# ACCESS IN SCOTLAND

Access to higher education for people from less advantaged backgrounds in Scotland

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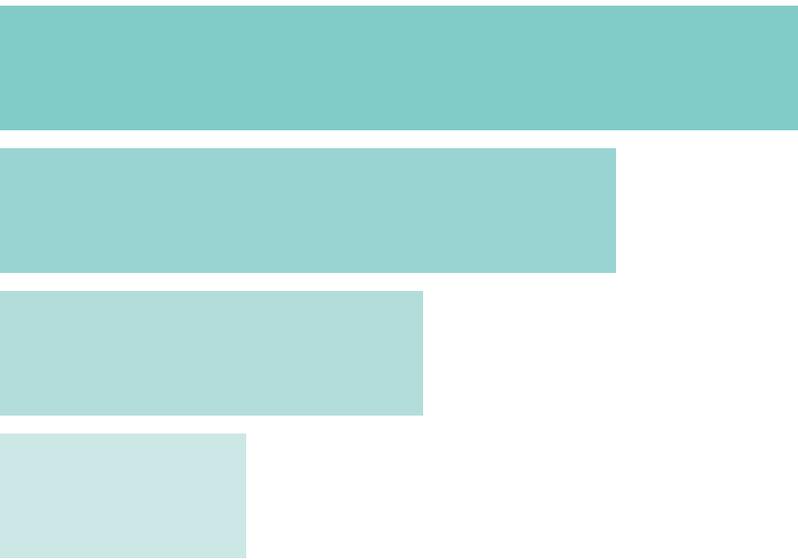
FOREWORD

Access to universities across the UK remains a challenge despite improvements in recent years. Those challenges are still more marked in Scotland than in the other nations, as this important new report from Edinburgh University shows.

This report lays bare the extent of the challenge. Scotland has a different approach to higher education. It no longer charges tuition fees, and as a result it retains a cap on student places that has been removed in England. But not only is the access gap still wider in Scotland, what progress there has been has largely been through sub-degree places in colleges. This is not to decry the contribution made by colleges: articulation, in particular, has an important role to play in improving university participation and vocational degree courses can complement higher apprenticeships as a route to employment.

But any access policy which underplays the importance of access to the Ancients is an access policy that does little to change access to Scotland's top professions. The Sutton Trust supports students at some of these great universities from low and middle income backgrounds – and programmes like our summer schools are important - and the universities themselves are making commendable efforts to boost access from across Scotland. The report notes that the policy of reserving places at the Ancients for disadvantaged students has improved their numbers at those universities, so it is vital that this policy continues.

So this is not just a challenge for the universities. It is one for everyone in Scotland from the First Minister to every secondary school, one for communities from the Highlands and Islands to the Borders. The First Minister has accepted the target from the Commission on Widening Access that a fifth of all those entering higher education in 2030 should come from the fifth poorest areas.

That is a noble ambition. But it must be a goal delivered by all higher education institutions in Scotland, not just further education colleges.

That's why we support other key commission recommendations – including having an independent commissioner for fair access and an expectation that universities each have clearly published policies on contextual admissions that include a minimum academic threshold for less advantaged students. We need to be radical and transparent if we are to effect real change.

I am very grateful to Professor Sheila Riddell and her colleagues at Edinburgh for all their work on this report. I hope that it prompts real action on access from the newly re-elected government as well as the whole education community in Scotland.

SIR PETER LAMPL, Chairman of the Sutton Trust and of the Education Endowment Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Scottish Government frequently emphasises its commitment to the principles of social justice and recognises the need for firmer action to tackle the social class gap in higher education participation. This research analyses the extent to which efforts to widen access to higher education have been successful, comparing Scotland with other parts of the UK.

The participation gap

- The gap in university participation between young people from the most and least advantaged areas is higher in Scotland than in the other home nations, although it has closed more quickly than elsewhere. However, Scottish 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas are still more than four times more likely to go straight to university than those from the least advantaged areas. In England, those from the most advantaged areas are 2.4 times as likely to go to university as those from the least, and three times as likely in Wales and Northern Ireland.
- The four-fold access gap between the most and least disadvantaged entrants in higher tariff universities is not very different from that in other Scottish universities. This is in contrast to the seven-fold gap at higher tariff, mainly Russell Group, universities in England. The higher tariff group in Scotland however covers a larger proportion, and wider range, of institutions. The provision of 720 funded places for disadvantaged students at the ancient universities since 2012 appears to have helped with recruitment to this group.
- In Scotland, university component of the higher education initial participation rate – the proportion of people entering any form of higher education before the age of 30 – was slightly lower in 2013–14 than in 2009–10. 34.1% of Scottish 18–30 year-olds now go direct to university, with a further 20.9% entering higher education through college. This compares with 47% entering higher education in England (this includes an estimated 6% who enter higher education in FE colleges and other non-university providers).
- Much – although not all – of the relationship between socio-economic background and HE participation is accounted for by previous educational attainment. So the messages that young people receive in school about higher education and subject choices, as well as the support they receive to do well in their Highers, are important.

Access through colleges

- Despite this, there has been improved access for disadvantaged students in Scotland as well as in the rest of the UK. However, detailed analysis of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) data reveals in Scotland this has been met almost entirely by the expansion of sub-degree programmes in Scottish colleges. Since 2006, 90 per cent of all the growth in entry into Scottish higher education by disadvantaged students has been through sub-degree courses in colleges. The funded places at the ancients are a notable exception, but there have been few other extra university places taken by disadvantaged students.

Social selection

- Academically selective Scottish universities are at least as socially selective as similar types of institution in other parts of the UK. Students from managerial and professional

backgrounds (NS-SEC 1-3) are over-represented in highly selective universities in both Scotland and England, and this gap has not narrowed between 1996 and 2014.

- Analysis of students' higher education destinations shows that in Scotland there is a growing tendency for socially advantaged students (those from managerial and professional and independent school backgrounds) to opt for courses in more selective universities.

- In 1996, independent schools (catering for about 5% of the Scottish school population) accounted for 23% of young entrants to ancient universities compared to only 9% of entrants to other pre-92 universities and 5% of entrants to post-92 universities. By 2004, the average percentage of students from independent schools in ancient universities declined to 19%. However, since then the proportion has gradually increased, peaking at 26% in 2014/15. In other words, privately educated pupils make up an increasing proportion of entrants to leading universities in Scotland

Comparisons with England

- Analysis using HESA benchmarks shows that there are important differences between the overall characteristics of the Scottish and English university sectors, with Scotland having a greater proportion of higher tariff, or more academically selective, institutions, whilst England has a higher proportion of lower tariff, or less selective institutions. This reflects the fact that England has a relatively large number of post-92 universities, providing more places for students with lower academic qualifications. Given the well-established association between social class background and educational attainment, the profile of the Scottish university system is likely to militate against the inclusion of students from less advantaged backgrounds in comparison with other parts of the UK.

The policy landscape

- Interviews with Scottish policy-makers showed that there was strong support for the principles of widening access. Contextualised admissions approaches were particularly endorsed, but there was a lack of detail about their use and effectiveness. Where there is very strong competition for places, reserving a certain number for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds seems to be an effective way of increasing their representation.

Overview

- Overall, Scottish universities' efforts to widen access for students from poorer backgrounds have achieved only partial success. It is not evident from the data that divergence in fee policy has given Scotland any specific advantage compared to other parts of the UK, in relation to increasing overall levels of participation or participation by more disadvantaged groups. Improvements in participation have been largely driven by the growth of college Higher National provision in which students from poorer backgrounds are over-represented. This is because the supply of university places in Scotland has not kept pace with rising demand and increased competition for university places, particularly in the most selective universities, has had a disproportionately negative effect on students from the most deprived backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The Scottish Government should ensure that additional places are available to meet rising demand.**

We have demonstrated that there is a mismatch between supply of higher education places in Scotland and demand, with disproportionately detrimental consequences for those from less advantaged backgrounds. The funding of additional places at the Ancients earmarked for students from disadvantaged backgrounds seems to have been an effective way of improving the participation rates of this group, and it is important that such measures continue. However, this report shows that the growth in higher education provision in Scotland has been largely in the college sector, which caters disproportionately for those from poorer backgrounds. So, there is a need for a more nuanced analysis of the pros and cons of relying on the college sector to drive the expansion of higher education.

2. **Bridging programmes to encourage successful higher education destinations should be expanded, alongside effective career and subject advice in schools.**

There is some evidence that students from low-progression schools admitted with lower grades may perform better at university than their counterparts from high participation schools with higher grades, as shown in some contextual admissions programmes in Scotland.

Programmes aimed at raising awareness and aspirations for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds – such as those targeted at the highly able at a younger age and summer schools for students taking Highers - are crucial. Schools and colleges should also have free access to professionally qualified careers advisers including specialist advisers with knowledge of entry to elite universities.

3. **A Commissioner for Fair Access should be appointed to oversee progress on widening access, independent of government and universities.**

A central recommendation of the Scottish Government's Commission on Widening Access was that a Commissioner for Fair Access should be appointed by the end of 2016. The First Minister has recently accepted this recommendation. The evidence presented in this report illustrates the extent of social inequality within Scottish higher education and underlines its importance. It will be important to ensure that that the new commissioner is able to operate independently of both the Scottish Government and the university sector.

The Commission on Widening Access also suggested that, by 2030, students from the 20% most deprived areas should make up 20% of the higher education population in Scotland, with milestones to track progress. This is a demanding but reasonable goal, and it will be important to ensure that progress across all types of institution is monitored by an independent body. The Commissioner should also monitor the use of contextualised admissions, ensuring that processes are fair and transparent, and that minimum entry requirements are not pitched at an unnecessarily high level.

4. **Both the Scottish Funding Council and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills should provide a breakdown of the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate by social class and type of institution attended.**

Our analysis has highlighted significant gaps in the availability of administrative data to inform cross-border comparative analysis. The use of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) as the principal measure of social disadvantage is problematic, since it does not capture data on young people from poorer backgrounds who are living in more advantaged areas. In addition to SIMD, data should be gathered on parental occupation and levels of education.

5. **Widening participation initiatives need to be planned carefully to avoid duplication, and rigorous evaluation needs to run alongside implementation.**

The Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government should evaluate the effectiveness of widening access outcome agreements as a means of achieving social change.
In particular, further research into student retention strategies for disadvantaged students and in how best to support higher education students at FE colleges, is critical.

ACRONYMS

ACES	Access to Creative Education in Scotland HE partners: University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Robert Gordon University
ASPIRENorth	The North Forum's major schools outreach project (SHEP) HE partners: UHI, Open University in Scotland, Robert Gordon University, University of Aberdeen
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
FEC	Further Education College
FOCUS West	Focus on College and University Study in the West of Scotland (SHEP) HE partners: University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, University of the West of Scotland, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of Strathclyde, Open University in Scotland.
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIPR	Higher education initial participation rates
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
HN	Higher national
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
LEAPS	Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (SHEP) HE partners: University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Heriot-Watt University, Queen Margaret University, SRUC
LIFT OFF	SHEP for Fife and Tayside HE partners: University of Abertay Dundee, University of Dundee, University of St Andrews
MD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
NS-SEC	National Statistics – Socio-Economic Classification

NUS	National Union of Students
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PI	Performance Indicator
POLAR	Participation of Local Areas
REACH Scotland	Project to increase access to high demand professional areas Partners: Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SHEP	Schools for Higher Education Programme
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SNP	Scottish National Party
SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
SRUC	Scotland's Rural University College
SWAP	Scottish Wider Access
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USP	Unique selling point
UWS	University of the West of Scotland
WARF	Wider Access Regional Forums

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government frequently emphasises its commitment to the principles of social justice and recognises the need for firmer action to tackle the social class gap in higher education (HE) participation. In a recent policy statement, the then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Angela Constance, stated: 'a child born today in one of our most deprived communities should have no less a chance of entering higher education than a child born in one of our least deprived. We want every child – whatever their background – to have an equal chance of attending university'. In order to identify the action needed to ensure that 20% of higher education students are drawn from the most socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the Commission on Widening Access (CWA) chaired by Dame Ruth Silver was set up by the Scottish Government in 2015, reporting in March 2016. The interim report of the Commission on Widening Access, published in November 2015, noted the scale of inequality in Scottish higher education and argued that this 'is unfair, damaging and unsustainable. Scotland has a moral, social and economic duty to achieve equality of access.'[1] The Commission's final report argued the need for a systemic approach, recognising the contribution to be made by all parts of the education system, from pre-school onwards.[2]

Other UK nations have also expressed a strong commitment to widening higher education participation, with a particular emphasis on including more students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Higher Education Green Paper, *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*, published in November 2015 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in London, envisages that within the Teaching Excellence Framework, institutions should be able to demonstrate that they are 'fulfilling widening participation expectations.'[3] A newly created Office for Students could set targets for higher education providers 'failing to make progress on agreed widening participation goals'. Young men from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and black and minority ethnic groups are identified as particularly in need of additional support. Widening access is also one of the guiding principles identified in the interim report of the Diamond Committee, charged with reviewing higher education funding and student finance arrangements in Wales.[4] Within policy discourse across the UK, there is thus much emphasis on social justice and equality, although there is a lack of clarity about the type of equality which is being sought and the evidence which might be needed to determine whether participation in higher education is becoming more or less fair.[5] This research analyses the current state of play in Scotland with regard to widening access, drawing comparisons with other parts of the UK where possible.

It provides an analysis of:

- Widening access policy levers (Section 1);
- UCAS headline data on applications, acceptances and entry rates by students from different social backgrounds across the UK (Sections 2 and 3);

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[1]Scottish Government. (2015). *Commission on Widening Access: Interim Report*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government, p. 8.
[2] Scottish Government. (2016). *Commission on Widening Access: Final Report: A Blueprint for Fairness*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government, p. 8.
[3]Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). (2015). *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. London: BIS. p.27.
[4]Welsh Government. (2015). *Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
[5]Riddell, S. (2016, forthcoming). Scottish higher education and social justice: tensions between data and discourse. *Scottish Educational Review*.

- Higher education initial participation rates (HEIPR) in Scotland and the rest of the UK (Section 4);

- UK differences in participation rates with regard to type of university and social background using HESA data (Section 5);

- Cross-UK institutional comparisons using HESA benchmarks (Section 6)

- Widening participation activity and debates in Scottish higher education institutions, particularly the ancient universities (Section 7).

Despite the need for UK cross-border comparisons following devolution, national differences in the school and higher education systems and in approaches to data gathering have made such comparisons difficult. This report uses a range of data sources to explore differences across the UK in higher education participation rates, the social profile of different institutions and approaches to widening access. We attempt to shed light on the way in which commonly used measures are compiled to facilitate public understanding of the statistics underpinning political discourse.

METHODS AND STRUCTURE

Section 1: Literature review

This section sets the policy scene by identifying the levers available to government to encourage inclusion and diversity within higher education. This is based on an analysis of recent government policy documents and research.

Sections 2 and 3: Analysis of UCAS data on university applications, admissions and entry

These sections draw on UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) reports as well as data drawn from the UCAS website. UCAS no longer makes detailed disaggregated records available to researchers, so we can only report on the aggregated data.

Section 4: Analysis of the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) in Scotland and England

This section explores HEIPR in Scotland and in England using data provided by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and BIS. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) measures the proportion of young people who enter higher education by the age of 30. For Scotland, we provide a breakdown of the HEIPR from 2006/07 to 2013/14 for entrants from the lowest quintile neighbourhoods as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The analysis will distinguish between participation in higher education institutions and colleges in Scotland and demonstrates that colleges account for a substantial proportion of initial entry, while other data available from HESA and UCAS shows that they play a far more limited role in England. We explore the extent to which growth in participation by people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Scotland is attributable to higher rates of participation in the college sector.

Section 5: Changes in the social profile of universities based on analysis of UCAS/HESA data from 1996 – 2014

This section builds on previous analysis of UCAS data by Raffe and Croxford,[6] which identified intra-UK differences in patterns of entry to HE institutions from 1996 to 2010 and an intensification of institutional segregation along social class lines. In this section, we extend the analysis to 2014, capturing changes in policy on student fees. We explore the impact of policy changes on patterns of participation by different categories of students, institutional differentiation and social inequalities. We explore the percentage of under-21 entrants in different types of institutions and from different social class backgrounds as measured by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC), and by independent/state school background. This analysis enables us to comment on the degree of institutional stability over time.

Section 6: Cross-UK institutional comparisons using HESA benchmarks

This section compares the social profile of Scottish universities with similar types of university in the rest of UK using HESA benchmarks.

Section 7: Widening access activity in Scottish institutions

This section provides an overview of widening participation initiatives in Scottish institutions, with a particular focus on the ancient universities. This analysis builds on work already undertaken for

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[6]Raffe, D., & Croxford, L. (2015). How stable is the stratification of higher education in England and Scotland? *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(2), 313-35.

Universities Scotland.[7] A small number of interviews with principals and widening participation officers in ancient universities are used to examine approaches adopted in highly selective institutions, as well as perceptions of the regulatory approach adopted by the Scottish Funding Council.

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[7]Riddell, S., Edward, S., Boeren, E., & Weedon, E. (2013). *Widening Access to Higher Education: Does Anyone Know What Works? A Report to Universities Scotland*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity (CREID).

Introduction

The broad principles of widening access are supported by governments of all four UK nations. In this section, we briefly review the policy levers available to governments to achieve fairer representation of students from different social groups, as well as some of the major criticisms of these. We recognise that school-based factors play an important role in the decisions that lead to the data we are publishing here, but the focus of this new research is on what the admissions data tell us. In the conclusion, specifically in relation to Scotland, we consider which levers appear to have been most successful in terms of promoting higher rates of participation by disadvantaged groups.

Undergraduate student support

The affordability of higher education is one of the factors likely to impact on rates of participation, particularly by students from less advantaged backgrounds. The Scottish Government has argued that the absence of undergraduate tuition fees in Scotland guarantees that the Scottish system is fair to all. For example, the White Paper on Independence[8] used higher education as a prime example of Scotland's commitment to social justice and equality.

The White Paper argued that 'free education for those able to benefit is a core part of Scotland's educational tradition and the values that underpin our educational system. One of the major achievements of devolved government in Scotland has been to restore this right to Scottish domiciled undergraduate students'.[9] This approach was contrasted with that of the Westminster Government, which 'has pursued an increasingly market-driven approach to higher education, increasing tuition fees for undergraduate students to up to £9,000 per year'. More recently, Scottish politicians have continued to assert that, in contrast with the English system, higher education north of the border is based on the ability to learn rather than the ability to pay. The purpose of this paper is not to enter the debate on the rights and wrongs of tuition fees; rather it is to look at what the data tells us about the trends in access, and to make recommendations that can be applied within the current funding parameters. Nevertheless it is useful to remind ourselves of the funding changes that have occurred in Scotland and the rest of the UK to provide a broader policy context.

Table 1.1 summarises important developments in the funding of UK higher education since 1945. For around fifty years, the funding of higher education across the UK was broadly similar. Major differences began to emerge following administrative devolution in 1992, when the funding councils established in each jurisdiction adopted responsibility for resource distribution.[10, 11] Following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, divergence continued. In 2000, the Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition government in the Scottish Parliament abolished fees for Scottish students studying in Scotland, whilst the £1,000 per annum tuition fee continued to be charged to all other UK students. In 2001, a graduate endowment payment of £2,000 was introduced in Scotland, supported by an income-contingent loan. The income threshold for the commencement of repayment following graduation was set at £10,000, but many groups were exempt including those studying only to Higher National Certificate or Diploma (HNC/D) level, disabled students and mature students. As a result,

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[8]Scottish Government. (2013). *Scotland's Future*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

[9]Scottish Government. (2013). *Scotland's Future*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government, p. 198.

[10]Gallacher, J., & Raffe, D. (2012). Higher education policy in post-devolution UK: more convergence than divergence? *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(4), 467–490.

Riddell, S., Weedon, E., & Minty, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK: Diverging or Converging Systems?* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

only just over 50% of students were eligible to repay. In 2007, following the election of a Scottish National Party (SNP) minority administration, the graduate endowment was abolished.

The SNP Government has maintained that its decision to abolish the graduate endowment has been a critical factor in encouraging participation by students from poorer backgrounds. However, despite the trebling of tuition fees in England, *university* participation rates in general, and by poorer students more specifically, are higher south of the border than in Scotland. Furthermore, the trend in increased application rates was very similar between 2006 and 2016, and entry rates increased more quickly in England. Other Scottish policies, such as the creation of ring-fenced university places for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and the expansion of sub-degree programmes in colleges, may have had a more powerful impact on increasing higher education participation rates.

Table 1.1: Undergraduate student support in the United Kingdom before and after devolution

1945–7	First national legislation empowering local authorities and Ministers to support students in higher education. Greater provision of national and local state scholarships ensured many students received grants and had full fees paid, but no absolute entitlement. Separate primary legislation for Scotland and Northern Ireland, both showing some variation in the detailed approach, including more emphasis in Scotland on studying locally.
1961–2	Following the Anderson Committee report, the introduction of full payment of fees (partially subject to means-testing until 1977) and means-tested grants, as an automatic entitlement on the award of a university place for the first time in any part of the UK. Separate primary legislation, regulations and administrative arrangements for Scotland and for Northern Ireland, but student entitlements essentially the same as for England and Wales.
1990	Introduction of student loans to supplement living cost grants across the UK. 'Mortgage-style' repayment with only link to earnings the ability to seek 12 months' suspension of repayments.
1998–9	Means-tested fee payment of up to £1,000 introduced across the UK. No liability below £23,000; full liability from £30,000. Grants reduced, loan entitlements increased and extended at higher incomes. Loans become 'income-contingent', payable at 9% of all earnings over a threshold, initially £10,000.
1999–00	Grants abolished completely across all of UK and replaced with higher loans.
2000–1	Fee payments abolished for Scottish students studying in Scotland. £1,000 fee continues for all other students in the UK.
2001–2	Introduction in Scotland of post-graduation payment (the 'graduate endowment') of £2,000, supported by income-contingent loan. National means-tested grants reintroduced for young Scottish students, up to £2,000. Institutionally-administered grants introduced for Scottish mature students.
2002–3	In Wales and Northern Ireland, means-tested grants re-introduced (for young and mature students) of up to £1,500.

2004–5	In England, means-tested grants re-introduced (for young and mature students) of up to £1,000.
2006–7	In England and Northern Ireland, variable fees of up to £3,000 introduced, with dedicated income-contingent fee loan. Grant maximum increased to £2,765. No change to fee arrangements in Wales. Income-contingent fee loan made available for Scottish and Welsh students studying in rest of UK. Annual fee payable by students from rest of UK in Scotland increased to £1,700 (£2,700 for medicine).
2007–8	Graduate endowment abolished in Scotland. In Wales, £3,000 fee introduced backed by income contingent loan, but with an additional non-means-tested grant towards fees of £1,845 to all Welsh students studying in Wales, reducing de facto fee liability. Grants increased to a maximum of £2,700.
2010–1	Fee grant abolished in Wales and means-tested maintenance grant increased to £5,000. National means-tested grant re-introduced in Scotland for mature students, up to £1,000.
2012–3	In England, variable fees of up £9,000 introduced, as before with dedicated income-contingent loan. Loan repayment threshold increased to £21,000 and loan interest rates increased. Grants increased to £3,250. In Wales, variable fees of £9,000 also introduced, but with a dedicated fee grant covering all fee costs over £3,465 for Welsh students studying in any part of the UK, effectively capping fees at that level. Maximum grant raised to £5,161. New loan rules adopted, as for England. In Scotland, variable fees with no legal maximum introduced for students from rest of the UK; loan increased to £9,000 for Scottish students in rest of UK; free tuition retained for Scots in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, fees capped at £3,465 for Northern Irish students in Northern Ireland, maximum fee loan increased to £9,000 for NI students in rest of UK. Variable fees of up to £9,000 introduced for students from rest of the UK.
2013–4	Maximum grant for young students reduced from £2,640 to £1,750 in Scotland and mature student grant reduced to £750 and income threshold for grant reduced; tapered system replaced with steps. Minimum loan increased from £940 to £4,500.
2016–17	Abolition of maintenance grants for English students, with increase in means-tested maintenance loan.

