** - Information on methods for collecting and analysing HEI data, the quality of HEI statistics, and links to the quality guidance used in managing the production of HEI statistics can be accessed on our statistics guidance page – <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics>
8. Figures for 2018/19 reported in this bulletin are counts of student enrolments associated with the award of HE qualifications during the period 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019 inclusive.
9. **Uses made of HE statistics** - This bulletin is disseminated direct to approximately 50 users. In addition, it is published on the Department's website and can be accessed through a link on the UK National Statistics [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) publication hub, using a filter of 'higher education' as the policy area and 'Department for the Economy' as the department. Users include policy colleagues in DfE, academics, researchers, members of the public, the NI Assembly, other government departments and other interested parties and individuals.

The bulletin and further analysis of the data provide an evidence base that is used in a number of DfE policies, strategies and reviews. Some of the most recent examples are: -

- DfE's Higher Education Strategy
- DfE's Widening Participation Strategy

Further details on these strategies are available from the DfE website: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/higher-education-strategies-northern-ireland>

In addition, HE statistics are used within other NI departments and their agencies. Some of the most recent examples are: -

- DoF – as a key indicator in the Education Domain of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NI MDM).
- DE – teacher demand model
- Invest NI – to quantify the supply of graduates for potential inward investment to NI

Around 100 HE statistical enquiries per year are received by the Department from various sources. These include requests for further breakdowns of enrolments, qualifications and destinations data.

10. **Departmental Targets** – Statistics from this bulletin are used in the measurement of the following key commitment as set in the Department's Northern Ireland Higher Education Strategy – '[Graduating to Success](#)':

“Increase the proportion of Higher Education graduates qualifying in STEM subjects to 22%”.

**11. Rounding Strategy** – DfE conforms to the HESA rounding strategy. Due to the provisions of the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Human Rights Act (1998), HESA (and therefore DfE) implements a strategy, in published and released tabulations, designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest 5, and suppressing percentages and averages based on small populations.

The HESA rounding strategy changed for the 2013/14 release onwards. Percentages are now suppressed if based on a population of fewer than 22.5 individuals; this is a change from the previous threshold of 52 individuals, used in earlier publications. This change will enable more percentage calculations to be published. A full list of the rounding strategy includes:

- 0, 1 and 2 are rounded to 0;
- all other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5;
- percentages based on fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed;
- averages based on fewer individuals are also suppressed;
- percentages and averages are based on unrounded figures;
- percentages are rounded to one decimal place;
- full-time equivalent (FTE) data are not rounded; and
- financial data are not rounded.

Total figures are also subject to this rounding methodology; so the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown.

**12. Open Government Licence** - Information (excluding logos) from the bulletin may be re-used free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence v.3.

To view this licence visit: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/)

Or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third part copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.



© Crown copyright 2018

**13.** The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) and other NI geographical indicators are based ON Crown Copyright and are reproduced with the permission of Land and Property Services under delegated authority from the Keeper of Public Records, © Crown copyright and database rights NIMA Licence MOU577.4 (2020).

## DEFINITIONS

### 14. Higher Education

HE students for the purpose of HESA's data collection are those students on courses for which the level of instruction is above that of Level 3 of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (for example, courses at the level of Certificate of HE and above).

### 15. Level of qualification gained

- (i) Postgraduate programmes of study are those leading to higher degrees, diplomas and certificates (including Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and professional qualifications) and usually require that entrants are already qualified to degree level (that is, already qualified at Level 6 of the QCA NQF).
  - Higher degrees include doctorates, master's degrees and higher bachelor's degrees.
  - (Other postgraduate includes postgraduate diplomas, certificates and professional qualifications and PGCE.
- (ii) First degrees include: first degrees with or without eligibility to register to practice with a health or social care or veterinary statutory regulatory body; first degrees with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)/registration with a General Teaching Council (GTC); enhanced first degrees; first degrees obtained concurrently with a diploma; and intercalated first degrees.
- (iii) Other undergraduate includes qualification aims equivalent to and below first degree level, such as: Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE); foundation degrees; diplomas in HE with eligibility to register to practice with a Health or Social Care or veterinary statutory regulatory body; Higher National Diploma (HND); Higher National Certificate (HNC); Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE); Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE); foundation courses at HE level; NVQ/SVQ levels 4 and 5; post-degree diplomas and certificates at undergraduate level; professional qualifications at undergraduate level; other undergraduate diplomas and certificates, including post registration health and social care courses; other formal HE qualifications of less than degree standard; institutional undergraduate credit; and no formal undergraduate qualifications.