The emphasis on tuition fees in Scottish policy discourse has meant that less attention has been paid to other aspects of student funding, including the availability of maintenance grants and loans. As is evident from Table 1.1, in 2013/14, the maximum non-repayable grant for young students was reduced from £2,640 to £1,750 and for mature students the grant was reduced to £750. The minimum non-income-assessed loan increased from £940 to £4,500, whilst the maximum means-tested loan was £5,500. It was increased later to £5,750. The rhetoric of free university education tends to ignore the fact that over recent years there has been a shift away from non-repayable maintenance grants to repayable maintenance loans, which are referred to as 'maintenance support'. For example, in the *Draft Budget 2016–17*, the Scottish Government states that it will:

Continue to deliver on our commitment to support the poorest students with a minimum income guarantee, currently £7,625 per year in maintenance support and to keeping higher education free for Scottish domiciled students.[12]

Maintenance grants in the rest of the UK have over recent years been more generous than provision in Scotland. However in England from autumn 2016 onwards the maintenance grant will be abolished for new entrants and replaced, in the same way as in Scotland, by maintenance loans, alongside a less predictable local system of institutional bursaries for low income students.

Hunter Blackburn[13] has demonstrated that student support arrangements in Scotland are non-redistributive in their effects. Scottish students from middle class backgrounds leave university with the least debt of any group in the UK, since they do not incur tuition fees if studying in Scotland and are likely to receive help with maintenance costs from their parents, thus avoiding maintenance loans. By way of contrast, in other parts of the UK, students from all social backgrounds are likely to take out loans to cover tuition fees (albeit assisted by government support in Wales and Northern Ireland). However, the poorest students in the rest of the UK have received relatively generous national grants and will continue to do so in Northern Ireland and Wales, and while grants are going, institutional bursaries will continue in England, to offset living costs. Hunter Blackburn argues that although overall levels of student debt are lower in Scotland than in other parts of the UK, Scotland has been the only UK jurisdiction where students from poorer backgrounds end up with higher levels of debt than those from richer backgrounds. This is because England, Wales and Northern Ireland have provided higher levels of targeted financial support for those from less affluent backgrounds.[14] This pattern is likely to continue in the future in Wales and Northern Ireland, as the smaller nations attempt to adapt their systems to cope with changes in England, the largest nation.

Targeted places for widening access students

The earmarking of places specifically for students from under-represented groups is another policy lever at the government's disposal. In October 2012, the Scottish Funding Council invited universities to submit proposals for additional funded places in a number of key areas including widening access and articulation.[15] The aim of these additional places was to change the culture of recruitment from particular groups. In 2013–14, 727 undergraduate places were made available for widening access to the most selective universities, and 1,020 undergraduate articulation places across 14 universities. The intention was to increase the number of places year on year at the institutions where they were originally allocated. However, in 2016, the SFC announced that:

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[12]Scottish Government. (2016). *Scotland's Spending Plans and Draft Budget 2016–17*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

[13]Hunter Blackburn, L. (2016). Student funding in the UK: Post-devolution Scotland in a UK context. In S. Riddell, E. Weedon & S. Minty (Eds.), *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK: Diverging or Converging Systems?* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
[14]Hunter Blackburn, L. (2016). Student funding in the UK: Post-devolution Scotland in a UK context. In S. Riddell, E. Weedon & S. Minty (Eds.), *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK: Diverging or Converging Systems?* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
[15] Articulation refers to the practice of allowing students to move from one or two year college-based higher national certificates or diplomas to the final years of a university degree programme. Articulation between colleges and universities has been promoted by the SFC since 2033 http://www.sfc.ac.uk/Priorities/Access/Articulation/Articulation.aspx. Articulation arrangements have, to date, normally been between colleges and post-92 universities.

In light of the 3.3 per cent reduction in SFC's grant-in-aid and to help minimise reductions in core teaching grant allocations, we have decided that the fourth tranche of additional undergraduate places will not be allocated to universities in AY 2016–17 for the widening access and articulation schemes, while the model for the skills for growth will be changed in order to encourage collaboration with industry.[16]

The Scottish Government subsequently stated that it wished the SFC to continue with the scheme, from within the budget set. How this will be managed remains to be seen. As is evident from the figures presented later in this section, there was a marked growth in the recruitment of students from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (SIMD20) to the ancient universities following the introduction of the targeted places, with the University of Glasgow taking the largest number. Where there is very strong competition for places, reserving a certain number for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds seems to be an effective way of increasing their representation. There is of course no reason why the universities themselves should not institute such measures, and it will be interesting to see if they do so if and when additional government-funded targeted places cease to be provided.

The role of colleges in widening access
Diversification of higher education providers may also be used to widen participation. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, unlike Wales and England, colleges play an important role as higher education providers. In Scotland, about 17% of higher education, generally in the form of sub-degree programmes, takes place in the college sector, compared with 6% in England and 1% in Wales (see Section 4 for further discussion of the role of colleges as higher education providers). Colleges have traditionally been effective in recruiting students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and offering more flexible routes, including articulation into the last two years of a university degree programme.[17&18] Following the allocation of additional funds by the Scottish Government and the creation of articulation hubs in 2008, there has been an increase in the number of students moving from college into the last two years of a university programme, increasing from 3,019 in 2011–12 to 3,469 in 2012–13.[19] Overall, according to SFC data, about 47% of HND/C students in Scotland progress to degree level study at university, although only 22% of these are awarded full credit. Those receiving partial or no credit will be required to repeat one or more years, leading to five or six year programmes of study to obtain an honours degree. This increases costs, even in the absence of tuition fees, and delays entry into the labour market. This last point is likely to be of particular significance to women who go on to start a family, who have less time to establish themselves in the workplace, before any interruption to their career. Moving from a sub-degree programme in a college to a degree level programme at a university occurs much more frequently in some disciplinary areas and courses compared with others. For example, students studying for an HNC in social care at a college are unlikely to progress to degree level study, whereas computer studies students are more likely to do so.

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[16] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2016). Outcome Agreement funding for universities – indicative allocations for 2016–17 (Announcement SFC/AN/04/2016). Edinburgh: Scottish Funding Council, p. 55. Retrieved from http://www.sfc.ac.uk/communications/Announcements/2016/SFCAN042016.aspx.

[17] Gallacher, J. (2009). Higher education in Scotland's colleges: a distinctive tradition. *Higher Education, 63*(4), 384–401.

[18] Gallacher, J. (2014). Higher education in Scotland: differentiation and diversion? The impact of college-university progression links. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 33*(1), 96–107.

[19] Universities Scotland. (2014). *Delivering for Scotland: The Third Round of Outcome Agreements for Higher Education*. Edinburgh: Universities Scotland.

Although Scottish colleges have been much more successful than universities in recruiting young people from socially deprived backgrounds, Gallacher[20] has drawn attention to both the upsides and downsides of such provision. As is the case in the US community college system, there is a danger that young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds are diverted into lower-status programmes leading to less well-paid jobs.[21] As discussed in greater depth later in this report, more than half (58%) of young higher education entrants from the most disadvantaged areas study at colleges, making them two and a half times more likely to do so than those from the most advantaged areas (23%).[22] Articulation routes are typically from college to post-92 institutions, limiting access to high-status courses and routes into certain professions such as law and medicine. In addition, the type of teaching and learning which takes place in some college sub-degree programmes is based on developing practical and vocational skills, and students may struggle with the pedagogical and assessment demands of a university degree, making them more likely to drop out.[23] As demonstrated in this report, the increase in higher education participation, particularly for students from poorer backgrounds, has been driven by the expansion of college rather than the university provision. Colleges are very important in terms of opening doors to previously excluded groups, but the danger is that students from less advantaged backgrounds are diverted away from more selective universities.

The regulation of widening access

Across the UK, governments make increasing use of regulation to manage the activities of private or third sector bodies within public sector quasi-markets. Significant differences have emerged in approaches to the regulation of widening access across the UK. In England, the raising of tuition fees in 2005 led to fears that students from poorer backgrounds would be disproportionately deterred from entering higher education. The resulting political pressure led to the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), with the remit of scrutinising universities' widening access plans. Although OFFA was able to prevent an institution from charging top-up fees if their widening access strategies were deemed inadequate, these sanctions were never used. Typically, agreement was reached on appropriate targets through negotiation rather than coercion. Following the publication of the Green Paper on Higher Education,[24] OFFA, along with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), will be subsumed into the Office for Students, with greater responsibility placed on individual universities to develop their own approaches to widening access.

Statutory underpinning of widening access was instituted somewhat later in Scotland because it was believed that the abolition of tuition fees and the graduate endowment were sufficient to ensure fair access for all those 'with the ability to learn'.[25] Under the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005, ministers were prevented from imposing terms and conditions on university admissions, but in

[20]Gallacher, J. (2014). Higher education in Scotland: differentiation and diversion? The impact of college-university progression links. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 33(1), 96–107.

[21]Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). (2011). *The returns to higher education qualifications*. BIS Research Paper 45. London: BIS.

[22]Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. (2015). *State of the nation and child poverty in Great Britain*. London: Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission.

[23]Kadar-Satat, G., & Iannelli, C. (2016). *Beyond access to higher education: Widening access initiatives and student retention in Scotland*. Edinburgh: AQMeN, University of Edinburgh.

[24]Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). (2015). *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. London: BIS.

[25]Gallacher, J., & Raffe, D. (2012). Higher education policy in post-devolution UK: more convergence than divergence? *Journal of Education Policy, 27*(4), 467–490.

the pre-legislative consultation document, *Putting learners at the centre*,[26] proposals were made to impose financial penalties on institutions whose widening access activities were deemed inadequate. Since then, the Scottish Funding Council has been required to secure improved outcomes in higher education through outcome agreements, and since 2012–2013, widening access forms an important part of these agreements. Under the terms of the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, financial penalties may be imposed on institutions failing to meet their widening access targets. To date, as in England, soft forms of regulation have been used, with the SFC using encouragement rather than coercion. The Commission on Widening Access proposal of a new Commissioner for Fair Access in Scotland, which has been accepted by the First Minister, could strengthen such interventions, allied with new targets to improve access. However, as we will see later, some of the ancient universities have opposed direct government intervention in the widening access arena on the grounds that this restricts their autonomy.

There are ongoing debates about the effectiveness of public sector audit as a means of achieving more socially just systems.[27] Critics claim that this type of managerialism promotes public mistrust in social institutions, minimal institutional compliance and various types of gaming strategies such as 'cherry picking' clients, in this case, competing with other institutions to recruit highly qualified candidates from areas of social deprivation.[28] Proponents of the use of performance indicators and targets, by way of contrast, suggest that these may be used to focus institutional energy on key social objectives. As mentioned above, some of the older Scottish universities have criticised the main indicator of deprivation used by the Scottish Government, (SIMD20), as this is an area rather than an individual level measure. According to HMRC, 54% of children in low income households in Scotland live outside SIMD20 neighbourhoods.[29]

Widening access programmes and strategies

For nearly two decades, the promotion of widening access initiatives has been seen as a major lever at policymakers' disposal to effect change in this area. In 2005, the Scottish Funding Council published a review of widening access activity in Scotland entitled *Learning for all*.[30] This report noted that, despite some progress in the further and higher education sectors, educational participation and achievement was still highly skewed by socio-economic background, geography and gender, with retention and achievement rates lower for men than for women. The report stressed the need to develop a common agenda across the college and university sector, to build the demand for learning amongst disadvantaged groups, to use the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), to work collectively and systematically to join up qualifications and programmes, and above all to monitor and evaluate the impact of their interventions.

Collaboration across institutional and sectoral boundaries became an important feature of subsequent widening participation activities. In 1999/2000, following the publication of the Dearing Report, four Wider Access Regional Forums (WARFs) were set up, centred on the South East, Fife and

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[26]Scottish Government. (2011). *Putting learners at the centre*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.
[27]Weedon, E. (2016, forthcoming). Widening access to higher education for disabled students: the intersection of socio-economic background and impairment. *Scottish Educational Review*.
[28]Arshad, R., & Riddell, S. (2011). Managing Disability Equality in Scotland. *Social Policy and Society, 10*(2), 229–238.
[29]Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. (2015). *State of the nation and child poverty in Great Britain*. London: Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission.
[30]Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2005). *Learning for all*. Edinburgh: SFC.

Tayside, the West, and the North. These were replaced by the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP), with the aim of targeting additional support 'on those pupils who are at risk of not achieving their full potential and/or those achieving their potential for progression to higher education in both colleges and universities.' Establishing baseline measures and monitoring progress over time were central goals of the reorganisation.[31]

The SFC publishes a list of SHEP schools for each individual programme (Aspire North – North of Scotland; LIFT off – Fife and Tayside; LEAPS – South East Scotland, and; FOCUS West – West of Scotland). A potential problem with this strategy is that many pupils living in poverty, who would benefit from additional support, do not attend one of the SHEP schools, and, by the same token, not all SHEP school pupils are from deprived backgrounds, although teachers are meant to identify those qualifying for additional support.

In addition to programmes supported by the SFC, each university organises its own widening access programmes, sometimes in collaboration with bodies such as the Sutton Trust and the Robertson Trust. Finally, under the SWAP (Scottish Widening Access Partnership) umbrella, the SFC funds a range of access programmes to encourage mature students back into higher education.

Most school-focused widening access programmes undertaken by universities, such as outreach work, buddying systems and summer schools, are based on the assumption that young people in socially disadvantaged areas lack aspiration. However, a report by Kintrea et al. (2011) for the Joseph Rowntree Trust, based on interviews with disadvantaged young people in England and Scotland, suggested that the central problem was a lack of knowledge and awareness of how the higher education system operated, along with cumulative disadvantages associated with living in a deprived area.[32] In addition, UK-based research shows that choices of HE institution and field of study is linked to social class.[33 & 34] Researchers argue that educational decisions are in fact a privilege which many low class families lack;[35, 36 & 37] students from disadvantaged background may refrain from participating in selective programmes because they feel they do not fit-in.[38] Targeting individuals therefore may not be the best means of altering structural economic and social disadvantage.

In England, from 2004 to 2011, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) played an important role in organising widening access activities under the auspices of the Aimhigher scheme. The incoming coalition government abolished this programme, arguing that there was a lack of

[31]See http://www.sfc.ac.uk/Priorities/Access/SchoolsforHigherEducationProgramme/SchoolsforHigherEducationProgramme.aspx.

[32] Kintrea, K., St Clair, R., & Houston, M. (2011). *The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

[33]Reay, D. (1998). 'Always knowing' and 'never being sure': Familial and institutional habituses and higher education choice education choice. *Journal of Education Policy, 13*(4), 519–529.

[34]Reay, D., Davies, J., David, M., & Ball, S. (2001). Choices of degree or degrees of choice? Class,'race' and the Higher Education Choice Process. *Sociology, 35*(4), 855–874.

[35]Crozier, G., Reay, D., James, D., Jamieson, F., Beedell, P., Hollingworth, S., & Williams, K. (2008). White middle-class parents, identities, educational choice and the urban comprehensive school: Dilemmas, ambivalence and moral ambiguity. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 29*(3), 261–272.

[36]Reay, D., Davies, J., David, M., & Ball, S. (2001). Choices of degree or degrees of choice? Class, 'race' and the Higher Education Choice Process. *Sociology, 35*(4), 855–874.

[37]Reay, D., & Lucey, H. (2003). The limits of 'choice': Children and inner city schooling. *Sociology, 37*(1), 121–142.

[38]Reay, D. (2004). Education and cultural capital: The implications of changing trends in education policies. *Cultural Trends, 13*(2), 73–86.

evidence of its effectiveness. Since then, institutions have been encouraged to organise and evaluate their own widening access programmes, reporting to OFFA on an annual basis. The literature suggests that there is a lack of evidence across the UK on the effectiveness of widening access programmes, with ongoing methodological debates.[39,40,41&42] Baker *et al.*[43] are critical of research into widening participation where:

> Students' accounts of their experiences are taken as if they were a systematic analysis of higher education institutions and result in an individualistic analysis of the problems related to access and progression.[44]

Gorard and Smith[45] highlight what they see as 'widespread problems' in research into widening participation, including:

> pseudo-research, poor quality reporting of research, deficiencies in datasets, analytical error, a lack of suitable comparators, obfuscation, a lack of scepticism in general, and the regular misattribution of causal links in particular.[46]

The interim report of the Commission on Widening Access questioned the effectiveness of existing current outreach programmes in terms of their impact on participation. Despite the lack of firm evidence on their effectiveness, government and individual institutions continue to invest significant sums of money in widening participation, with broadly similar approaches used across the UK.

Contextualised admissions

Admissions policies are clearly of vital importance to ensure that the selection process does not discriminate against people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. As noted earlier, admissions policies remain the responsibility of individual institutions, although the government may use a variety of carrots and sticks to encourage universities to operate progressive policies. Scotland's universities have participated in many UK-wide initiatives, including Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA). The Admissions to Higher Education Review,[47] generally known as the Schwartz Report, may be seen as a policy milestone. Schwartz recommended that, in order to ensure processual fairness, admissions systems should:

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[39]Torgerson, C., Gascoine, L., Heaps, C., Menzies, V., & Younger, K. (2014). *Higher education access: Evidence of effectiveness of university access strategies and approaches*. A Report to the Sutton Trust. Durham: University of Durham.

[40]Riddell, S., Edward, S., Boeren, E., & Weedon, E. (2013). *Widening access to higher education: Does anyone know what works? A Report to Universities Scotland*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity (CREID).

[41]Baker, S., Brown, B., & Fazey, J. A. (2006). Individualisation in the widening participation debate. *London Review of Education, 4*(2), 169–182.

[42]Gorard, S., & Smith, E. (2006). Beyond the learning society: What have we learnt from widening participation research? *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 25*(6), 575–594.

[43]Baker, S., Brown, B., & Fazey, J. A. (2006). Individualisation in the widening participation debate. *London Review of Education,4*(2), 169–182.

[44]Baker, S., Brown, B., & Fazey, J. A. (2006). Individualisation in the widening participation debate. *London Review of Education,4*(2), p. 169.

[45]Gorard, S., & Smith, E. (2006). Beyond the learning society: What have we learnt from widening participation research? *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 25*(6), 575–594.

[46]Gorard, S., & Smith, E. (2006). Beyond the learning society: What have we learnt from widening participation research? *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 25*(6), p. 575.

[47] Schwartz, S. (2004). *Fair admissions to higher education: Recommendations for good practice*. Nottingham: Department for Education and Skills.

- be transparent, and provide consistent and efficient information;

- select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and potential;

- use assessment methods that are reliable and valid;

- minimise barriers to applicants;

- be professional in every respect and underpinned by institutional structures and processes.

In order to implement the five principles of the Schwartz review, institutions across the UK have developed contextual admissions policies, recognising that students from low participation schools and neighbourhoods face greater barriers in terms of acquiring school qualifications compared with those from more advantaged backgrounds and private schools. Research by Lasselle *et al.*[48] on contextualised admissions policies at St Andrews University shows that students from low-progression schools admitted with lower grades may perform better than their counterparts from high participation schools with higher grades. Selective institutions may adjust admissions criteria, setting a minimum qualifications level for a particular course which all students must fulfil, but requiring students from socially advantaged schools to achieve higher qualifications. Whilst many institutions support the broad principles of contextualised admissions, there is little evidence that such practices are being widely used,[49] partly because of fears of disadvantaging those from middle class backgrounds. Boliver's[50] research suggests that those from more advantaged backgrounds are more likely to gain a place in a Russell Group university compared with those from less advantaged backgrounds, even when their qualifications are similar. Contextualised admissions policies may be poorly explained to young people, who may mistrust such practices on the grounds that fairness constitutes treating everyone the same.[51]

Retention strategies

Students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to drop out than others, so encouraging effective retention strategies is an important means of promoting widening access.[52] This is again an area where government may exert indirect influence through funding regimes, but the ultimate responsibility for student support lies within institutions themselves. Despite their importance, there has been little evaluation of retention initiatives either in Scotland or in the rest of the UK.[53]

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[48]Lasselle, L., McDougall-Bagnall, J., & Smith, I. (2014). School grades, school context and university degree performance: Evidence from an elite Scottish institution. *Oxford Review of Education, 40*(3), 293–314.

[49]Lasselle, L., McDougall-Bagnall, J., & Smith, I. (2014). School grades, school context and university degree performance: Evidence from an elite Scottish institution. *Oxford Review of Education, 40*(3), 293–314.

[50]Boliver, V. (2013). How fair is access to more prestigious UK universities? *British Journal of Sociology, 64*(2), 344–364.

[51]Minty, S. (2016, forthcoming). Getting into higher education: young people's views of fairness. *Scottish Educational Review.*

[52] Kadar-Satat, G., & Iannelli, C. (2016). *Beyond access to higher education: Widening access initiatives and student retention in Scotland.* AQMeN Research Report. Edinburgh: AQMeN, University of Edinburgh.

[53]Cree, V., Christie, H., & Tett, L. (2016, forthcoming). Relationships matter: The views of college entrants to an ancient Scottish university. *Scottish Educational Review.*

Analysis of the implementation of the Schwartz report recommendations in different institutional settings[54 & 55] suggested that contextual information about students was used in different ways by different types of institutions. Over-subscribed, 'selecting' courses used contextual factors to inform the recruitment process, whereas 'recruiting' institutions used contextual information to identify applicants who would need additional support once accepted.[56]

A study of student retention in Scotland found that students from less advantaged social backgrounds were more likely to drop out of university than others.[57] However, there was no evidence that students from SHEP schools were more likely to drop out than others (although this may be because not all students from SHEP schools are from disadvantaged backgrounds). Students who previously studied at college were also more likely to drop out than those entering from school and those from deprived areas attending old and ancient universities were more likely to drop out than those attending post-92 universities. The findings of this study are important because they suggest that the students targeted by some widening participation programmes are at greater risk of failing to complete their course. This underlines the need for much more investment in targeted support initiatives, particularly in selective universities.

Improving educational outcomes at school level

As noted by Rees and Taylor (2014),[58] much – although not all – of the relationship between socio-economic background and HE participation is accounted for by previous educational attainment, which is the most important factor when all others are taken into account. Differences in attainment levels at secondary school also explains some of the gaps in retention rates among students from more and less advantaged backgrounds and those with protected characteristics.[59] The Scottish Government has underlined its commitment to eliminating the attainment gap in schools, and making progress in this area should contribute to narrowing the participation gap in higher education.

As shown in Figure 1.1, young people from the most socially advantaged neighbourhoods in Scotland are twice as likely to obtain at least one Scottish Higher (SCQF level 6) as those from the most deprived neighbourhoods.

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[54]Centre for Education and Inclusion Research and Institute for Access Studies. (2008a). *Fair admissions to higher education: A review of the implementation of the Schwartz Report principles three years on*. Report1:Executive Summary and conclusions. Retrieved from http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/SchwartzReview/Schwartz_Report_Review_Report_1_Final10.12.08.pdf

[55]Centre for Education and Inclusion Research and Institute for Access Studies. (2008b). *Fair admissions to higher education: a review of the implementation of the Schwartz Report principles three years on*. Report 2: Research findings. Retrieved from http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/SchwartzReview/Schwartz_Report_Review_Report_2_Final10.12.08.pdf

[56]Centre for Education and Inclusion Research and Institute for Access Studies. (2008a). *Fair admissions to higher education: a review of the implementation of the Schwartz Report principles three years on*. Report 1: Executive Summary and conclusions, pp. 18–19. Retrieved from http://www.spa.ac.uk/documents/SchwartzReview/Schwartz_Report_Review_Report_1_Final10.12.08.pdf

[57]Kadar-Satat, G., & Iannelli, C. (2016). *Beyond access to higher education: Widening access initiatives and student retention in Scotland*. Edinburgh: AQMeN, University of Edinburgh.

[58] Rees, G. & Taylor, C. (2014). *Evidence to the review of higher education funding and student finance arrangements in Wales.* Cardiff: Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods.

[59] Kadar-Satat, G., & Iannelli, C. (2016). *Beyond access to higher education: Widening access initiatives and student retention in Scotland*. Edinburgh: AQMeN, University of Edinburgh.

Figure 1.1: Attainment by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2013–14
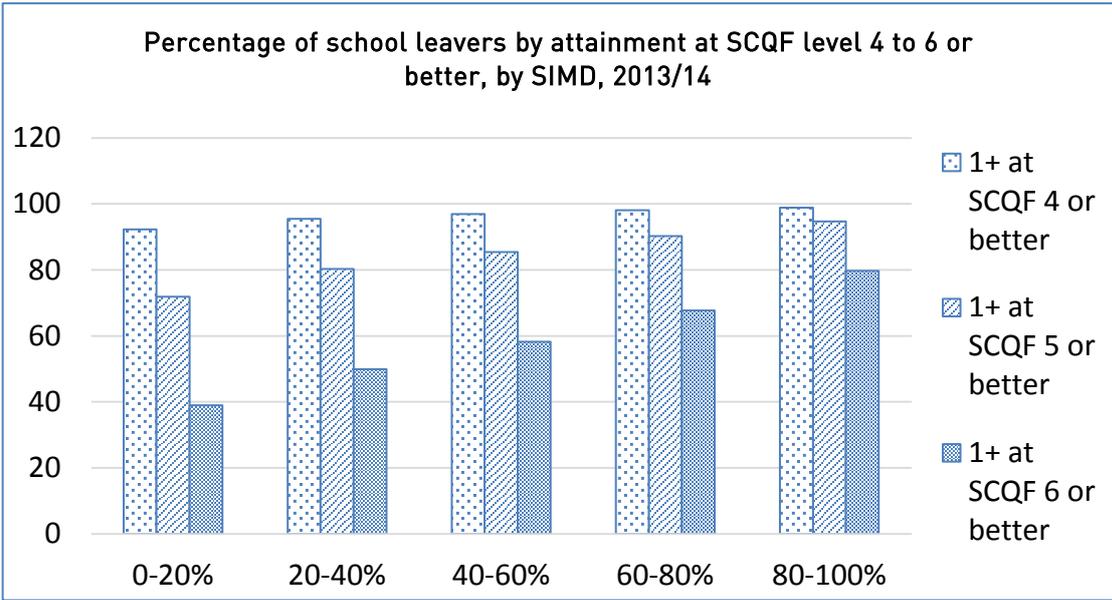
Source: Scottish Government (2015)[60]

At higher levels of attainment, social differences become even more apparent, as shown in Table 1.2. Figures for Dundee City Council are added, to illustrate the further extent of local variation.

Table 1.2: Pupils achieving 3 or more As at Higher in one sitting by SIMD quintile and local authority, 2011

		Poorest 20%	20% – 40%	40% – 60%	60% – 80%	Richest 20%
Scotland	Number	220	415	784	1220	1771
	%	2.5	4.8	8.2	12.2	17.4
Dundee City	Number	5	*	*	17	41
	%	1.4	*	17	8.1	21.7

Source: Wyness (2013)[61]

The gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods underlines the need to target resources, rather than spreading them evenly over the whole country. A report for the Joseph Rowntree Trust suggested that until 2015 only 5% of local authority funding was allocated to areas of deprivation (Sosu & Ellis, 2015).[62] The Scottish Attainment Challenge initiative, launched in 2015, aims to target funding at schools and local authorities with the highest concentrations of deprivation in order to close the attainment gap, although the lack of individual level measures of poverty and attainment may pose challenges for effective targeting.

[60] Scottish Government. (2015). *Commission on Widening Access: Interim report*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

[61] Wyness, G. (2013). *Education in a devolved Scotland: A quantitative analysis of attainment and inequality*. Paper presented at the Educational attainment and inequality in Scotland Seminar, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 28th August 2013. Retrieved from http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/education/creid/Projects/34ivf_ESRCF_Seminar_PPT_Wyness.pdf
[62] Sosu, E., & Ellis, S. (2014). *Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Table 1.3: Indicators of educational attainment in the home nations (%)

Measure	Source	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
Five or more GCSEs A*-C or Scottish equivalent	GCSE exams or equivalent, 2010/11	80.5	67.3	78.8	75.3
A*-C GCSE in Maths or Scottish equivalent	GCSE exams or equivalent, 2006/07	54.6	50.0	48.3	54.7
A*-C GCSE in English or Scottish equivalent	GCSE exams or equivalent, 2006/07	60.2	58.9	69.8	62.9
Percentage of 17–18 year olds at school or in further and higher education	Labour Force Survey	72		60	
Percentage of 17–24 year olds with no qualifications	Labour Force Survey, 2009	7.0	7.8	7.4	12.7
Percentage of 18 year olds with two or more A-levels or Highers	A-level results, 2011/12; Higher results 2011/12	51.8	27.1	36.8	50.2

Source: Wyness (2013)[63]

Scotland and Wales have a lower proportion of pupils attaining two or more A levels or Highers than England and Northern Ireland, although qualifications at lower levels are broadly similar (see Table 1.3). Given the strong association between social class and educational attainment, this reinforces the need for targeted additional support.

Whilst levels of school attainment are of central importance in reproducing social inequalities in higher education participation, so too are subjects studied for A levels or Highers. UK universities specify not only the grades which must be achieved for admission to particular courses, but also the subjects which are required. Russell Group universities published a guide aimed at pupils, parents and teachers, identifying the following 'facilitating subjects': chemistry, physics, biology, maths and further maths, English literature, modern and classical languages, history and geography. Using data from the Scottish School-Leavers' Surveys from the end of the 1980s to the early 21st century, Iannelli[63] examined the relationship between subjects chosen in upper secondary education and the social class differences in entry to higher education. She found that social inequalities in entry to higher education in Scotland are mostly explained by different subject choices made by pupils from different social class backgrounds. Subject choices are clearly not made in a social vacuum, but are shaped by cultural expectations and the array of available subjects within particular schools. Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland's national curriculum, emphasises that pupils' subject choices should reflect pupil interests and aspirations, rather than being bound by a common curriculum. Whilst a greater degree of choice may be motivating, there are also dangers that pupils from working class backgrounds may choose or be channelled into vocational subjects, whilst middle class pupils are encouraged by parents and teachers to take more academic subjects. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) report, *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD*

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[63]Iannelli, C. (2013). The role of the school curriculum in social mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 34*(5-6), 907-928.

Perspective,[64] drew attention to the need for research to assess the social and academic impact of Curriculum for Excellence, which to date remains unevaluated.

Targeting resources on critical education sectors

The distribution of funds across educational sectors reveals a great deal about implicit policy priorities. Whilst the Scottish Government continues to emphasise the importance of widening access, it is evident that budgetary allocations across education sectors do not always support these goals. In Scotland, higher education receives relatively generous funding compared with other sectors. Whilst £1 billion was allocated to higher education teaching in 2012–13, further education teaching in colleges and pre-schools sectors received much less generous funding (£300 million and £450 million respectively). A report on school education published by Audit Scotland in 2014 noted that in 2012/13, £3.8 billion was spent on Scottish primary and secondary schools, 68% of which was on staff costs. According to Audit Scotland, councils' spending on education fell by 5% in real terms between 2010/11 and 2012/13 as a result of employing fewer staff. Over this timescale, university funding was maintained in real terms. Future discussion of the best means of improving participation rates of under-represented groups in higher education must focus not just on widening access initiatives aimed at older pupils, but also on budgetary allocation decisions across all education sectors.

Removing the cap on student numbers

In England, the cap on student places allocated to different universities has been lifted in stages since 2013. In line with the Browne Review, students are positioned as drivers of a market in higher education provision, whereby preferred providers flourish and weaker providers wither, and possibly die.[65] In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, student numbers continue to be determined by government. As we shall see in future sections, the lifting of the student cap in England is leading to greater expansion of the system than in other parts of the UK. This deregulation has had positive consequences for some selective universities, which have been able to recruit more undergraduate students, but negative consequences for other mainly newer universities, which have lost about a quarter of their student population. With regard to widening access, Iannelli (2011)[66] has demonstrated that students from less advantaged backgrounds tend to increase participation when the system is expanding, since under such conditions they are not striving to displace middle class students.

Summary

The Scottish Government has publicly stated its commitment to improving access to university by students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and has argued that the absence of tuition fees in Scotland ensures that entry to higher education is 'based on the ability to learn rather than the ability

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[64]Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2015). *Improving schools in Scotland: An OECD perspective*. OECD.

[65]Browne Review of Higher Education. (2010). *Securing a sustainable future for higher education: An independent review of higher education funding and student finance*. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf

[66] Iannelli, C. (2011). Educational expansion and social mobility: the Scottish case. *Social Policy and Society, 10*(2), 251–64.

to pay'. However, measures to regulate access to university in Scotland were implemented almost a decade later than equivalent measures in England.

There are a number of policy levers which may contribute to reducing social inequality in higher education. These include: undergraduate student support to cover living costs, as well as tuition fees; funding earmarked places for widening access students; expanding higher education in colleges; regulating widening access; encouraging widening access programmes at national and institutional level; using contextualised admissions; developing retention strategies; improving educational outcomes at school level; targeting resources on parts of the education system which are likely to have a major impact on child development and attainment; lifting of the cap on student numbers. Subsequent sections of this report explore the extent to which there is evidence of the effectiveness of the policy measures outlined above.

SECTION 2: SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN RATES OF UNIVERSITY PARTICIPATION ACROSS THE UK: UCAS HEADLINE STATISTICS

Introduction

To set the scene for the analysis provided in Section 3, this section summarises some key findings from recent UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admission Service) reports on applications and acceptances to higher education institutions across the UK.[67,68] It should be noted that in Scotland those applying to study sub-degree programmes in college (accounting for 17% of all higher education provision) do not apply via UCAS, so these data do not reflect all higher education activity across the four nations. Applicants to college higher education courses in England (6% of all HE provision) are included in the UCAS data.

UCAS is an important source of information on widening participation, uniquely providing information on applications to higher education institutions across the UK, and on the outcomes of the application process. The analysis here uses data from the UCAS main scheme, which is the set of figures most often quoted.

The main limitations of UCAS as a comparative source are:

- **Different coverage in different parts of the UK**. For Scotland, the UCAS main scheme excludes applicants and entrants to sub-degree HE courses in colleges but since 2015 has included applicants to undergraduate teacher training (UTT).[69]

- **Vulnerability to administrative changes**. As well as the reclassification of UTT admissions in Scotland in 2015, in 2010 applicants to nursing and midwifery courses across the UK moved into UCAS.[70]

- **The time series data below therefore overstate real change over time**: the effect of the UTT change in Scotland is estimated below, but it has not been possible to do the same for nursing/midwifery.

In addition, UCAS data on students' backgrounds are only available UK-wide using POLAR3 quintiles. However, the Scottish Government uses SIMD as its preferred measure of deprivation: a more limited range of UCAS data are available using this, for Scotland only. Further analysis below shows that using POLAR3[71] and SIMD produces similar figures for the most deprived 20% in Scotland (Q1), but

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[67] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

[68] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

[69] The contribution to Scottish participation rates of HE in FE is considered in Section 4. UTT remains part of a separate UCAS scheme for England and Wales. In 2014, UTT accounted for 3,695 applicants from Scotland and 1,910 acceptances: Figures 13 and 14, UCAS *Teacher Training 2014 End of Cycle Report*. Moving these into the main scheme will have increased total Scottish applicants recorded there by around 8% and acceptances by 5%. The majority of these students study in ancient or pre-92 universities.

[70] The move coincides with a spike in the Scottish application figures that year. UCAS quantifies the effect on total applications in Scotland as no more than 2% in any subsequent year (UCAS *Analysis Note 2015/03*, Technical Note 5), with Q5 in 2014 and 2015 particularly affected. In England, UCAS reports the change particularly affected figures for older age groups, but again it is not possible to adjust the figures below from the published data (UCAS *How have applications for full-time undergraduate higher education in the UK changed in 2012?* July 2012, para 85).

[71] The Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of the young population that participates in higher education. POLAR3 is a reiteration of the existing POLAR classification http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2012/201226/.

different results for least deprived (Q5). Using POLAR3 tends to provides more favourable figures for Scotland than using SIMD.

Age at application and entry

Much of the UCAS data below uses rates of application and entry at age 18. In Scotland, the structure of the school system enables young people to achieve qualifications for university earlier, so that entry at age 17 is more common. To allow for this, UCAS uses a different point in the year to measure age for Scottish applicants.   Even so, 3% of UCAS applicants aged up to 19 in 2015 were recorded as being aged up to 17 in Scotland, compared to less than 0.5% in the rest of the UK. In England, by contrast, 19 year olds make up a larger number of those accepted by the age of 19 than in the rest of the UK (29%, compared to 22% in Scotland). Overall, in 2015 18 year olds constituted 71% of all applicants aged up to 19 from England, 75% from Scotland, 73% from Wales and 79% from Northern Ireland, with very similar percentages for applicants. This suggests that using age 18 data alone is likely to under-state figures for England slightly relative to the other nations, in comparisons of behaviours and outcomes for recent school leavers.

Application rates by country of domicile

With regard to the proportion of 18 year olds applying to enter higher education (mainly degree programmes) via UCAS, Figure 2.1 shows variations across the four countries between 2006 and 2016, although in each country there has been a marked increase in application rates. Northern Ireland has consistently had high application rates (just under 50% of the age group), followed by England (about 35% of the age group). In 2015, Scotland and Wales had similar rates of application by 18 year olds (about 32%).

In the 2012 admissions cycle, following the trebling of tuition fees, there was a marked decline in applications in Northern Ireland and England (there has also been some decline in Wales which has not trebled tuition fees for Welsh students). This was in part due to decisions by prospective students to apply to university in 2011 to avoid tuition fees, rather than taking a gap year and applying after the confirmation of exam results. In subsequent years the upward trend in application rates continued, overtaking 2010 levels by 2014/15.

In Scotland the pattern was somewhat different, with relatively stable application rates between 2010 and 2013. However, some of the increase in application rates in Scotland in 2010 was due to certain courses (nursing and midwifery) being processed though UCAS for the first time.

Figure 2.1: January deadline application rates for 18 year olds by country, 2006–2016
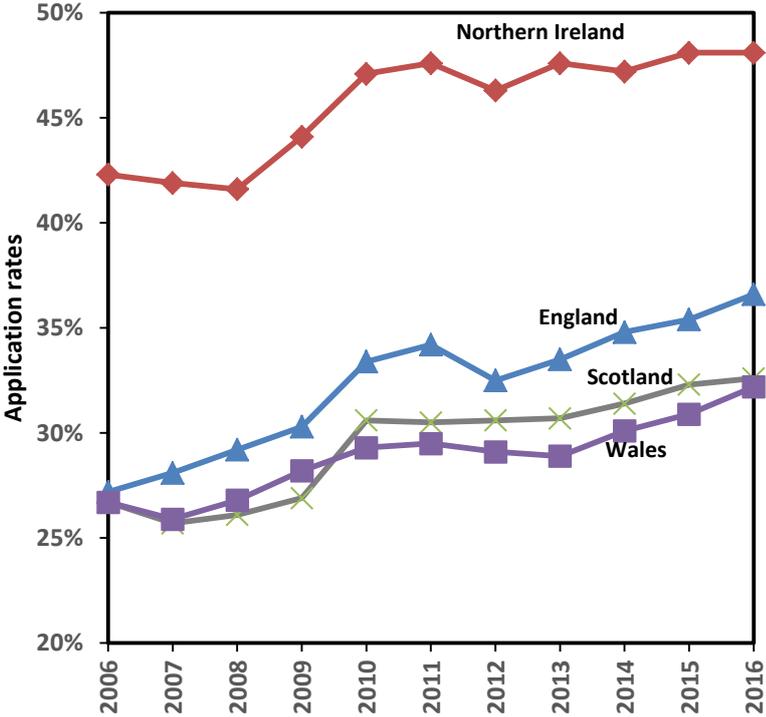
Acceptance rates by country of domicile

Figure 2.2 shows acceptance rates for the four countries in 2015, with Northern Ireland having a relatively low (and declining) acceptance rate for 18 year olds compared with the other countries. This reflects the decision of Northern Irish policy makers to reduce the number of university places in response to budgetary pressures. The acceptance rate in Scotland (74%) is markedly lower than the equivalent figures for England (85%) and Wales (87%). This is a reflection of the cap on student numbers in Scotland, which has been lifted in stages in England. Student numbers are also controlled by the Welsh Government, but almost half of Welsh-domiciled students take up places in English universities, where the Welsh government has been subsidising their fees.

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[72] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

Figure 2.2: Proportion of 18 year olds accepted for entry by UK country of domicile, 2006–2015

Source: UCAS (2015)[73]
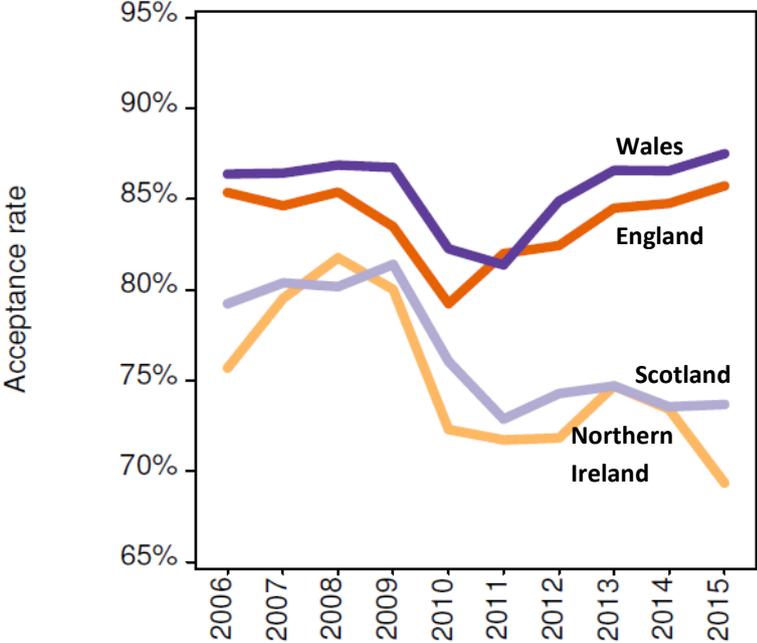
Entry rates by country of domicile

Scotland also has a lower proportion of 18 year olds entering university (about 23%) compared with the other three nations (Wales: 26%; England: 30%; Northern Ireland: 32%). Between 2013 and 2014, entry rates increased markedly for English and Welsh domiciled students, reflecting the early stages of the uncapping of student numbers. Whereas the proportion of 18 year olds entering university has increased in Scotland, Wales and England, it has declined in Northern Ireland (see Figure 2.3).

It should be noted that the abolition of the graduate endowment in 2007 does not appear to have had an effect on the application, acceptance or entry rates of Scottish 18 year olds compared with observable patterns in other countries where tuition fees continued to be charged.

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[73] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 32.

Figure 2.3: Proportion of 18 year olds entering university by cycle and country of domicile, 2006–15
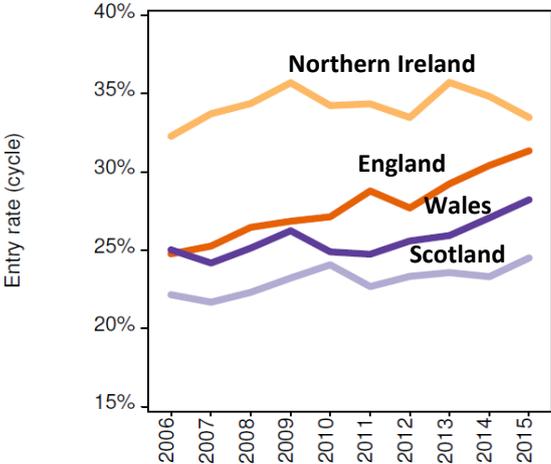
Social inequality in entry rates by area deprivation and country of domicile

As shown by Figure 2.4, Scotland has the lowest UCAS 18 year old entry rate for people living in the most deprived areas. Only 8% of Scottish domiciled 18 year olds from POLAR 3 Q1 enter university, compared with England (17%), Wales (15%) and Northern Ireland (14%). But Scotland also has the lowest 18 year old entry rate for young people living in the most advantaged areas (See Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.4: 18 year old entry rates for disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile, 2006-15
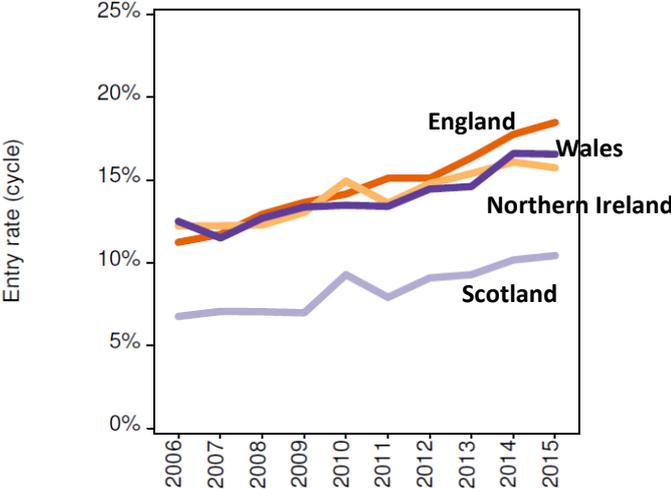
[74] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 34.
[75] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 93.

Figure 2.5: 18 year old entry rates for advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) by country of domicile, 2006–2015
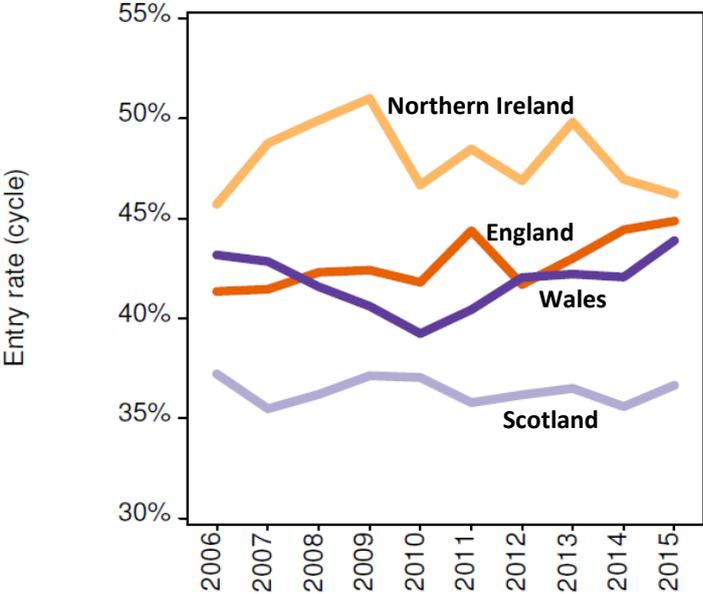
Social inequality in entry rates to higher tariff institutions by area deprivation and country of domicile

A slightly different picture emerges when comparing the 18 year old entry rate to high tariff providers in the four nations – including the ancients in Scotland and Russell Group universities across the UK. As shown in Figure 2.6, a higher proportion of Scottish 18 year olds enter higher tariff providers (about 5.5%), compared with about 3% in England and Wales and about 1.5% in Northern Ireland. Scotland also has the highest proportion of 18 year olds from advantaged areas entering higher tariff providers (See Figure 2.7).