### 16. Mode of study

- (i) Full-time students are those whose study was recorded as full-time (as described above), and also includes awards from dormant and writing-up status where the student's mode of study was previously full-time.
- (ii) Part-time students are those whose study was recorded as part-time (as described above), and also includes awards from dormant and writing-up status where the student's mode of study was previously part-time, and awards given to those on sabbatical.

## **17. Classification of first degrees**

The classification of a first degree indicates the qualification class that the student obtained. Certain qualifications obtained at first degree level are not subject to classification of the award, notably medical and general degrees. These, together with ordinary degrees and aegrotat qualifications, have been included within the 'unclassified' category. Third class honours and the pass category have been aggregated as 'third class/pass'. Lower second and undivided second class honours have been aggregated as 'second class, lower division'.

The percentage calculations included in this bulletin are expressed excluding unclassified first degrees.

## **18. Domicile**

Domicile refers to a student's permanent place of residence prior to enrolment on a course. Student enrolments recorded with domicile UK region unknown, Channel Islands and Isle of Man are included in the GB category for the purposes of this bulletin.

## **19. Academic year**

The academic year runs from 1st August to 31st July.

## **20. STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths Qualifications**

Broad STEM includes the following subject areas: Medicine and Dentistry; Subjects allied to Medicine; Biological Sciences; Veterinary Sciences; Agriculture and related subjects; Physical Sciences; Mathematical Sciences; Computer Science; Engineering and Technology; and Architecture, Building and Planning.

Narrow STEM is a subset of Broad STEM and includes the following subject areas: Biological Sciences; Physical Sciences; Mathematical Sciences; Computer Science; Engineering and Technology.

## **21. Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM)**

The analysis presented in section 1.4 utilises five groups (quintiles) of Super Output Areas (SOAs) across NI. These five groups are determined based on level of deprivation using the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (NI MDM) 2017.

SOAs ranked 1 to 178 are the most deprived quintiles relative to all other SOAs. Those ranked 713 to 890 are the most affluent relative to all other SOAs. SOA is determined using the postcode provided on the enrolment record.

NI MDM 2017 is a weighted combination of the seven domains of deprivation. The Income and Employment Deprivation domains account for nearly 50% of the multiple deprivation measure. The Health and Disability Domain, and Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain combined account for a further 30%, and the remainder

is made up of the Access to Services, Living Environment and Crime and Disorder Domains.

For further details on deprivation measurement in NI please follow this link:  
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017>

**Media enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office**  
Tel: (028) 9052 9604, Email: [pressoffice@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@economy-ni.gov.uk)

## LIST OF TABLES

### Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining Higher Education Qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions

[Table 1](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions by mode of study, level of qualification and location of institution - 2009/10 to 2018/19

[Table 1a](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study and location of institution - 2009/10 to 2018/19

[Table 1b](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by NI Domiciled students at UK HEIs by mode of study and location of institution between 2009/10 and 2018/19

[Table 1c](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by NI Domiciled students at UK HEIs by mode of study and location of institution between 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 1d](#): NI Domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by level of qualification and mode of study - 2009/10 to 2018/19

[Table 1e](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by NI Domiciled students at UK HEIs by level of qualification and mode of study between 2009/10 and 2018/19

[Table 1f](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by NI Domiciled students at UK HEIs by level of qualification and mode of study between 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 2](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions by qualifications gained, location of study, mode of study and sex - 2018/19