As shown in Figure 2.8, Scotland also has the lowest gap in entry rates to higher tariff providers between those living in the most and least advantaged areas. This is partly attributable to the Scottish Government's decision, from 2012 onwards, to award 720 additional places to ancient universities specifically for young people from the most disadvantaged areas. Equally, Scotland also has the highest entry rate to higher tariff institutions of 18 year olds from the most advantaged areas (Figure 2.7), who are over four times as likely to enter higher tariff institutions as those from the most disadvantaged areas. In England, the gap is higher, with young people from the most advantaged areas about seven times as likely to enter higher tariff institutions compared with those from the most disadvantaged areas. Across the UK, the gap between the most and least advantaged has been narrowing, with the exception of Wales where inequality appears to be growing.

Figure 2.6: 18 year old entry rates to higher tariff providers for disadvantaged areas (POLAR3 Q1) by country of domicile, 2006–2015
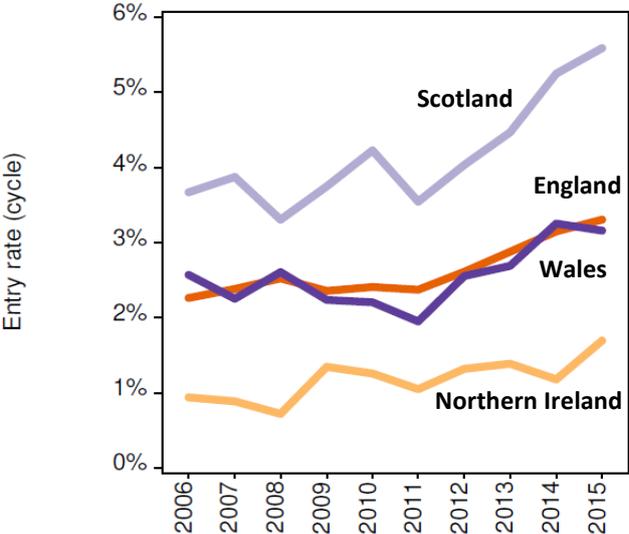
Source: UCAS (2015) [76]

Figure 2.7: 18 year old entry rates to higher tariff providers for advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) by country of domicile, 2006–2015

Source: UCAS (2015)[77]
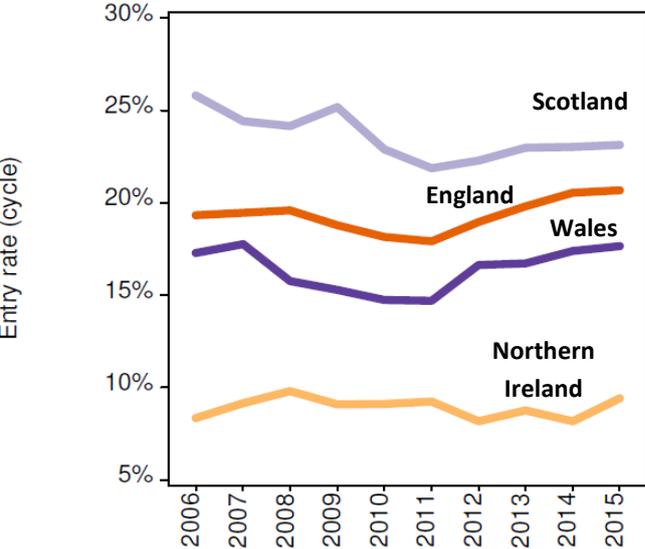
[76] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 98.

[77] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 98.

Figure 2.8: 18 year old entry rate ratios (higher tariff providers): most advantaged areas (POLAR3 Q5) to most disadvantaged areas by country of domicile 2006–2015
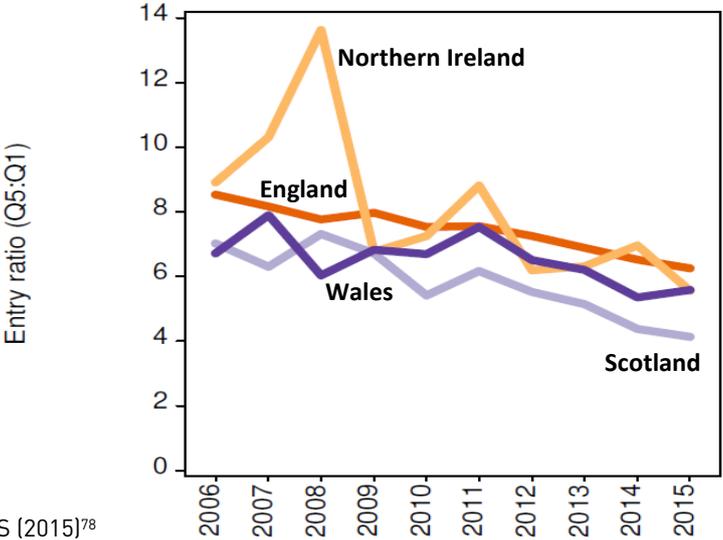
Despite the narrowing of the social gap in entry rates to higher tariff institutions, there are large differences in the social profile of the four ancient universities in Scotland (see Figure 2.9). Aberdeen and St Andrews Universities appear to be accepting a smaller proportion of young people from the most disadvantaged areas, in this case measured by the SIMD, whilst Edinburgh and particularly Glasgow Universities are accepting a higher proportion. The University of the West of Scotland has been included as a point of comparison, as young people from the least advantaged backgrounds are disproportionately represented at this university.

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[78] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 99.

Figure 2.9: Young Scottish SIMD20 entrants to fulltime undergraduate courses at selected universities, 2006–2015
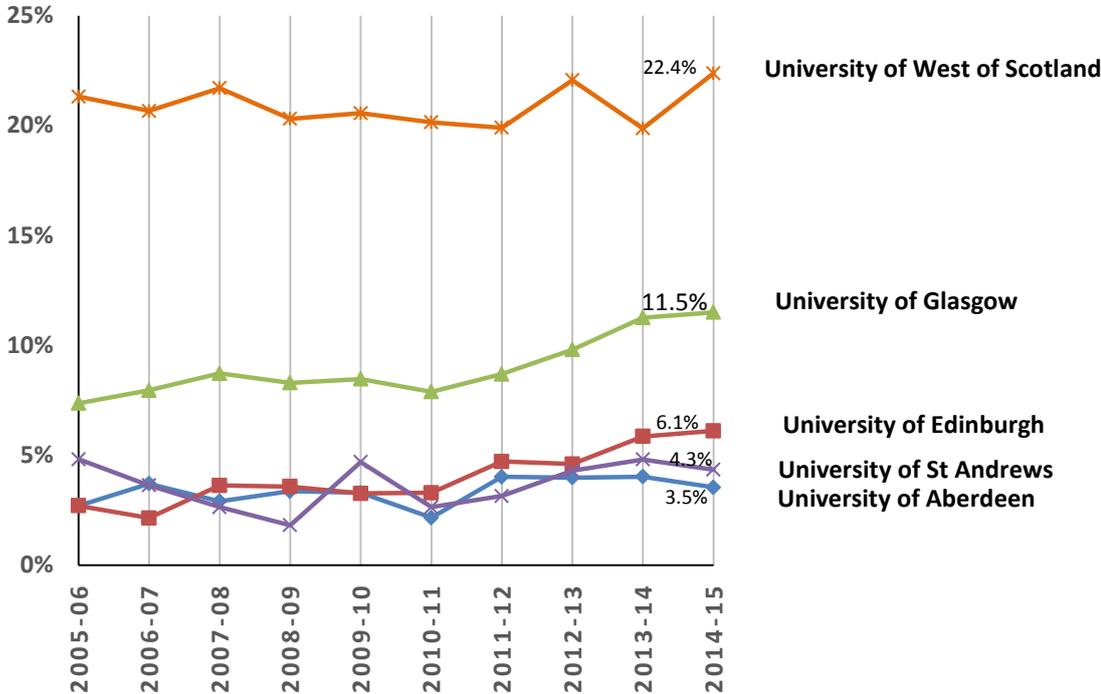
Summary

UCAS data allow us to examine whether the absence of undergraduate tuition fees in Scotland has led to the emergence of a fairer system of higher education based on participation rates of different social class groups.

Scotland has relatively low application, acceptance and entry rates through UCAS compared with the other home nations (although there is some variation in the position of the countries depending on the measure). The abolition of the Scottish graduate endowment in 2007 did not appear to have a marked impact on the relative participation rates of different social groups.

The gap in participation between young people from the most and least advantaged areas is higher in Scotland than in the other home nations although it has closed more quickly than elsewhere. However, Scottish young people from the most advantaged areas are still more than four times as likely to enter higher education through UCAS compared with those from the least advantaged areas. In England, those from the most advantaged areas are 2.4 times as likely to go to university as those from the least advantaged areas, and three times as likely in Wales and Northern Ireland. Participation rates have also risen more slowly in Scotland than England since 2007.

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[79] Scottish Funding Council. (2014). *University Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2014–15*. Edinburgh: SFC.

The Scottish Government's policy of earmarking additional places for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds from 2013 onwards has increased their rates of university participation. The future of this policy after 2016 is unclear.

The staged lifting of the cap on student numbers in England from 2013 onwards appears to be having a positive impact on application, acceptance and entry rates. The lifting of the cap in England has also had an impact on participation by Welsh domiciled students, many of whom study in England. By way of contrast, the capping of student numbers in Scotland has led to more modest increases in participation rates. In Northern Ireland, there has been a decline in entry rates due to policy makers' decision to reduce student numbers.

SECTION 3: ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS OF UCAS DATA

Introduction

This section analyses UCAS data in greater depth, making use of more detailed material from the UCAS website. We start by looking at questions of comparability between nations and over time. We compare trends in application and entry rates in the four nations, putting these in the context of the absolute numbers of students involved, and also consider entry rates to higher tariff provision in Scotland and England. Finally, our analysis shows how acceptance rates vary between the different nations for students from different backgrounds

The UCAS gap and the contribution of HE in Scottish colleges

Comparing application and entry rates (as measured by UCAS at age 18, the only group for which UCAS provides a breakdown by background) exposes a substantial gap in UCAS figures between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

Table 3.1 provides the most recent available application[80] and entry[81] rates for each UK nation for POLAR3 quintile 1 and quintile 5. The gap between Scotland and the other nations is largest for Q1, and larger for entry rates than applications. Thus, the application rate for the most advantaged students in Scotland is only slightly below that of England (at 88% of the English figure), but the entry rate for the most disadvantaged is just over half that of England (56%).

Table 3.1: Application (January, 2016) and entry (2015) rates at age 18, POLAR3 Q1 (most disadvantaged) and Q5 (least disadvantaged)

	Application rates (Jan., 2016)			Entry rates (2015)		
	Average	Q1	Q5	Average	Q1	Q5
England	37%	22%	52%	31%	19%	45%
Northern Ireland	48%	24%	62%	34%	16%	46%
Scotland	33%	16%	46%	25%	10%	37%
Wales	32%	20%	50%	28%	17%	44%
Scotland as % of England	89%[82]	72%	88%	78%	56%	82%

Source: UCAS *UK application rates by the January 2016 deadline*, Figures 14[83] and 15; *End of Cycle Report 2015*, Figures 65 and 66.[84]

How far the gap in UCAS entry rates can be said to be filled by HE provision in Scottish colleges is therefore particularly important for students from the poorest neighbourhoods.

Some students entering higher education in a Scottish college will progress to degree-level study in a university with advanced standing (i.e. no requirement to repeat a year) under arrangements not recorded by UCAS. These are most clearly comparable with those entering degree-level study directly

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[80]Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

[81]Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

[82] The figure here reflects effects due to the relative size of quintile groups in each nation, and the position in quintiles for which data is not provided

[83] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 27.

[84] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 93.

through UCAS. Students moving with advanced standing appear to equal around one-eighth of the total at all ages entering through UCAS.[85]

A further similar-sized group moves with no or partial credit,[86] requiring the student to repeat one or more years, often re-entering at first year. Some of these students will use UCAS at the point of transition, but will do so after age 18. College entrants eventually joining a degree-level course without using UCAS therefore appear likely to equal something below one quarter of the number entering via UCAS.

The figures above are for all students. While 18 year old entrants may not follow exactly this pattern, it appears possible that a substantial part of the gap in the *average* entry rate at 18 is met by students who go to university after first studying higher education in a college. It is worth noting that many of these students will, however, have to study for one or more extra years, compared to traditional UCAS entrants.

The gap for the most disadvantaged (Q1) students is much larger than the average. Even if this group makes more use than average of the college to HEI route, such movement is still unlikely to be enough to close the gap in disadvantaged participation rates with England. For there to be no gap, HN-level study conducted wholly within a college almost certainly needs to be treated as relevant.

To summarise, in comparing participation rates for the most disadvantaged between Scotland and England, it is important to consider whether taking a higher national qualification in a college is comparable to degree-level study, particularly in light of the frequent requirement for an additional year of study for many of those students who do move from college to a university.

The opportunities available through UCAS
While much attention has focused on the exclusion of higher education in Scottish colleges from UCAS data, less attention has been paid to how the provision accessed *within* UCAS compares for students from each nation. Figure 3.1 compares the percentage of acceptances through the UCAS main scheme for English- and Scottish-domiciled students in 2015:

  a)   by type of institution, separating institutions between: Sutton Trust 30;[87] other universities/specialist music or arts colleges; colleges; and other providers (all ages).

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[85] From Table 12 (SFC, 2015): 3,788 students moved from a college to HEI with advanced standing in 2013. This includes students at all ages and is not broken down further by age or SIMD. Assuming none of these were recruited through UCAS, this was equivalent to 12.2% of 30,800/30,900 (total Scottish-domiciled UCAS entrants in 2011/2012, used as equivalent entry cohort: Table 2, UCAS, 2015). This figure can be expected to increase in 2014–15 and 2015–16, due to additional places ring-fenced for articulating students funded by the SFC. However the SFC's preferred approach was for these students to be recruited through UCAS (SFC, 2013), so some of this increase may already be included in the UCAS data. If the number of non-UCAS articulating students has since increased by 1,500, this group would now equate to around 16% of current entrants.
[86] From Table 12 (SFC, 2015): in 2013–14, 49.4% of those moving from college to an HEI with an HN-level qualification obtained advanced standing.

[87] The Sutton Trust 30 are the universities identified by the Sutton Trust as the most highly selective British universities. These are: University of Bath, University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Imperial College, Kings College London, University of Lancaster, University of Leeds, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics, University of Manchester, University of Newcastle, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, University of Reading, Royal Holloway University of

b) by tariff level[88] of accepting institution, studying anywhere in the UK (all ages).

A relatively small proportion of students from each country studies elsewhere in the UK: these figures therefore strongly reflect the provision available to students through UCAS within their home nation.

Figure 3.1: The pattern of institutional provision accessed through UCAS by English- and Scottish-domiciled students accepted in 2015
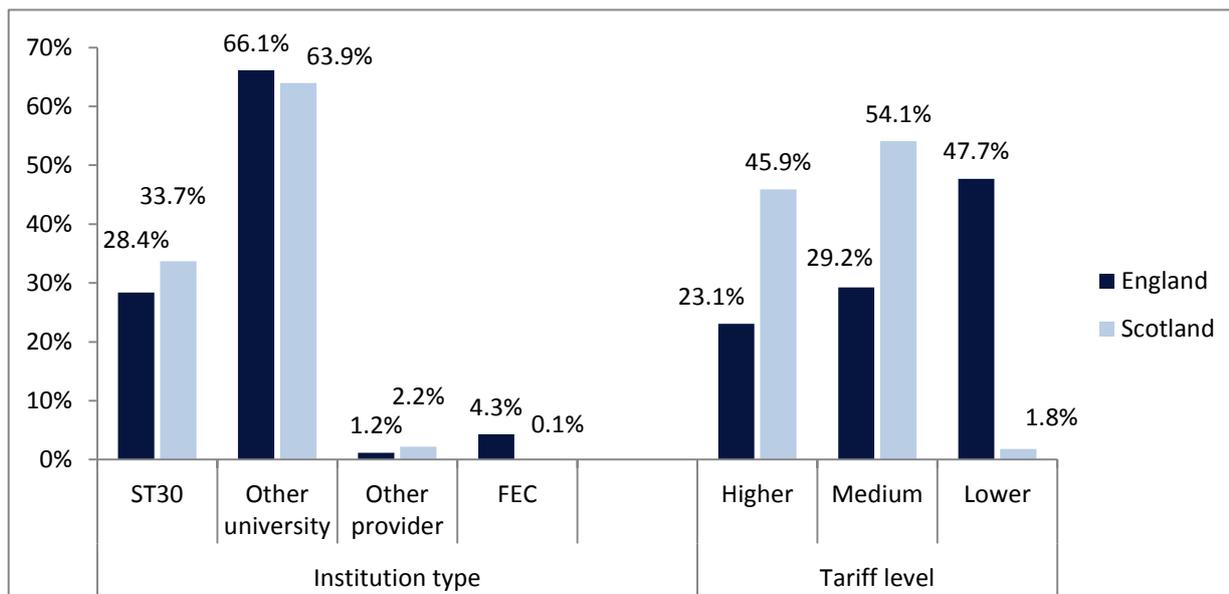
Source: Institution type – *UCAS Undergraduate End of Cycle Data Resources 2015*,[89] *Applicants and acceptances for universities and colleges,* Provider by UK country of domicile, main scheme acceptances: classification by author.

Tariff level – UCAS *End of Cycle Report 2015*, Table 6.[90]

In 2015, universities[91] accounted for 94% of acceptances for English students and 98% of acceptances for Scottish students through the UCAS main scheme. Other data suggest that the level of sub-degree

London, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of Surrey, University College London, University of Warwick and University of York.

[88] UCAS groups institutions roughly by the highest, middle and lowest third in the UK, based on the average levels of attainment of their UK 18 year old accepted applicants (summarised through UCAS tariff points) in recent cycles (UCAS, 2015). UCAS does not identify institutions within each tariff band.

[89] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *UCAS Undergraduate end of cycle data resources*. Retrieved from https://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/ucas-undergraduate-end-cycle-data-resources (UCAS online data).

[90] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

[91] "Other universities" in England includes specialist music and arts HEIs (for non-performance based courses) and university colleges, but excludes university affiliates and bodies designated "university centres." "Other universities" in Scotland include the Glasgow School of Art, but not Scotland's Rural College. Students on performance-based courses at specialist music and drama institutions throughout the UK are not recorded in the UCAS main scheme data, which therefore omits all students at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire and those on comparable courses elsewhere in the UK.

and foundation degree study in English universities is relatively small,[92] as in Scotland, and that colleges and 'other providers' are the principal providers of sub-degree and foundation degree courses. Even if disadvantaged English students are more concentrated in colleges and other providers, the scale of such provision is not enough to account for the bulk of these students.

In both nations, students using UCAS are therefore overwhelmingly entering those institutions in their home nation able to provide, and mainly delivering, higher education to ordinary or honours degree-level. In these terms, the two sets of figures should be comparable with little or no adjustment.

An important finding from Figure 3.1 is that Scottish UCAS entrants are very much more concentrated in higher and medium tariff institutions than those from England. They have access to almost no lower tariff provision within their local university sector which, by contrast, accounts for the largest single group of English acceptances.[93] This is despite the small difference between the two nations in the proportion of UCAS applicants who attend either the Sutton Trust 30 universities[94] or other university-level institutions.

This analysis also shows that a substantially higher percentage of Scottish entrants are in higher tariff institutions than are in ST30 universities. The opposite is true in England. This suggests that, relative to England, higher entry requirements apply in Scotland among universities *beyond* the most selective. Higher entry requirements to more universities, and the absence of lower tariff university provision outside the college sector, may explain why Scottish students accepted through UCAS are far less likely to come from more disadvantaged backgrounds than those from England (and also Wales): see Figure 3.2 below.

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[92] See also for example Tables 7 and 8, HEFCE *Higher Education in England: Key Facts* 2015 2015/15.[92] In Scotland, the UHI provides its courses in partnership with colleges, while Scotland's Rural College incorporated Elmwood and Oakridge Colleges in 2013.

[93] This may be affected by the relative weighting given by UCAS to Highers compared to English A-levels/BTECs: however, the issue here would be over-weighting of Highers, while the more common concern has been that Highers are undervalued in university entrance in England.

[94] These universities are: University of Bath, University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Imperial College, King's College London, University of Lancaster, University of Leeds, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics, University of Manchester, University of Newcastle, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, University of Reading, Royal Holloway, University of London, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of Surrey, University College London, University of Warwick and *University of York.*

Entry and application rates by background

Figure 3.2: Percentage share of acceptances at age 18 by POLAR3 quintiles by student domicile in 2015
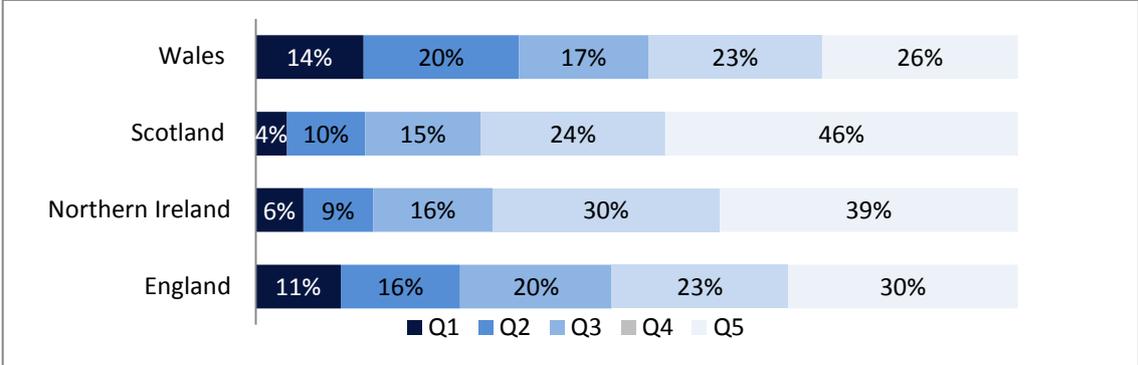
Source: UCAS (2015: Table 7)[95] Entry and application rates by background

To overcome the difficulty of questions raised by comparing absolute values, the analysis below concentrates on *trends over time* in UCAS application and entry rates at age 18, by background.

(i) Context: low absolute numbers

Despite increasing over the past decade in every part of the UK, levels of engagement through UCAS from the most disadvantaged areas remain low. This means that relatively large percentage increases in application and entry rates often quoted for this group, and included below, mask small changes in actual numbers. This is particularly true for Scotland. Between 2006 and 2015, the absolute number of Scottish-domiciled 18 year olds accepted by Scottish institutions through UCAS from POLAR3 Q1 rose by 42%; but this meant only 180 additional students (from 425 to 605).[96]

Between 2014 and 2015, only five additional students from the most deprived areas in Scotland (POLAR3 Q1) entered Scottish higher education via UCAS. The reclassification of undergraduate teacher training (UTT) in 2015 appears to account for an increase of 20 such students in total[97], suggesting that on a like-for-like comparison, in 2015 the age 18 numbers from the most deprived backgrounds (POLAR3 Q1) in fact fell slightly, year-on-year.

The absolute number of age 18 acceptances from the most deprived areas in Wales in 2015 also fell (from 1,515 to 1,500) and remained unchanged in Northern Ireland (520), while rising in England (from 21,425 to 22,480). In Wales, the entry *rate* for this group remained unchanged, reflecting a falling total population aged 18. By contrast, without the inclusion of the undergraduate teacher training numbers, it appears the Q1 entry rate in Scotland would have fallen by 0.1 percentage points, rather than rising by 0.2percentage points.[98]

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[95] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.
[96] UCAS (2015).
[97] Calculated from UCAS *Daily Clearing Analysis 2015* as at 28 August 2015, POLAR3 by UK domicile, comparing with and without X1 Scotland for Scottish domiciled students in POLAR3 Q1.

[98] Calculated as 10.4% (reported entry rate) multiplied by 585/605, giving 10.1%, compared to 10.2% in 2014. However, this uses acceptance data to interpret entry figures, which only allows a rough estimate. The entry and application rates below are used as reported by UCAS, without adjustment.

(ii)   Trends in application rates at age 18

The change in the application rate between 2006 and 2016 at Q1 and Q5 for 18 year olds domiciled in each nation is shown in Table 3.2, in both actual percentage points and as a percentage increase. The Scottish figures given both for POLAR and SIMD, to show that these give very similar results.

Table 3.2:   Application rate change in the UK 2006–2016

	Q1		Q5	
	Actual % points	Proportionate	Actual % points	Proportionate
England	9.8	80%	6.3	14%
Northern Ireland	5.6	30%	4.6	8%
Scotland POLAR3	6.3	65%	3.4	8%
SIMD	6.5	65%	3.7	8%
Wales	6.8	50%	4.4	10%

Source: UCAS *UK application rates by the January 2016 deadline* Figures 14, 15 and 16.[99]

England and Scotland show the largest proportionate rises for Q1 (80% and 65%). For Q5, applications rose more slowly in all nations. That the nations with the highest and lowest (zero) tuition fees saw the largest (and similar) proportionate improvements in applications from the most disadvantaged young people strongly suggests that factors other than tuition fee policy are important in influencing application behaviour by this group at age 18.

(iii)   Trends in entry rates at age 18

Entry rates are the relevant measure for actual access: they measure entry to a UCAS institution anywhere in the UK, by domicile. Table 3.3 shows these for the same groups as before, to the latest available year, here 2015.

Table 3.3:   Entry rate change in the UK 2006–2015

	Q1		Q5	
	Actual % points	Proportionate	Actual % points	Proportionate
England	7.3	65%	3.6	9%
Northern Ireland	3.5	29%	0.5	1%
Scotland POLAR3	3.6	54%	-0.5	-1%
SIMD	2.5.	35%	-0.9	-2%
Wales	4.1	33%	0.7	2%

Source: UCAS *End of Cycle Report 2015* Tables 65, 66 and 76.[100]

The rise for the most disadvantaged students was largest in England proportionately and in percentage points. The position among the devolved administrations was more mixed. Unlike applications, using POLAR or SIMD makes a difference, giving a range of 35% to 54%. Table A.2, Appendix 1, shows that between 2014 and 2015, the Q1 entry rate rose in England, was unchanged in

[99] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS.
[100] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

Wales and fell in Northern Ireland. It rose in Scotland using POLAR3 (but probably only because of the reclassification of UTT – see above) and fell using SIMD.

Entry rates for Q5 rose more slowly in most UK nations. Unusually, the entry rate for the most advantaged in Scotland *fell* marginally over the decade. The gap in entry rates between POLAR3 Q1 and Q5 has therefore closed most quickly in Scotland, even though the entry rate for the most disadvantaged has risen faster in England. The small drop in the entry rate for Q5 in Scotland is likely to indicate a tighter supply of places for Scottish-domiciled students in their home nation.

Entry to higher tariff institutions

Although entry rates through UCAS are generally lower in Scotland than elsewhere, the opposite is true for higher tariff institutions, where Scotland has the highest figures: see Figure 3.3.[101]

Figure 3.3: Entry rates at 18, by higher tariff institution/other UCAS, England and Scotland, 2015, Q1 and Q5
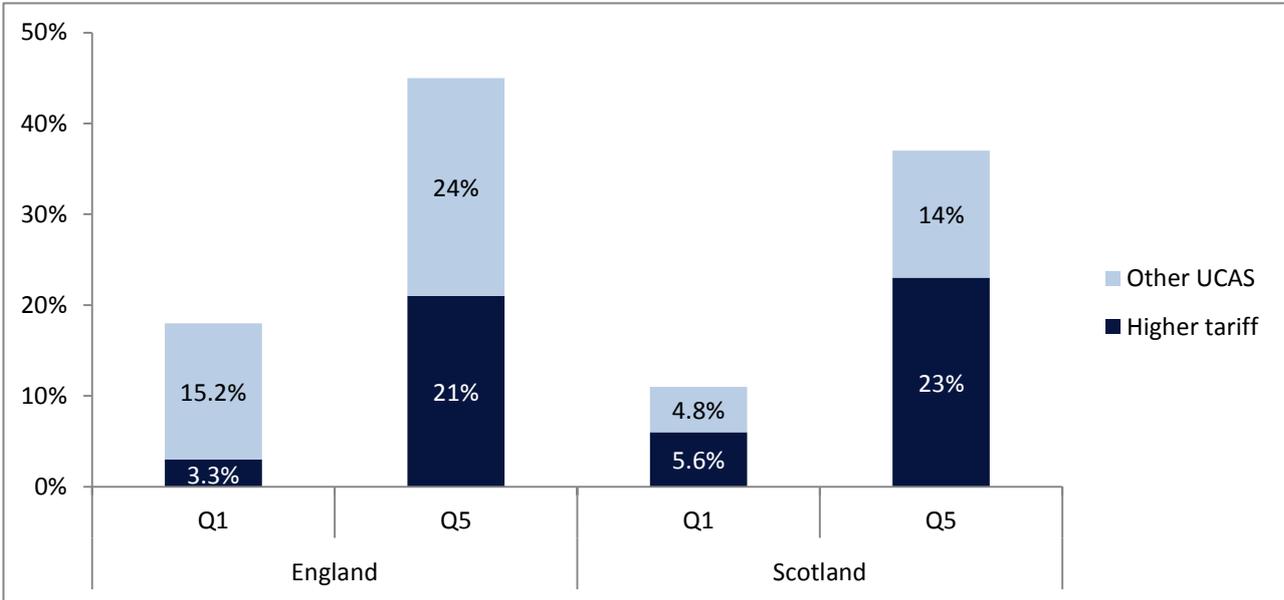
Source: UCAS *End of Cycle Report 2015* Tables 70 and 71.[102]

There was a sharp rise between 2012 and 2015 for Q1 in Scotland (from 4.0% to 5.6%). This coincides with the release over that period of additional funded places targeted specifically at widening access. At age 18, those from Scotland from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are now two-thirds more likely than those in England to enter a higher-tariff institution, but much less likely overall to enter any UCAS institution. At Q5, entry rates to higher tariff institutions at 18 are only slightly higher in Scotland, but entry rates to other university level institutions are substantially lower, likely again to be indicative of a more constrained university system.

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[101] The Q1 entry rate to higher tariff institutions (not shown) for Welsh students is 3.2% and 1.7% for Northern Irish students.
[102] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

Acceptance rates: by background and country

Further evidence of a tighter supply of places comes from the overall acceptance rate for UCAS applicants: this shows the proportion of applicants accepted. UCAS has already shown that the acceptance rate has fallen for Scottish students as a whole group (and for those from Northern Ireland) in recent years and is now well below the figures for either England or Wales.[103]

Further analysis allows the differences between POLAR3 quintiles to be shown (as before, looking only at those aged 18). The full figures for all four nations, including for Q2 to Q4, are in Table A.3 in Appendix 1. Across the four UK nations, Scotland and Northern Ireland show a similar pattern, as do England and Wales. Figure 3.4 therefore excludes the Welsh and Northern Irish data for ease of interpretation and compares the Q1 and Q5 data for Scotland and England only. The figures for the intervening quintiles are between those for Q1 and Q5 in each UK nation.

Figure 3.4: Acceptance rates for Scotland and England, 18 year olds, POLAR3 Q1 and Q5
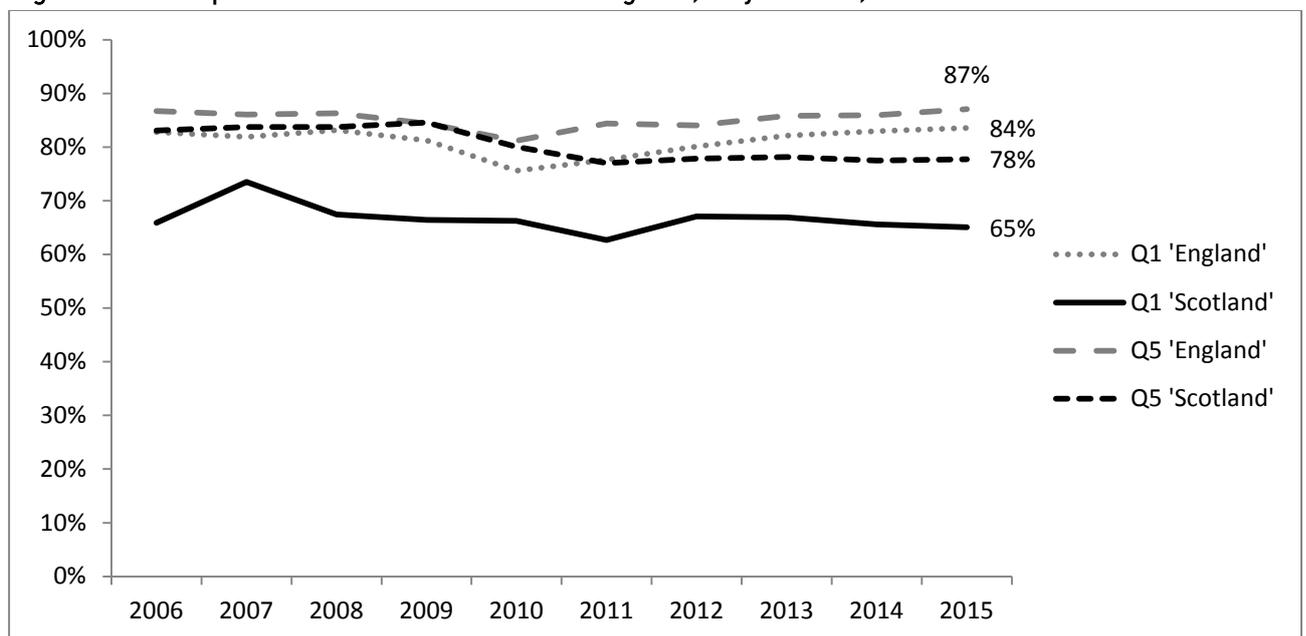
Source: UCAS *Undergraduate End of Cycle Data Resources 2015*, *applicants and acceptances by groups of applicants POLAR3 by UK country (all applicants and acceptances)*. UCAS *UK application rates by the January 2016 deadline*, Figures 14[104] and 15; *End of Cycle Report 2015*, Figures 65 and 66.[105]

The acceptance rate for the most disadvantaged in Scotland has been persistently well below that of the most advantaged Scottish students and students from all backgrounds in England (and Wales).

In Scotland, acceptance rates have fallen for all five POLAR quintiles. The fall at Q1 since 2006 has been small. Those in Q2, the second most deprived group, have seen the largest fall in absolute and

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[103] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, Figure 11.

[104] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 27.
[105] UCAS. (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS, p. 93.

proportionate terms (-5.9 percentage points, -8%) and now have similar acceptance rate to Q1: see Table 5 in Appendix 1. Although more young people in Scotland are applying to and entering higher education through UCAS, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the age group,[106] at every level of advantage acceptance rates have fallen, a pattern not seen elsewhere in the mainland UK, strongly suggesting increased competition for places. Thus the chance of an application being successful through UCAS is generally lower for Scottish-domiciled students than for those from England or Wales; and coming from a disadvantaged area has a substantially larger negative impact in Scotland (and Northern Ireland) than in England or Wales.

EU students are in competition with those from Scotland for Scottish Government-funded places. There is some ambiguity in the data as to how far this has been a relevant factor.[107] At minimum, the availability of places in the Scottish system for students from Scotland seems likely to become increasingly sensitive to the recruitment of EU students. The number of students from other parts of the UK to institutions in Scotland has risen over the past decade, particularly since the cap on their number was lifted by the Scottish Government in 2012. However, these students are not in competition for places with Scots, as they cannot take Scottish Government-funded places reserved for Scottish and non-UK EU students.

Summary

Data from UCAS strongly suggest that the supply of university places in Scotland for Scottish students has not kept pace with rising demand and that this is affecting students from the most deprived backgrounds most acutely. Among Scottish-domiciled students, the gap with other parts of the UK in UCAS application and entry rates at age 18 is largest for the most disadvantaged 20% (Table 3.1). Scottish UCAS entrants are more concentrated in higher and medium tariff institutions than those from England (Figure 1) and a lower proportion are from less advantaged backgrounds (Figure 3.2).

Since 2006, England and Scotland have seen the largest proportionate improvements in UCAS applications from the most disadvantaged 18 year olds in the UK since 2006 (Table 3.2). This has been from a lower base in Scotland. Since 2006, the absolute number of the most disadvantaged Scottish-domiciled 18 year olds accepted by Scottish institutions through UCAS rose by 42%: but this meant only 180 additional students. On a like-for-like comparison, the number fell between 2014 and 2015, as did the entry rates for this group.

The UCAS entry rate for the most *advantaged* in Scotland *fell* marginally over the decade (Table 3.3). The most disadvantaged 18 years olds are now more likely to enter a higher-tariff institution if they are from Scotland than if they are from England. But they are much less likely to enter (mainly university-level) HE through UCAS overall (Figure 3.3). UCAS acceptance rates are lower in Scotland than in England or Wales and coming from a disadvantaged area has a particularly negative impact on the success rate of applications for students from Scotland (Figure 3.4).

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[106] Over the decade, the absolute number of applications from those aged 18 rose by 12% (+2180), while acceptances rose by 4% (+615). These figures are lower than for application and entry *rates*, because the total number of 18 year olds has fallen over the period. UCAS *End of Cycle Resources 2015*.

[107] The number of non-UK EU students recruited through UCAS to Scottish institutions between 2011 and 2015 fell slightly, from 4,270 to 4,245, UCAS *End of Cycle Report,* Table 5 (REF), but the number claiming support from the Scottish Government nearly doubled over the same period: SAAS *Higher Education Student Support in Scotland 2014–15*, Table A2. Part of the rise recorded by SAAS will be due to the temporary ability of Northern Irish students with dual Irish nationality to claim fee support: this is no longer available to new entrants.

A central question in comparing levels of access, whether within Scotland or more widely within the UK, is how far entry to an HN-level programme at college, and perhaps no further, offers an experience equivalent to that offered by direct entry into degree-level study at university, which accounts for most UCAS provision on both sides of the border. For the most disadvantaged, the size of the gap in entry rates through UCAS means that all forms of HE provision in Scottish colleges would need to be considered equivalent to fill it.

SECTION 4: THE HIGHER EDUCATION INITIAL PARTICIPATION RATE IN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND (HEIPR)

Introduction

Comparisons of *participation rates* between the home nations adjust for changes over time in the size of the population. A number of participation rate measures are used in different parts the UK. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) is the only one which covers all forms of higher education, in contrast to UCAS, and is calculated in the same way in more than one UK nation, with only minor differences. It is described as a suitable basis for UK comparisons by the SFC and is available for Scotland and England from 2006–07 to 2013–14. Further information on the way it is calculated is in Appendix 2. In effect, the HEIPR expresses how likely it is that a person will have entered higher education by the age of 30. By measuring participation in all forms of higher education and including those who do not enter immediately from school, it is a more inclusive measure than, say, UCAS age 18 entry rates.

Since 2015, it has been published for Scotland only as a single headline figure, no longer providing a breakdown of how participation in HE varies by the type of institution (university or college) or level, treating Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 7 and 8 (Higher National and foundation degrees) identically to SCQF levels 9 and 10 (ordinary and honours degrees). It is also not normally available by background. The report uses additional breakdowns of the Scottish figures provided by the SFC: further breakdowns of the HEIPR for England are not available at the time of writing (April 2016), but cross-referencing with other data allows some additional tentative comparisons.

HEIPR: total participation

Scotland has had higher levels of total participation in higher education than England for many years, long understood to be driven by the larger volume of activity at HNC/D level which takes place mainly in colleges. Very little degree-level work is undertaken in Scottish colleges. Although the gap in the HEIPR between the two countries has narrowed since 2006, the HEIPR remains almost one-fifth higher for Scotland, standing at 55.0% in 2013–14, compared to 46.6% for England. Over the period, the HEIPR increased by 1.8 percentage points (3.4% proportionately) in Scotland and by 4.4 percentage points (10.4% proportionately) in England.

The increase in HEIPR has not been steady in either country. In Scotland, it peaked in 2011–12 and then fell back. It remains below its 2009–10 value. The figure for England increased up to 2011–12, rising in that year, prior to a large increase in tuition fees. It fell sharply in 2012 and then in 2013 rose to a level slightly above its pre-2011 highest value.

Figure 4.1: HEIPR 2006–07 to 2013–14, England and Scotland (2013–14 figure for England provisional)
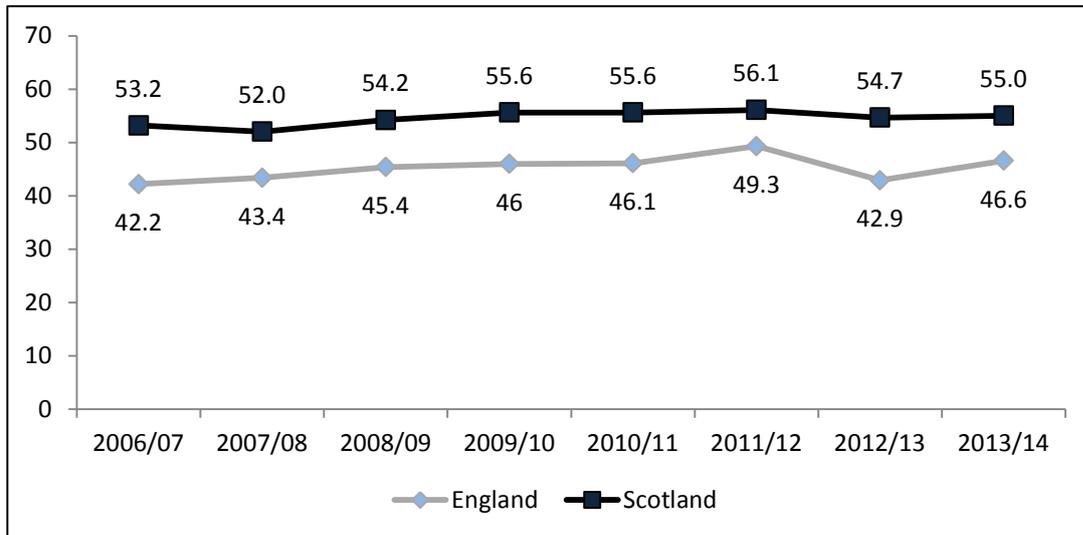
Sources: SFC, BIS

Initial participation rates by type of institution

To understand better the underlying trends, particularly for those from more disadvantaged backgrounds, further breakdowns of the HEIPR data have been obtained from the SFC.

Initial entry routes: college or university?

Figure 4.2: HEIPR in Scotland by institution type vs total HEIPR England (with estimate of effect of removing provision in English FECs). Labels added for HEIs and FECs in Scotland. The difference from the total shown above is accounted for by entry into HEIs in the rest of the UK.
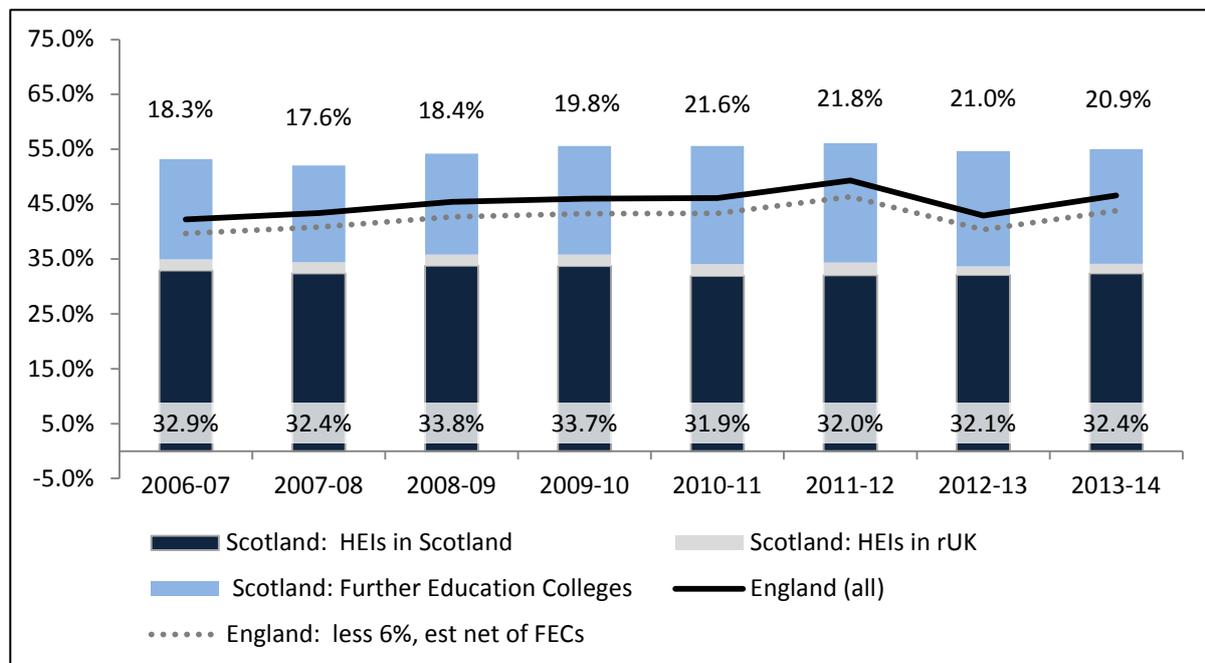
Sources:Further analysis provided by SFC, BIS.

While the total HEIPR for Scotland is higher, *initial* entry to higher education institutions (HEIs) seems likely to be substantially higher in England. The HEIPR for universities and other HEIs in Scotland followed no steady trend. It was generally lower over the last four years of the period than the first and a little lower in 2013 than in 2006. Including entry into HEIs in other parts of the UK, the HEIPR for HEIs fell from 34.9% to 34.1%. By contrast, for colleges the HEIPR rose from 18.9% to 20.3% over the period. The figures for colleges showed a reasonably steady increase, although the highest figure was 21.8% in 2011–12. HE provision in colleges therefore accounts for all the growth in the HEIPR for Scotland since 2006–07.

(ii)   Later movement

The HEIPR measures a student's initial point of entry and does not take into account that some of those who begin their higher education in a college will go on to undertake further undergraduate study in a university. Some students initially admitted to a college will eventually move to a university to do a degree. In 2013–14 there were around 17,500 successful HN completions, according to the SFC Infact database and just over 8,000 students who moved from a college to university[108] Allowing for the fact that some students drop out between initial entry and successful HN completion, it might be expected that some 40% of those initially entering a college course may move to university, probably enough to close the gap with England in degree-level participation by age 30. However, as argued elsewhere in this report, those who do not get full credit – around 4,000 of the 8,000 – face one or more repeat years.

Background and institutional type
Using further data provided by the SFC, for Scotland it is possible to compare how the HEIPR Is composed of different types of institution for students from different backgrounds.