[Table 2a](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by level of qualification, location of institution and mode of Study - 2018/19

[Table 2b](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study, level of qualification and location of institution - 2018/19

[Table 2c](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by location of institution and level of qualification - 2018/19

[Table 2d](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by level of qualification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 2e](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by sex and level of qualification - 2018/19

[Table 2f](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study, level of qualification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 3](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions by qualifications gained, MDM quintile, mode of study and sex – 2018/19

[Table 3a](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions by mode of study and MDM quintile – 2018/19 (with %)

[Table 4](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions by qualifications gained, subject area and sex - 2018/19

[Table 4a](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by qualifications gained and subject area - 2018/19

[Table 4b](#): Proportion of Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs in Broad and Narrow STEM subjects by level of qualification - 2018/19

[Table 4c](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by qualifications gained and sex - 2018/19

[Table 4d](#): Proportion of Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs in Broad and Narrow STEM subjects by sex - 2018/19

[Table 5](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining first degrees at UK Higher Education Institutions by subject area, degree classification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 5a](#): Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining first degrees at UK HEIs by degree classification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 5b](#): Proportion of Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining first degrees at UK HEIs by degree classification and sex - 2018/19

## [Students gaining Higher Education Qualifications at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions](#)

[Table 6](#): Students gaining qualifications at Northern Ireland HEIs by level of qualification, mode of study and country of domicile - 2009/10 to 2018/19

[Table 6a](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by mode of study and country of domicile - 2014/15 to 2018/19

[Table 6b](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs by mode of study and country of domicile between 2009/10 and 2018/19

[Table 6c](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs by mode of study and country of domicile between 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 6d](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification, mode of study - 2009/10 to 2018/19

[Table 6e](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs by level of qualification and mode of study between 2009/10 and 2018/19

[Table 6f](#): Percentage change in qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs by level of qualification and mode of study between 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 7](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI Higher Education Institutions by qualifications gained, country of domicile, mode of study and sex - 2018/19

[Table 7a](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification, country of domicile and mode of Study - 2018/19

[Table 7b](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by mode of study, level of qualification and country of domicile - 2018/19

[Table 7c](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by country of domicile and level of qualification - 2018/19

[Table 7d](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 7e](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by sex and level of qualification - 2018/19

[Table 7f](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by mode of study, level of qualification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 8](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI Higher Education Institutions by qualifications gained, subject area and sex - 2018/19

[Table 8a](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by qualifications gained and subject area - 2018/19

[Table 8b](#): Proportion of students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs in Broad and Narrow STEM subjects by level of qualification - 2018/19

[Table 8c](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by qualifications gained and sex - 2018/19

[Table 8d](#): Proportion of students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs in Broad and Narrow STEM subjects by sex - 2018/19

[Table 9](#): Students gaining first degrees at NI Higher Education Institutions by subject area, degree classification and sex 2018/19

[Table 9a](#): Students gaining first degrees at NI Higher Education Institutions by degree classification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 9b](#): Proportion of students gaining first degrees at NI Higher Education Institutions by degree classification and sex - 2018/19

[Table 10](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI Higher Education Institutions by qualification gained, level of study, mode of study and institution - 2014/15 to 2018/19

[Table 10a](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by mode of study and Institution - 2014/15 to 2018/19

[Table 10b](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by mode of study and Institution - 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 10c](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification and Institution - 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 11](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI Higher Education Institutions by country of domicile, level of qualification, mode of qualification and institution - 2018/19

[Table 11a](#): Students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by country of domicile and institution - 2018/19

[Table 11b](#): Country of domicile breakdown of students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs by mode of study and institution - 2018/19

[Table 12](#): Students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by level of study, mode of study and country of institution - 2014/15 to 2018/19

[Table 12a](#): Students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study and country of institution - 2017/18 and 2018/19

[Table 12b](#): Students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs by level of qualification and country of institution - 2017/18 and 2018/19