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[108]Scottish Funding Council. (2015). Learning for all: Measures of success. Edinburgh: Scottish Funding Council, Table 12.

Figure 4.3: HEIPR in Scotland only, by SIMD MD20 (students from most deprived 20% of areas) and SIMD LD20 (students from least deprived 20% of areas) and institutional type

Sources: Further analysis provided by SFC.
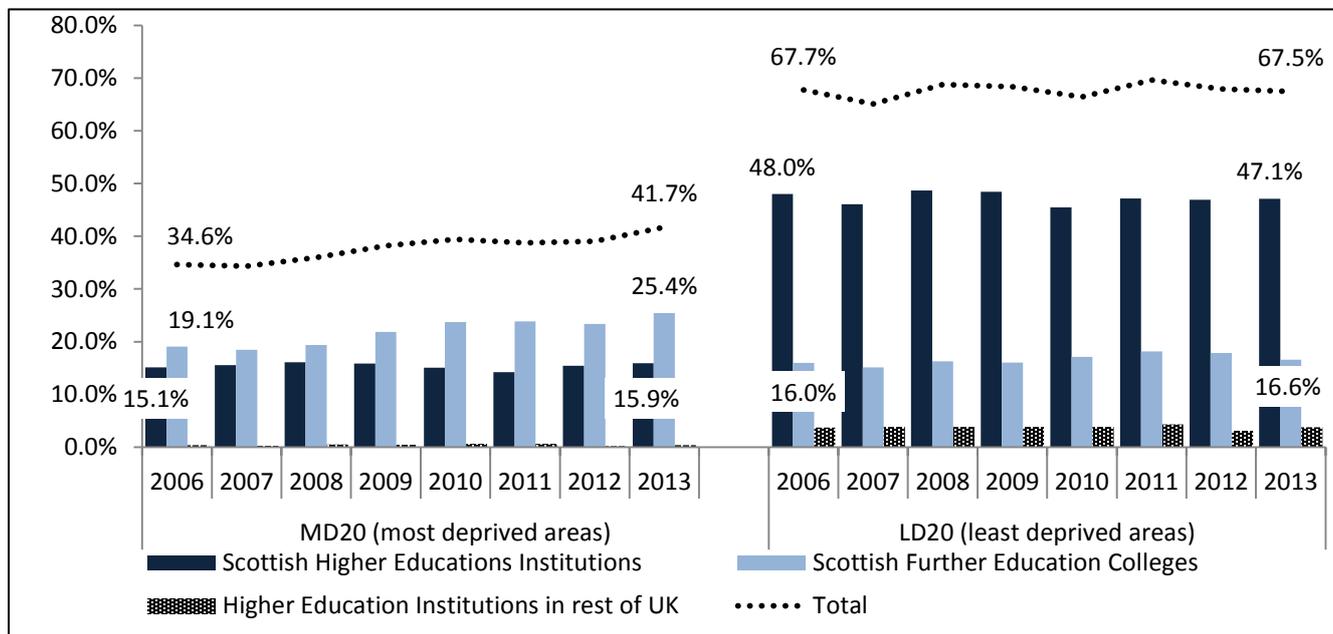
The participation pattern for the most and least deprived students is starkly different, with the former relying much more heavily on initial entry into a college than a university. The least deprived are almost three times more likely to enter a university than a college. Ninety per cent of the overall growth in the HEIPR for the most disadvantaged in Scotland since 2006 (6.3 percentage points) has been due to increased entry into college-level higher education. Over the period 2006–2013, the difference in routes between the two groups has therefore become more pronounced. By 2013, 61% of the most disadvantaged group initially entered HE via college, compared to 55% in 2006.

The increase in the direct entry rate into HEIs by age 30 for the most disadvantaged has been relatively small, ranging between 16.1% (2008) and 14.4% (2011). Once very low figures for entry into HEIs elsewhere in the UK are included, the figure for initial entry into HEIs rises from 15.6% in 2006, to 16.3% in 2013.

Overall, the HEIPR for the most disadvantaged in Scotland has increased over the period, though it was flat or falling slightly between 2010 and 2012. The HEIPR for the least disadvantaged 20% in Scotland had no clear pattern: in 2013 it was much the same as in 2006, meaning that the gap between the most and least disadvantaged students had reduced. This mirrors the UCAS data. A small rise in college entry offsets a drop for HEIs. The figure for HEIs in the rest of the UK was the same at the end of the period as at the beginning.

The concentration of growth in college entry is likely to reflect the relatively tight capping of university places in Scotland at a time of rising demand. The Scottish Government fully funds places for Scottish (and EU) students and therefore restricts recruitment to these (Students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland pay fees). Colleges are funded on a different model, which allocates less per place,

and does not restrict so rigidly, so that colleges can be more responsive to demand. Since 2012, they have also been encouraged to shift their provision more towards younger full-time students studying for accredited qualifications. The figures here are consistent with the UCAS data showing signs of greater competition for university places over the period. As demand for entry into university has risen particularly quickly among this group, with government encouragement, that extra demand has in practice been met by increasing HE provision in colleges.

Without equivalent data for England it is not possible to estimate how much of the growth there in participation by more disadvantaged students may also have taken place in colleges (or other non-university providers, particularly private colleges). However, the smaller relative volume of provision in England outside HEIs makes it more difficult for these to account for so much of the change. The staged loosening and final lifting of the cap on university places in England also makes it less likely that demand has been displaced from universities into other providers.

Level of initial study

The SFC is also able to provide data on the split between levels of study on initial entry.

Figure 4.4: HEIPR Scotland level of study
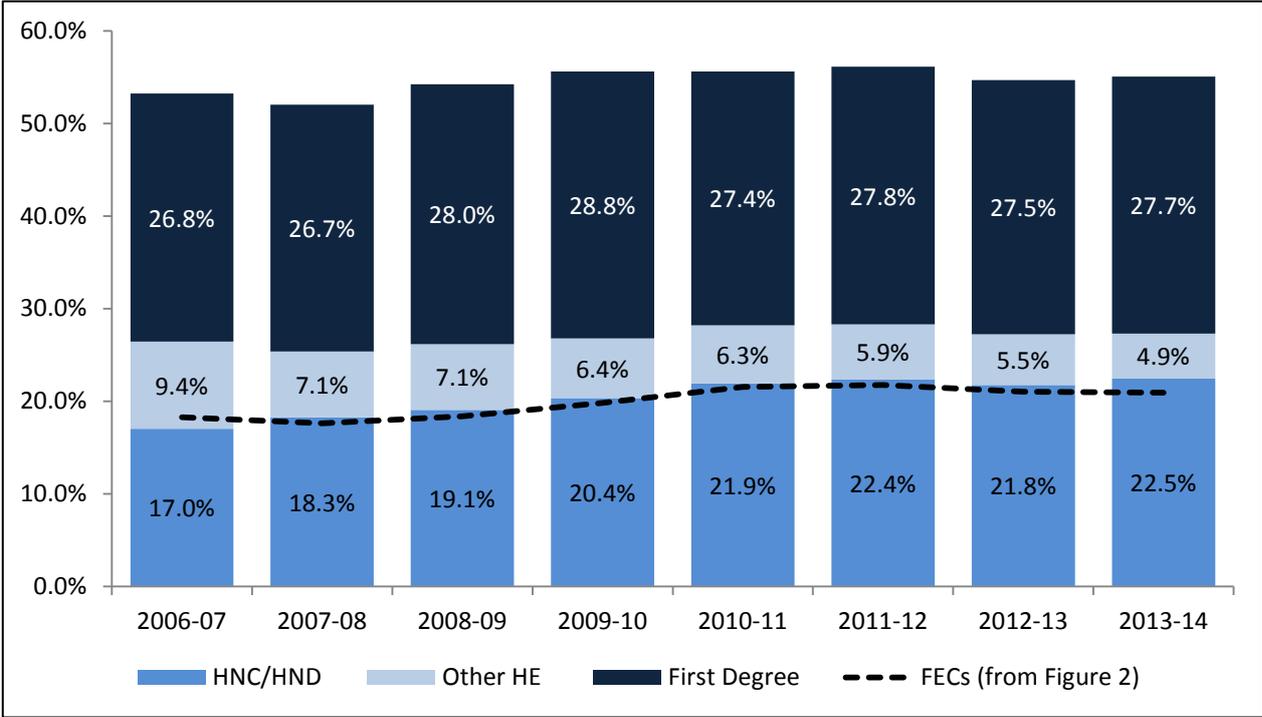
Sources:Further analysis provided by SFC.

The strongest growth has been in HN-level entry and closely matches the increase in entry to colleges. The proportion entering direct into first degree courses has remained more or less static since 2008–09, excepting a peak in 2009–10.

A further large change has been a near-halving of 'other HE' (mainly non-HN sub-degrees). This seems due in part to some of this switching to degree-level provision at HEIs, although there may also have been some switching towards HNs in colleges.

For this report, it was not possible to further separate this data by background, but the strong association of HN provision with colleges implies that the figures would look like those in Figure 4.4, with HN entry being much more significant to the most disadvantaged.

Again, the same figures are not currently available for England, but the relatively low level of sub-degree provision in universities, and small proportion of HE provided outside universities, suggests that the English figures are likely to show a higher HEIPR for first degrees.

Summary

The increase in HEIPR has not been steady in either country. In Scotland, it remains below its 2009–10 value. The figure for England fell sharply in 2012 and then rose to a level slightly above its pre-2011 highest value. As demand for entry into university has risen, detailed analysis of the HEIPR reveals this has been met by increasing HE provision in Scottish colleges. An increased level of entry into sub-degree programmes (HNCs and HNDs) in colleges accounts for all of the growth in the HEIPR for Scotland since 2006–07.

In particular, entry to HN-level courses in colleges has been relied on to increase initial access to higher education for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Ninety per cent of the overall growth in the HEIPR for the most disadvantaged in Scotland since 2006 (6.3 percentage points) has been due to increased entry into college-level higher education. Rates of initial entry by age 30 directly into university have increased only slightly for the most disadvantaged. Since 2006, the difference in entry routes (direct entry to university from school, or entry to university via a sub-degree college programme) between the most and least disadvantaged has become more pronounced. The increased HEIPR in England may include some sub-degree growth, but this is likely to account for a small amount of the overall growth.

Levels of *eventual* entry into university-level higher education may be similar in Scotland to England, allowing for movement from HN and equivalent courses to university. However, students who progress from a two year college HND programme to degree-level study, may take up to six years to complete an honours degree, incurring substantial additional time and cost.

Given the high incidence of repeat years, for *equal access* on *equal terms* to the most competitive institutions, over-reliance on the HN to degree route is problematic and it should not be simply assumed that this route makes up for initial differences in access, particularly to older universities.

SECTION 5: THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF UNIVERSITIES BETWEEN 1996 AND 2014: SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND COMPARED

Introduction

In this section, we explore the social profile of Scottish and English universities by type of institution, social class of student and type of school attended. The analysis builds on work undertaken by David Raffe and Linda Croxford, Centre for Educational Sociology, University of Edinburgh, allowing us to track institutional change from 1996 to 2014. The overall picture is one of stasis rather than change, with Scotland having greater levels of social class segregation than England within the university sector. Within the Scottish HE sector, it appears that students from socially advantaged backgrounds are increasingly likely to gain a place in a pre-92 institution. As demonstrated below, in 2014/15, slightly over two thirds of HE entrants from professional and managerial backgrounds, and 88% of independent school entrants, chose to study in a Scottish pre-92 university. By way of contrast, within the English HE sector, students from more socially advantaged backgrounds are more evenly spread across the pre- and post-92 sectors, indicating lower levels of social clustering.

The social profile of English and Scottish universities, 1996–2014

Figure 5.1 illustrates the percentage of under-21 entrants from a higher social class background (measured by having a parent with a professional/managerial occupation) and from independent schools within the populations of the three different types of Scottish university.

In 1996, 68% of entrants to the ancient universities were from higher social class backgrounds compared to 58% of entrants to other pre-92 universities and 50% of entrants to post-1992 universities. By the academic year 2014/15, the proportion of those from professional and managerial backgrounds had declined in all three institution types, to 59%, 49% and 42% in the ancient, other pre-92 and post-92 university sectors, correspondingly. The proportionate decline in the percentage of entrants from higher social class backgrounds between 1996 and 2014 was relatively similar across all three university types. This finding indicates that in Scotland, institutional social-class segregation remained markedly stable in the past 18 years. It should be noted that within the time period analysed, changes have been made to the social class classification and the social class question on the UCAS application form, which may have affected the outcomes of our analysis.[109]

In addition, Figure 5.1 shows segregation by secondary school type across the three university types in Scotland. In 1996, independent schools (catering for about 5% of the Scottish school population) accounted for 23% of young entrants to ancient universities compared to only 9% of entrants to other pre-92 universities and 5% of entrants to post-92 universities. By 2004, the average percentage of students from independent schools in ancient universities declined to 19%. However, since then the proportion has gradually increased, peaking at 26% in 2014/15. In contrast, the average percentage of entrants from independent schools to other pre-92 university and post-92 university remained relatively stable between 1996 and 2014. Taken together, these findings suggest that while institutional differences in the percentage of entrants from high social class remained relatively stable in the past 18 years, differences between more and less selective universities in student recruitment from independent schools have slightly widened.

Figure 5.1: Average percentage of under-21 entrants from professional and managerial class, and from private schools, by university sector – Scotland

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[109] For information on these changes and their analytical implications, see Raffe and Croxford (2015) andHESA: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2379#nssec.
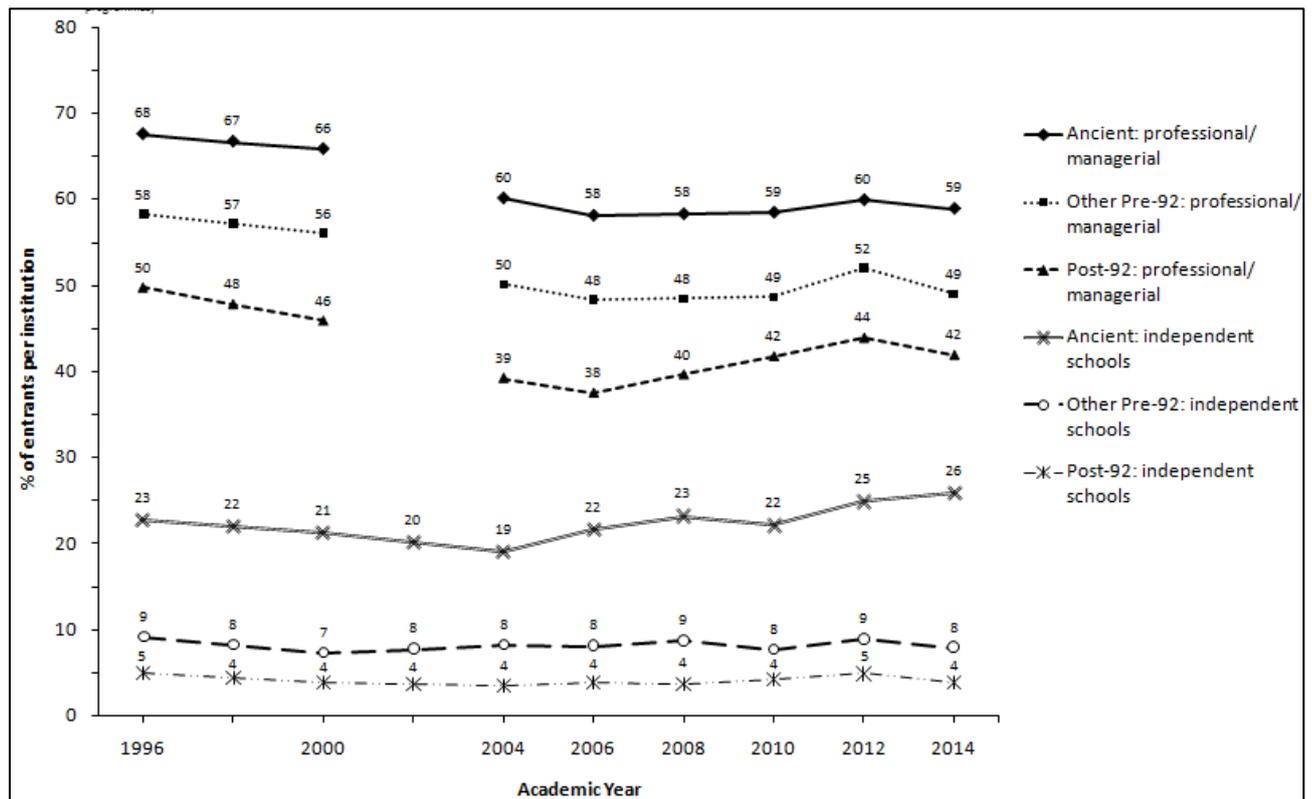
Figure 5.2 displays a comparable analysis for England. In 1996, on average, students from higher social class backgrounds accounted for 79% of under-21 entrants to golden triangle universities compared to 73% of entrants to other Russell Group universities, 66% of entrants to other pre-92 universities and 54% of entrants to post-92 universities. By 2014 these percentages have somewhat declined in all four university types, when students from higher social class backgrounds accounted for 75% of young entrants to golden triangle universities compared to 67% of entrants to other Russell Group universities, 59% of entrants to other pre-92 universities and 47% of entrants to post-92 universities. However, the smallest proportionate decline was in the golden triangle universities, followed by the other Russell Group universities.   Institutional segregation by entrants' secondary school type is also shown in Figure 5.2. In 1996, on average, 46% of young entrants in golden triangle universities came from private schools (catering for about 7% of the school population) compared with only 28%, 19% and 8% of entrants in other Russell Group universities, other pre-92 universities and post-92 universities, correspondingly. By 2014, these percentages declined in the golden triangle (37%), other Russell Group (21%) and other pre-92 universities (14%). In the post-92 universities, the

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[110] Raffe, D. & Croxford, L. (2013). How stable is the stratification of Higher Education in England and Scotland? *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(2), 313-335. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2013.820127.

average percentage of privately schooled entrants declined to 4% between 1996 and 2006 and remained at this level in consecutive years.

Figure 5.2: Average percentage of under-21 entrants from professional and managerial class, and from private schools, by university sector – <u>England</u>
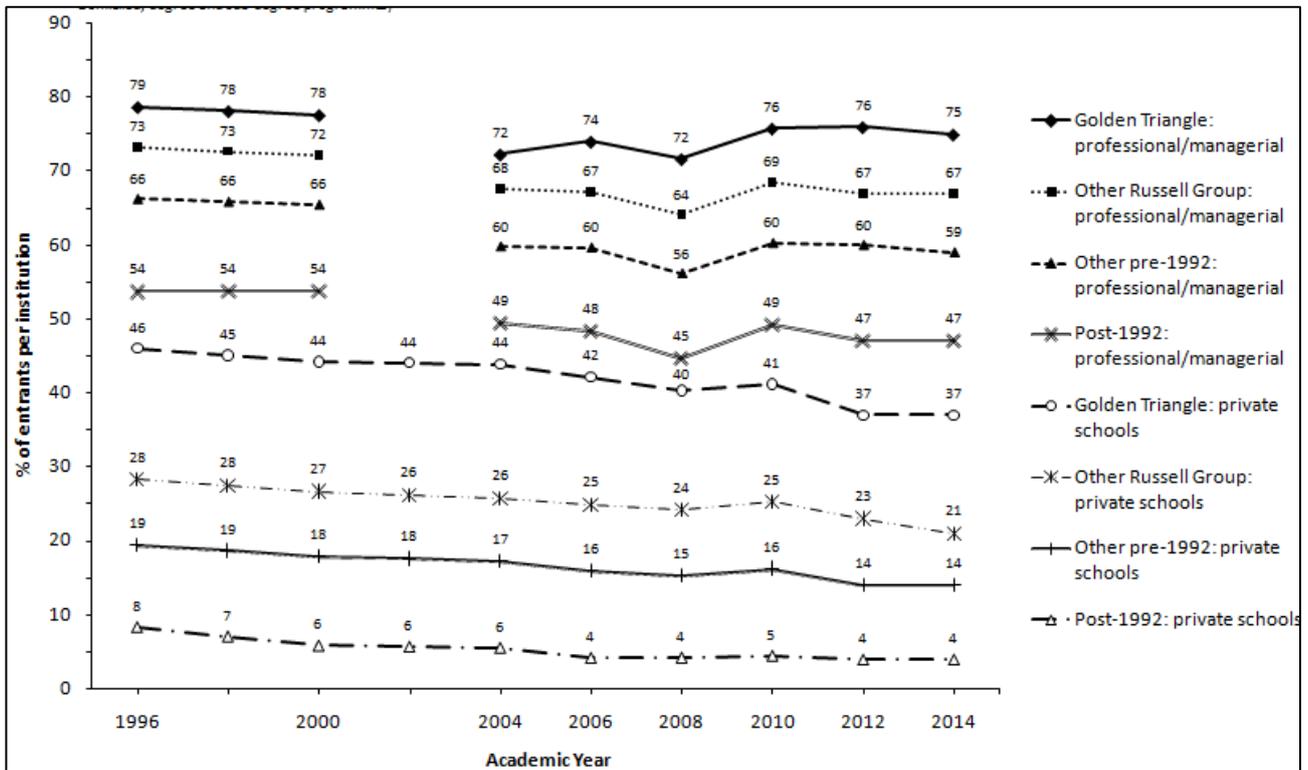
A comparison of institutional segregation in Scotland and England between 1996 and 2014 can now be drawn. Highly selective universities in Scotland and England consistently recruit a higher percentage of students from professional or managerial family backgrounds compared with less selective universities. There has been a decline in the percentage of the student body from higher social class backgrounds from 1996 to 2014 across all university types in both UK nations. However, there is no indication that the institutional gap is narrowing. Our analysis shows that the social profile of the three Scottish university types remained stable between 1996 and 2014 and there is also some indication that the institutional gap has slightly increased in England.

We also found that, in both UK nations, there is a persistent trend whereby the intake of entrants from private schools varies across university types: highly selective universities recruit a much higher percentage of privately schooled students than less selective universities. Furthermore, while in

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[111] Raffe, D. & Croxford, L. (2013). How stable is the stratification of Higher Education in England and Scotland? *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(2), 313-335. DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2013.820127.

Scotland the institutional gap in intake of students from independent schools has slightly widened between 1996 and 2014, in England it decreased, albeit to a very small extent.

Overall, our analysis demonstrates enduring stability in the social profile of the Scottish and English higher education systems despite strong governmental commitment to social justice, as manifested by the introduction of a range of widening participation policies and changes to tuition fee regimes (see Table 1.1). Of course, it may very well be true that interventions designed to advance agreed targets (e.g. targeted places for traditionally underrepresented groups and articulation students, SHEP) have narrowed social class gaps in entry to some of the most highly selective universities. However a wider scale institutional change towards more equality in the social-class composition of more and less selective Scottish universities has not been achieved.

The social background of university entrants and their higher education destinations, 2011 to 2014
We now examine in more detail where students from particular social backgrounds choose to undertake degree level study. We focus on academic years 2011 to 2014 and explore the associations between students' social class and entry to different university types in England and Scotland. This analysis enables us to identify the HE destinations of secondary school pupils from higher and lower social class groups. We also look at the relationship between secondary school type and entry to more and less selective universities.

As discussed earlier in this section, in both Scotland and England, university students are more likely to be from a higher than a lower social class background. However, it is also interesting to investigate whether school leavers from higher and lower social class groups cluster in different types of university, and whether this varies by jurisdiction. Figure 5.3 displays the average percentage of under-21s from higher and lower social class groups entering higher education in Scotland, by university type. The figure presents a clear and consistent association between social class and institution type. Within the Scottish HE sector in 2011, of all under-21 entrants from a managerial or professional background, 37% entered ancient universities and 32% entered a post-92 university. In comparison, of all 2011 young entrants with a parent in a routine or manual occupation only 21% entered ancient universities while 48% entered post-92 universities. The percentages of entrants in the "other pre-92" university group are relatively similar amongst students with higher and lower social class backgrounds: 25% of those with a managerial or professional parent and 23% of those with a parent in a routine or manual occupation. The gap in the percentage of students from higher and lower social class backgrounds entering the ancient and other pre-92 universities remained relatively stable in consecutive academic years. In contrast, there has been a slight decline in the average percentage of under-21s from both social-class groups entering post-92 universities and an increase in entry rates at universities classified as "others".[112]

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[112] In Scotland, the "other HEI" group comprises Glasgow School of Art, Edinburgh Art College, Royal Conservatoire of and SRUC. For consistency with Raffe and Croxford analysis (2015), we also included the University of Highlands and Islands in the 'others' category.

Figure 5.3: Average % of under-21s from different social-class background entering HE in Scotland, by university type
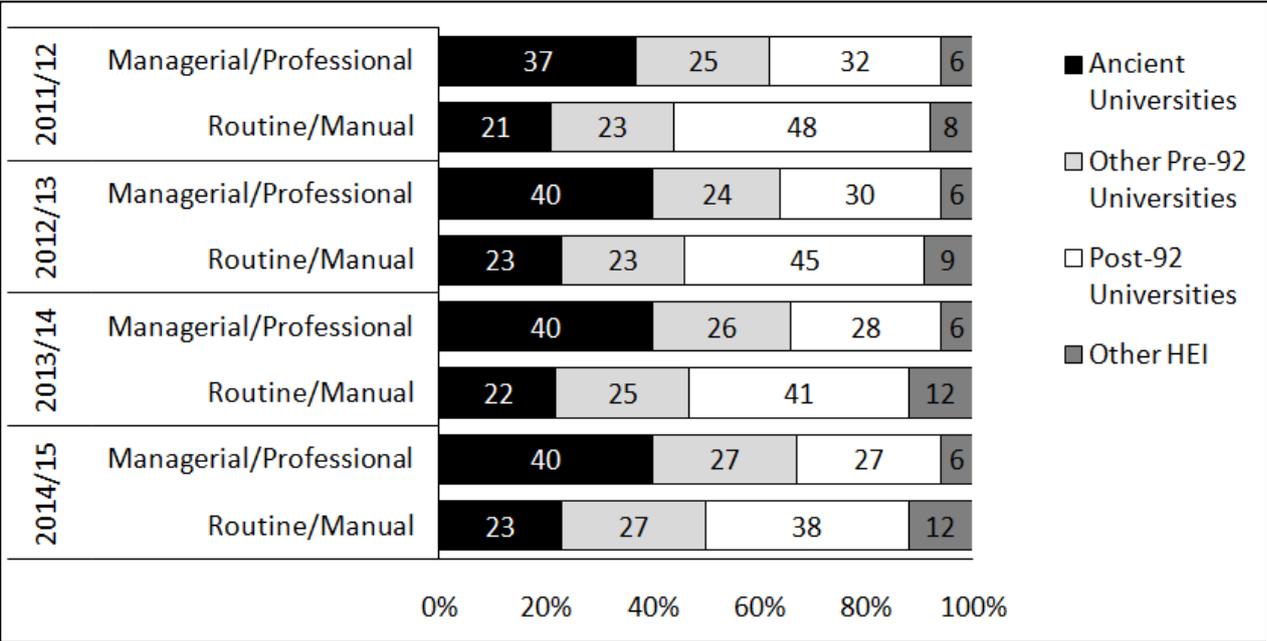
		Ancient Universities	Other Pre-92 Universities	Post-92 Universities	Other HEI
2011/12	Managerial/Professional	37	25	32	6
	Routine/Manual	21	23	48	8
2012/13	Managerial/Professional	40	24	30	6
	Routine/Manual	23	23	45	9
2013/14	Managerial/Professional	40	26	28	6
	Routine/Manual	22	25	41	12
2014/15	Managerial/Professional	40	27	27	6
	Routine/Manual	23	27	38	12

Source: HESA Student Record 2011/12 to 2014/15. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited 2016. The analysis includes all UK-Domiciled students enrolled in degree and sub-degree programmes.

Figure 5.4 presents the comparable analysis for England from 2011/12 to 2014/15. This analysis shows that the average percentage of under-21s from different social-class backgrounds entering higher education institutions in England varied by university type and this trend was consistent across the years we explored. As can be seen, in each of the academic years under examination, a higher proportion of students from a managerial or professional background entered selective universities compared with students with parents in routine or manual occupations, and the gap is larger in Russell Group universities than in other pre-92 universities. This trend is reversed in post-92 universities: students with parents in routine or manual occupations entered these universities in higher percentages than students with managerial or professional parents. Overall, our analysis shows that in both UK nations, there is still a strong association between university type and students' social background. Furthermore, the gap in the higher education destinations of students from higher and lower social class groups in Scotland and England has not changed between 2011 and 2014. Indeed, in Scotland, the concentration of middle class entrants in pre-92 universities is increasing (in 2011, 62% of entrants from managerial and professional backgrounds gained a place in a pre-92 institution, compared with 67% in 2014). In England, by way of contrast, students from higher social class backgrounds are more evenly spread across the pre- and post-92 university sectors, with 49% of entrants from managerial and professional backgrounds choosing pre-92 universities in 2014, compared with 46% choosing post-92 institutions – a fairly even split. In terms of its social profile, the Scottish pre-92 university sector is more middle class in composition than its English counterpart, a finding which is borne out by analysis in Section 6.

Figure 5.4: Average % of under-21s from different social-class background entering HE in England, by university type

Source: HESA Student Record 2011/12 to 2014/15. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited 2016.

		Russell Group	Other pre-1992	Post-1992	Other HEI
2011/12	Managerial/Professional	25	21	48	6
	Routine/Manual	11	16	67	6
2012/13	Managerial/Professional	26	21	47	6
	Routine/Manual	12	16	66	6
2013/14	Managerial/Professional	27	22	46	5
	Routine/Manual	12	17	64	7
2014/15	Managerial/Professional	27	22	46	5
	Routine/Manual	12	17	65	6
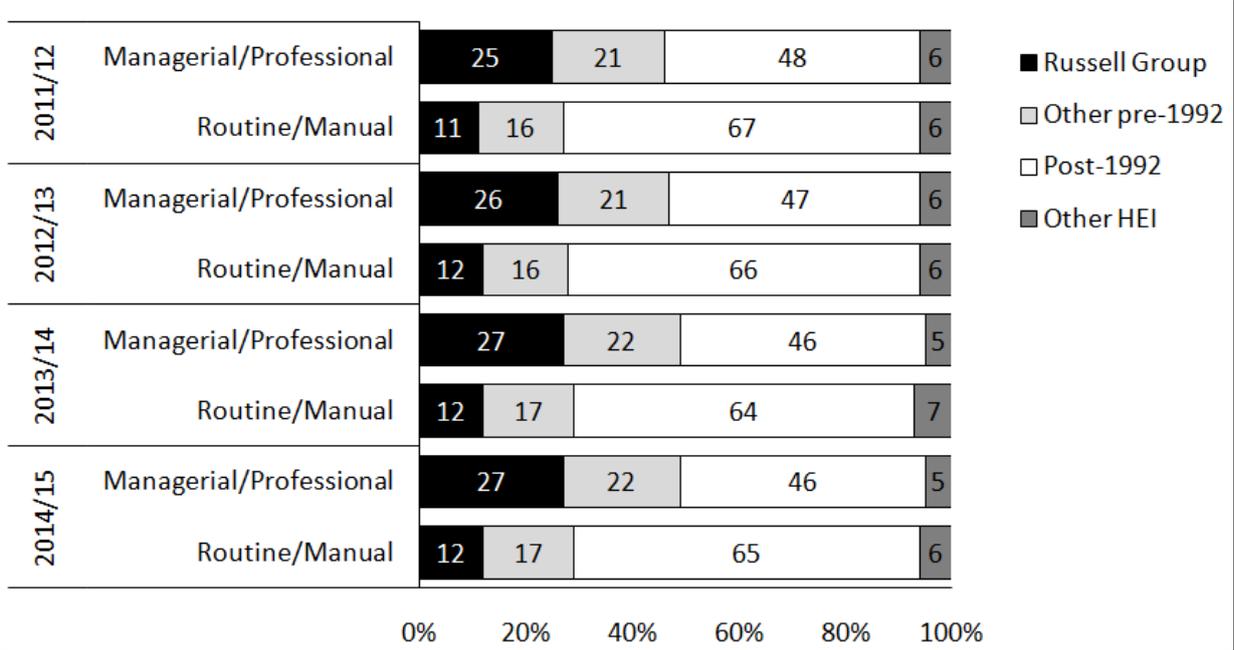
The analysis includes all UK-Domiciled students enrolled in degree and sub-degree programmes.

We also analysed the higher education choices of students from state and independent schools. Currently, around 5% of Scottish pupils are educated in independent schools, and this figure rises to 6.5% at secondary school level.[113] A higher proportion of pupils in England attend independent schools – 7% overall and 18% of those over the age of 16.[114] Figure 5.5 displays the average percentage of young students from independent and state schools entering different types of Scottish higher education institution. In 2011/12, 62% of young students who were educated in independent schools prior to entry to higher education enrolled in ancient universities compared to only 27% of those who studied in state schools. The socio-economic gap is smaller in other pre-92 universities: on average, of all students from higher social class backgrounds, 25% entered this university sector in 2011/12 compared to 21% of students from lower social class backgrounds. The trend is reversed for the post-92 universities: on average, only 14% of under-21s from independent schools enrolled in these universities compared to 41% of state school entrants. By 2014/15 the average percentage of students from independent schools entering ancient universities increased to 71%, while the percentage of state school students entering such universities remained largely unchanged at 27%. Underlining the trend noted above in relation to parental occupation, it is evident that the Scottish pre-92 sector is becoming increasingly middle class in character, with 88% of independent school HE entrants electing to study in pre-92 universities in 2014/15, compared with 83% in 2011/12. Only 20% of students from independent schools chose to study at a Scottish post-92 university.

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[113] See: http://www.scis.org.uk/assets/Uploads/SCIS-Business/Press-release/2015-SCIS-Census-2015.pdf ; and http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Summarystatsforschools
[114] See: http://www.isc.co.uk/research/

Figure 5.5: Average % of under-21s from state and private schools entering HE in Scotland, by university type
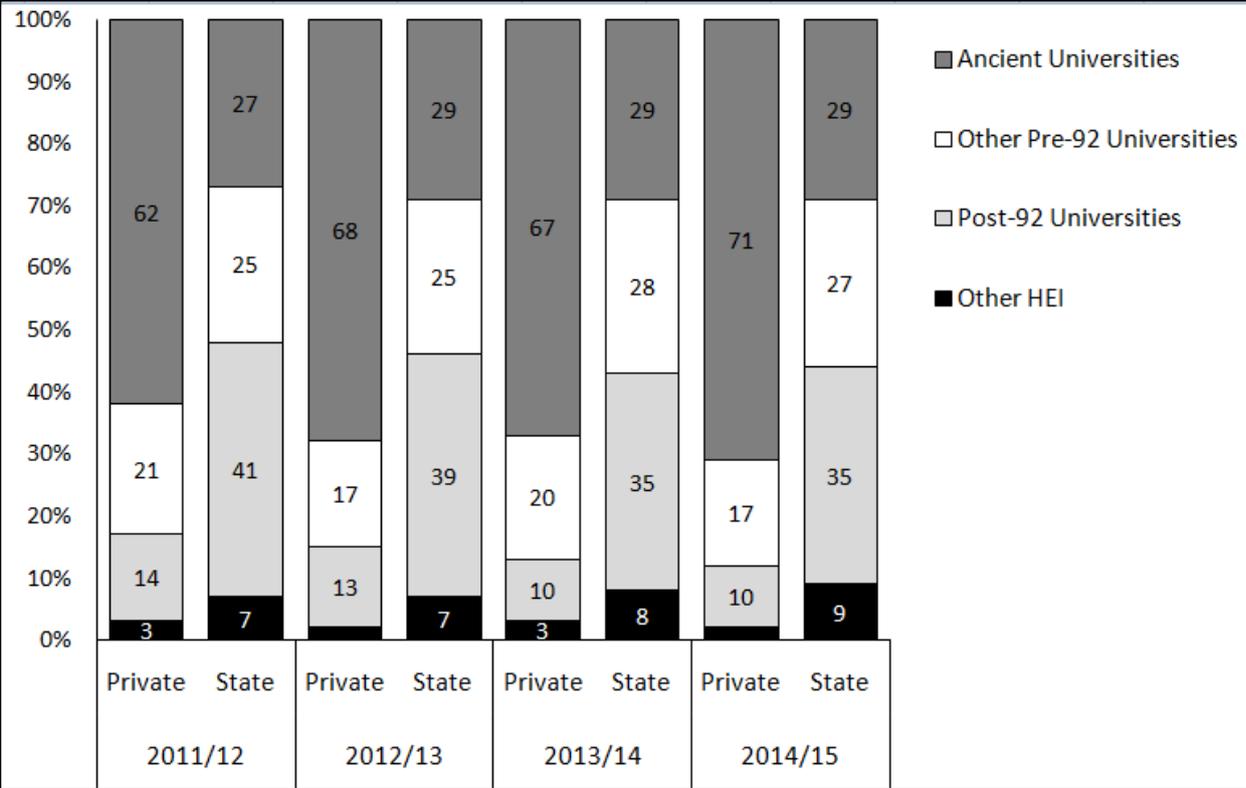
Source: HESA Student Record 2011/12 to 2014/15. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited 2016. The analysis includes all UK-Domiciled students enrolled in degree and sub-degree programmes.

Figure 5.6 presents similar data for England. In recent academic years, on average, about half (48–49%) of privately schooled young students entered a Russell Group university compared to 16–18% of their state educated peers. In other words, privately educated students are almost three times more likely to go to a leading university. This is a stable and consistent gap, which has not changed over the time period covered by this research. A 'school type' variation is also evident in the average percentage of entrants in other pre-92 universities: again, a higher percentage of students from private schools entered this university type than students from state schools. By a way of contrast, a majority of state school students entered a post-92 university compared with only about one in five of their privately educated counterparts. This result is in line with earlier analysis we presented, showing considerable correlation between university type and students' background, which has remained stable over time despite the various widening participation policies discussed in Sections 1 and 7.

Figure 5.6: Average % of under-21s from state and private schools entering HE in England, by university type
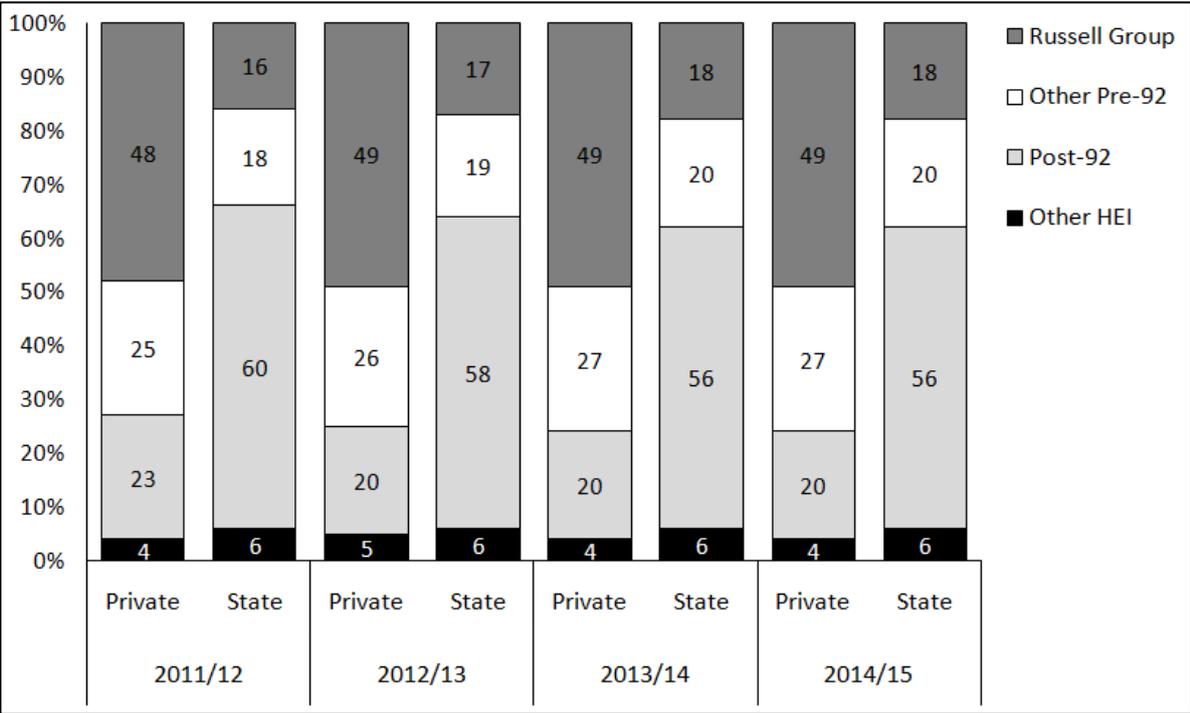

Source: HESA Student Record 2011/12 to 2014/15. Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited 2016. The analysis includes all UK-Domiciled students enrolled in degree and sub-degree programmes.

Summary

The proportion of students from more socially advantaged backgrounds is greater in highly selective universities than in less selective universities in both Scotland and England, and this gap has not narrowed between 1996 and 2014. This is despite a general reduction in the average percentage of students from higher social class backgrounds entering highly selective universities as well as the introduction of various widening participation policies and changes in tuition fee regimes.

In Scotland, on average, just over 20% of students from lower social class background entered highly selective ancient universities while about 40% of students from higher social class backgrounds entered these universities. This trend is reversed in relation to the less selective post-92 universities, which include a higher proportion of students from less socially advantaged backgrounds. These patterns have been stable between 2011 and 2014. A similar social-class gap has been identified in England.

In Scotland, students from independent schools are over-represented in ancient universities. Students from independent schools are also slightly over-represented in other pre-92 universities, but not in post-92 universities. Moreover, in the past decade, there was a small yet steady increase in the percentage of independent school students in ancient universities, while the distribution of students by school type in other university types in Scotland remained relatively unchanged. This means that the institutional segregation by students' school type has slightly widened in Scotland in recent years. Similarly, the average percentage of privately schooled students in highly selective universities in

65

England is higher than the percentage of these students in less selective universities. This gap has neither narrowed nor widened between 1996 and 2014.

The institutional segregation by social class background and secondary school type is also shown by the analysis of students' higher education destinations. In both UK nations, students from independent schools are concentrated in very selective universities. In Scotland (but not in England) there is a growing concentration of socially advantaged students (those from managerial and professional and independent school backgrounds) in more selective institutions (in 2011/12, 62% of independent school entrants were awarded a place in one of the four Scottish ancient universities. By 2014/15, this proportion had increased to 71% of independent school entrants. Over this period, the proportion of independent school entrants gaining a place in a Scottish post-92 university declined from 21% in 2011/12 to 17% in 2014/15 – see Figure 5.5). In England, this social class clustering effect is an important feature of the system but is somewhat less marked – in 2014/15, 49% of independent school entrants gained a place in a Russell Group university, compared with 27% in another pre-92 university and 20% in a post-92 university. With regard to entrants from higher social class backgrounds, there was approximately a 50:50 split between the pre- and post-university sectors.

Introduction

This section provides an overview of the performance of UK institutions in relation to their inclusion of students from working class backgrounds. To make cross-university comparisons more meaningful, we compare the social profile of institutions of particular types. The principal focus of our analysis is the proportion of first year, full time undergraduate degree students from working class backgrounds in higher and lower tariff institutions (see tables A3.1 and A3.2 in Appendix 3) using benchmarks developed by HESA. We also compare ST 30 institutions across the UK. Ancient universities in Scotland are compared with Russell Group universities in the rest of the UK. We begin with a discussion of HESA performance indicators and institutional benchmarks relating to widening access.

Performance Indicators and benchmarks

HESA developed a range of performance indicators (PI) following the Dearing Report in order to allow higher education institutions to monitor their performance relative to other institutions.[115] Published annually since 2002, HESA indicators cover widening participation, student retention, learning and teaching outcomes, research output and employment of graduates. [116]The widening access indicators use three measures: (i) the highest earning parent or carer's occupational group (NS-SEC[117]), (ii) type of school attended (state or independent) and (iii) low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR).

The published data focus on young, first year full-time entrants from the UK and show, for each institution, the percentage with parents/carers from working class backgrounds (NS-SEC 4-7) and the percentage from state schools. However, HESA cautions against a straight comparison between diverse institutions, suggesting instead that HEIs should be benchmarked against others with similar characteristics. These benchmarks, published alongside the PI, are based on sector averages and take into account the subject mix and entry level qualifications of each institution.[118] HESA reports indicate whether an institution performs statistically significantly[119] below or above its benchmark.

Our main focus is on socioeconomic background and we therefore examine the proportion of students from NS-SEC 4-7 in the first year full-time population in the analysis that follows. We recognise that there are some drawbacks with this PI (see e.g. Weedon, 2014)[120] and that it is due to be discontinued; however, currently it is the only one that allows for comparison between similar types of institutions across the whole of the UK. It should be noted that HESA data include the majority of first year full-time students, but does not include mature students (those aged 21 and above). Across the UK, 76.8% of the first year university student population is made up of young students, with some variation by jurisdiction. In England, young students make up 77.2% of the first year undergraduate population. In the other countries, the proportions are as follows: Scotland: 74.2%; Wales: 75.5%; and Northern Ireland: 75.1%. The proportion of young students is generally higher in the higher tariff institutions

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[115]National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE). (1997).*Higher education in the learning society: Report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Ron Dearing*. London: Stationery Office. Retrieved fromhttp://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dearing1997/dearing1997.html#24.

[116] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/

[117] NS-SEC stands for the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and is divided into 7 categories from professional and higher managerial (1) to routine occupations (7).

[118] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/guide

[119] A difference is considered statistically significant if the PI is both 'greater than three times the standard deviation and greater than three percentage points' (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/benchmarks).

[120] Weedon, E. (2014). *Working paper 1 – Widening participation to higher education of under-represented groups in Scotland: The challenges of using performance indicators*. Edinburgh, CREID, University of Edinburgh.

which are the focus of our analysis (for a comparison of the proportion of young/mature students in higher/lower tariff institutions see Figure A3:1 in Appendix 3). Institutions also vary in relation to the proportion of UK and EU students. These differences need to be borne in mind as the widening access data relate only to UK students. It should also be remembered that HE provision in colleges is not included in this analysis where, as noted in earlier sections, students from poorer backgrounds are disproportionately represented.

Sampling strategy

In order to compare the Scottish institutions with higher education institutions across the UK, a sampling strategy was developed based on the sector adjusted benchmarks. The data used was the most recently published covering the period 2014–15 (Table T1b) and, unless otherwise stated, all data come from this table.[121] We split the institutions into two groups: (i) those with lower benchmarks which require the highest qualifications on entry; (ii) those with higher benchmarks which require lower entry qualifications. To maintain consistency with other parts of the report, the low benchmark institutions are referred to as 'higher tariff' institutions and high benchmark group is referred to as 'lower tariff' institutions (see tables A3.1 and A3.2 for a list of institutions in each category). The higher tariff institutions normally provide a subject mix associated with a more socially advantaged intake. The proportion of NS-SEC 4-7 students at universities in the four home nations is as follows: England: 33.7%; Scotland: 28.5%; Wales: 33.1%; Northern Ireland: 38.6% and the average for the whole of the UK is 33.4%. We set our cut-off point at a benchmark of 31% to include the ancient and the old (pre-92) Scottish institutions, in other words, below the overall average but above the Scottish average. The total number of institutions included in the initial analysis was 123 in England, 18 in Scotland, 8 in Wales and 4 in Northern Ireland (for further details of the sampling strategy see Appendix 3).

Characteristics of the university sector in each jurisdiction

An initial analysis shows the overall proportion of institutions in the higher tariff group in Scotland is considerably higher than elsewhere in the UK, as half of the Scottish universities fall into this group compared to around one third of institutions (39) in England. In Wales only 1 out of 8 and in Northern Ireland 1 out 4 was considered higher tariff (see Table A3:1 in Appendix 3 for the complete list of higher tariff institutions). In England and Scotland the list includes a number of institutions which are highly specialised in particular subject areas (e.g. art, music or agriculture) which generally have fewer students. The benchmarks for these institutions suggest that entry is highly competitive. However, the aim here is to compare institutions that offer a broad range of subject areas; these smaller, specialised institutions marked with an asterisk in Table A3:1 have therefore been omitted from the analysis, which includes 29 institutions in England, 8 in Scotland and 1 each in Wales and Northern Ireland. Based on an analysis of this smaller number of institutions, it is still evident that Scotland has a greater proportion of higher tariff institutions with 8 out of 18 (44%) falling into this category in comparison to around a quarter of institutions in England and Northern Ireland and an even smaller proportion in Wales. The relatively large higher tariff sector in Scotland means that opportunities for university-level higher education for young people are substantially more concentrated in universities where the entry qualifications required would be expected to produce a less socially mixed intake.

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[121] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg

The social profile of the student population by type of university and jurisdiction

Overall, compared with England, Scottish universities include a slightly lower proportion of students from working class backgrounds (NS-SEC 4-7). The proportion of students from working class backgrounds is marginally higher in more selective institutions in Scotland than in England (23.5% in Scotland compared with 21.5% in England), but this is offset by a lower proportion of working class students in less selective institutions (36.9% in Scotland compared with 38.8% in England). In Northern Ireland, the one higher tariff institution performs well above its benchmark with 32.1% of all young entrants coming from working class backgrounds and in the lower tariff institutions, 43.9% of students come from working class backgrounds. The proportion of students from working class backgrounds In the Welsh higher tariff institution is 23.9%, and in the lower tariff institutions the proportion is 36.3%, a similar picture to Scotland. If the analysis is restricted to first year students on first degree programmes only, the gap between the lower tariff institutions in England and Scotland widens to 4%; however, Scotland and Wales are virtually the same and Northern Ireland remains the highest performing sector with regard to the inclusion of working class students in university (Figure A3:2 in Appendix 3).

Figure 6.1: Percentage of first year students from NS-SEC 4–7 in higher tariff institutions compared to those in lower tariff institutions in the four UK jurisdictions, 2014–15
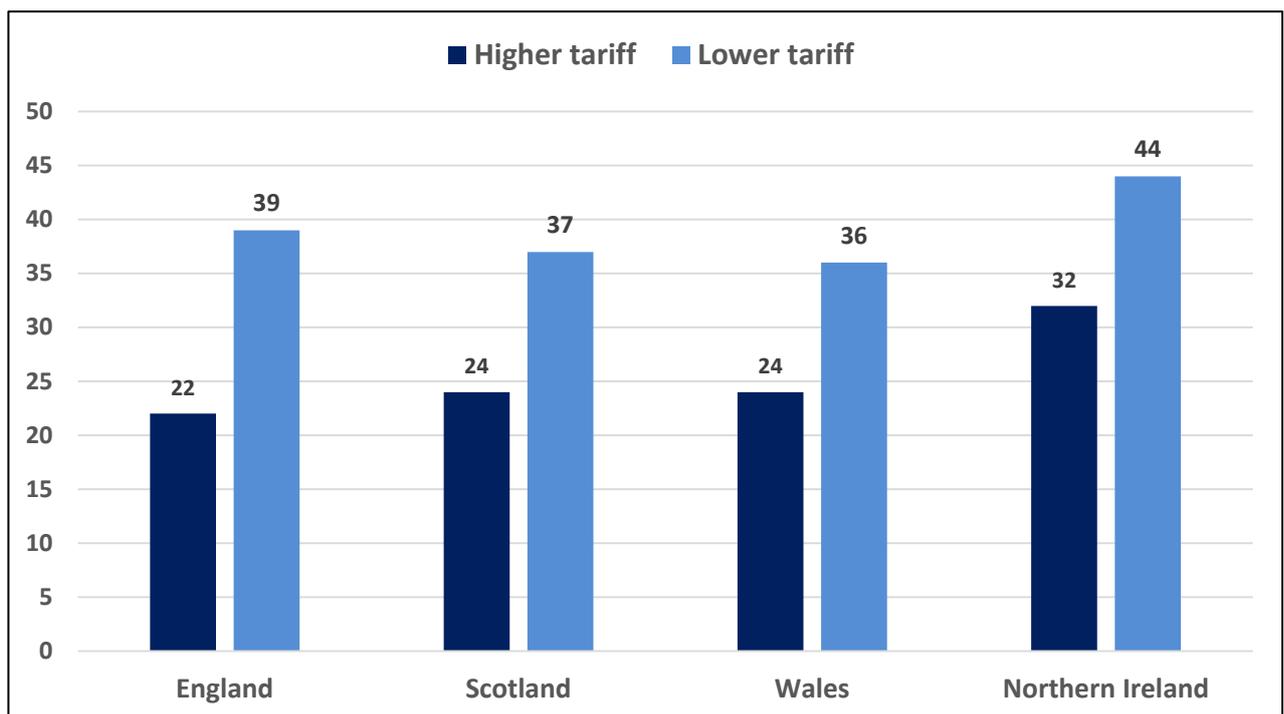
Source: HESA, https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1b
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Figure 6.2 shows the relationship between the Scottish ancient universities and the 20 Russell group universities in England and the two Russell Group institutions in Wales and Northern Ireland respectively. As already noted, the Northern Ireland Russell Group institution performs significantly better than other institutions of this type in the UK. This is also the case in Wales, but to a much lesser extent. There is virtually no difference between the English Russell Group institutions and the four Scottish ancient universities. It was noted in the 2015 report of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission that the four Scottish ancient institutions were 'as socially unrepresentative as the 20 English Russell Group universities.'[122]

Figure 6.2: Percentage of students from NS-SEC 4–7 in Russell Group institutions in the rest of the UK compared to the four ancient Scottish institutions, 2014–15
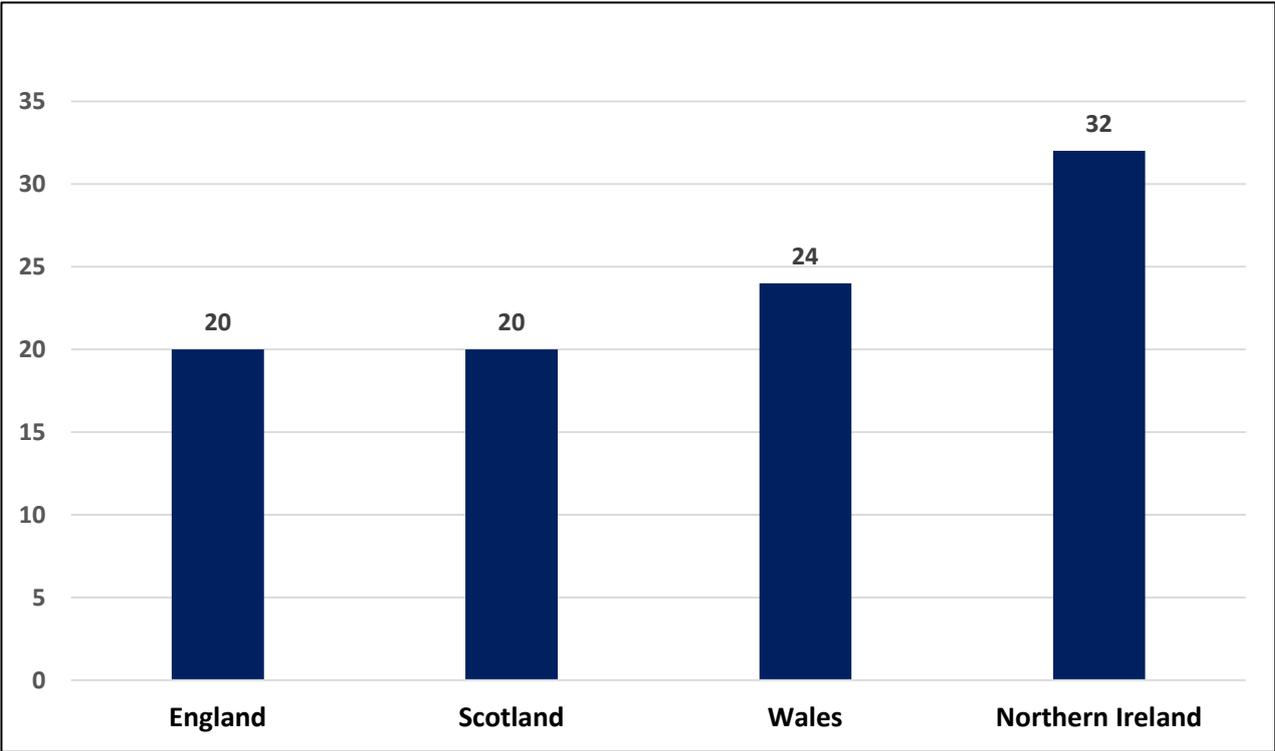
Source: HESA, https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1b
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Figure 6.3 compares the four nations using the ST30 grouping identified by the Sutton Trust. The ST30 includes all of the Russell Group institutions except Queen Mary University, London but includes the universities of Bath, Lancaster, Reading, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College and Surrey, in England and the universities of St Andrews and Strathclyde in Scotland. As the figure shows, there is again very little difference between Scotland and England when the focus is on the more selective institutions, although Scottish ancient universities are overall marginally more inclusive.

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[122]Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. (2015). *State of the nation and child poverty in Great Britain*. London: Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission.

Figure 6.3: Percentage of students from NS-SEC 4–7 in ST30 institutions in the four UK jurisdictions, 2014–15.
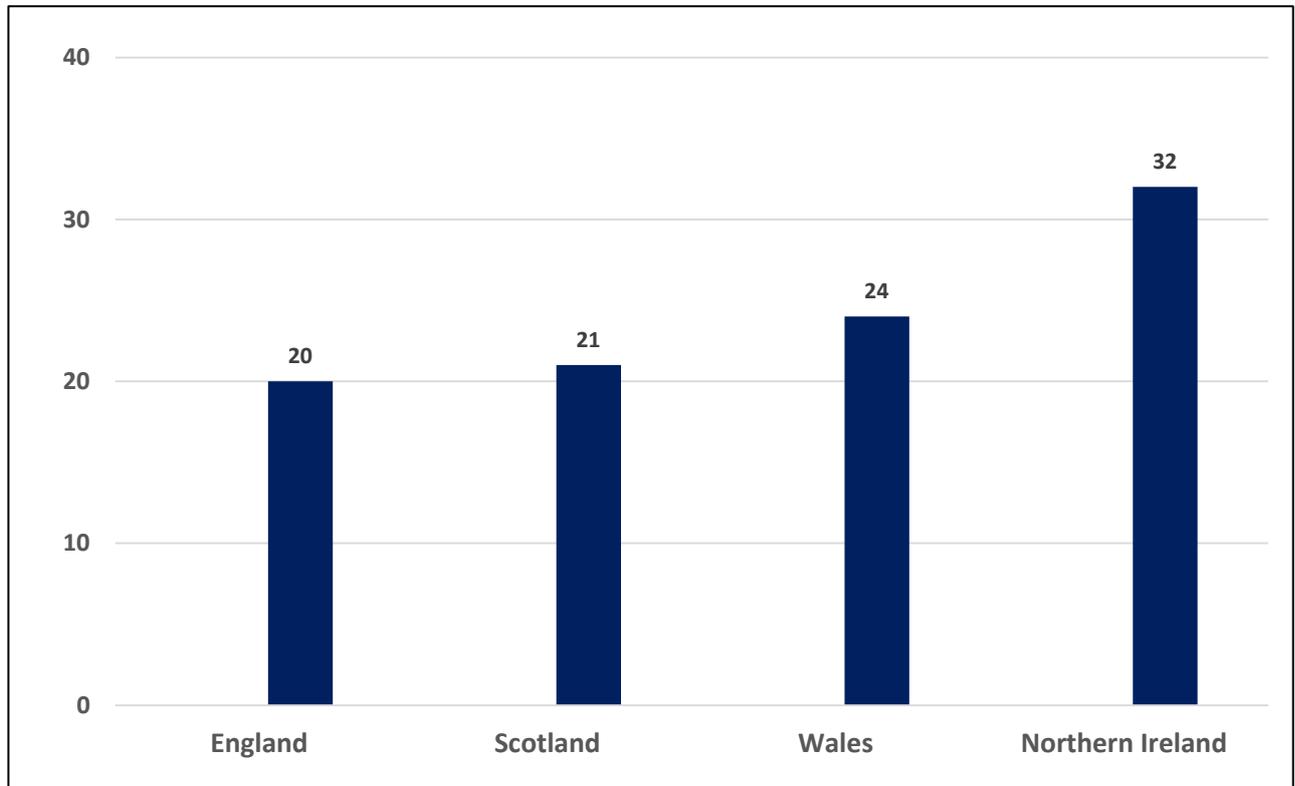
Source: HESA https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1b,
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

The similarity in performance between English Russell Group institutions and the Scottish ancient universities suggests that the overall marginally higher proportion of working class students in higher tariff institutions in Scotland (as shown in Figure 6.1) is largely accounted for by the performance of the old rather than the ancient universities. Figure 6.4 presents data on the Scottish higher tariff institutions, showing that the universities of Strathclyde and Stirling are the only ones to perform above their benchmark, whilst the University of Dundee is only marginally below its benchmark. The other institutions perform below benchmark but only one, St Andrews, is statistically significantly below its benchmark.

Figure 6.4: A comparison of the NS-SEC 4–7 PI and benchmark in higher tariff institutions in Scotland, 2014–15.
Source: HESA https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1b.
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number
            *PI is statistically significantly below benchmark
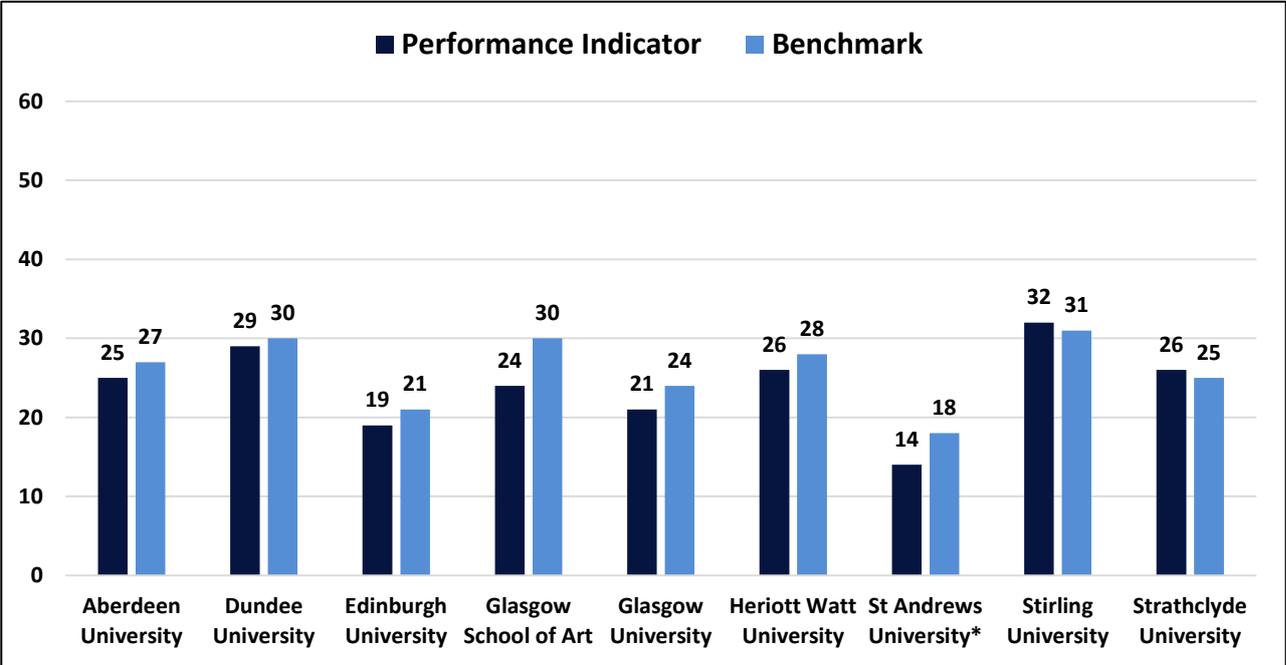
Figure 6.5 presents data on the proportion of working class students in lower tariff Scottish institutions against their benchmarks. It can be seen that five of the institutions perform above or at their benchmark but only two are statistically significantly above the benchmark – University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) and University of the West of Scotland (UWS).

Figure 6.5: A comparison of the NS-SEC 4–7 PI and benchmark in lower tariff institutions in Scotland, 2014–15
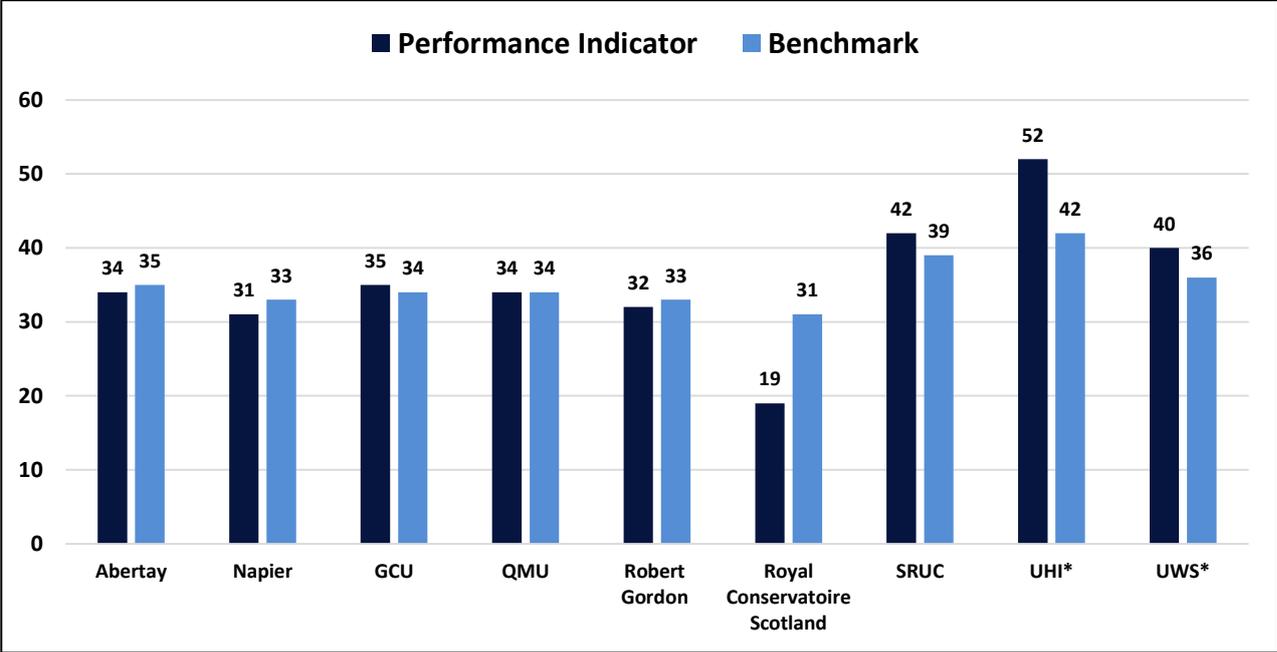
Source: HESA, https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1b
Note: figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number
          *PI is statistically significantly above the benchmarks

Figure 6.6: Changes in the percentage of Scottish-domiciled students from NS-SEC 4–7 in ancient Scottish universities from 2012–15
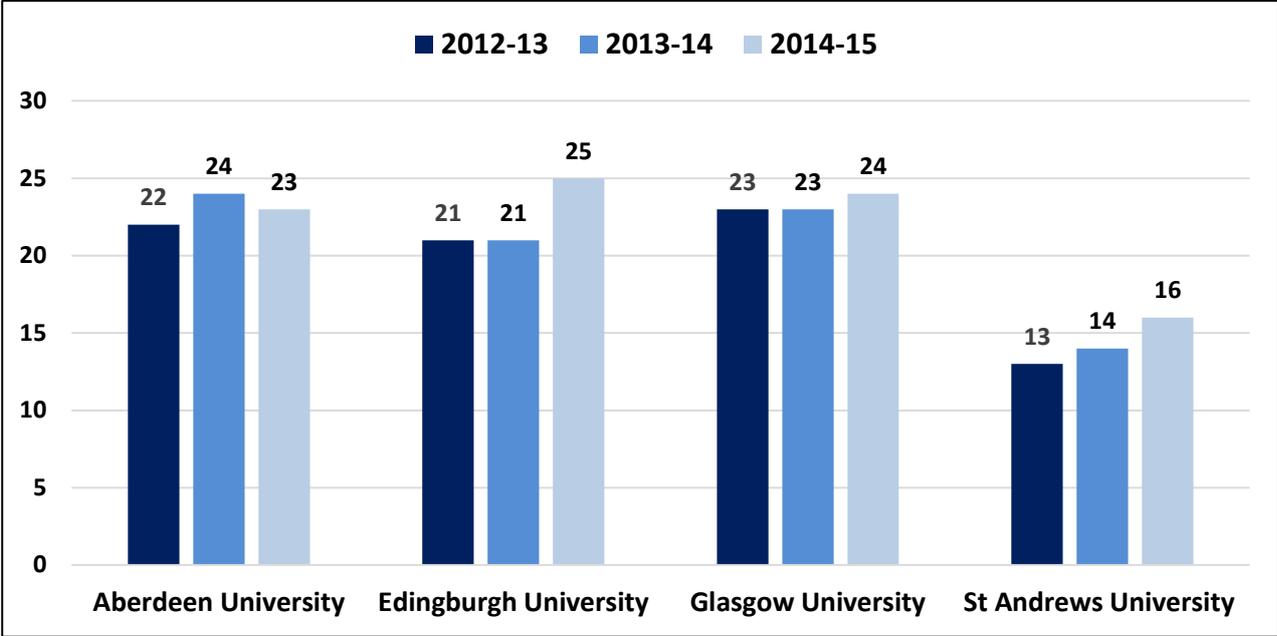
Source: SFC,
          http://www.sfc.ac.uk/PublicationsStatistics/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_indicators/Participation_indicator_for_Scottish_HEIs.aspx
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Finally, focusing only on the four ancient universities in Figure 6.6, data from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) shows changes in the participation rate of Scottish domiciled students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds over the past three years. The change has been greatest in the two institutions that started from the lowest base – University of Edinburgh and University of St Andrews. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Scottish Government provided additional places earmarked for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in ancient universities for a period of three years from 2013. The data here suggest that this may have had some impact but mainly in two institutions.

- **Summary**
  This section provides an overview of the performance of UK institutions of similar types in relation to their inclusion of first year, full time undergraduate students from working class backgrounds. Comparisons were made between higher and lower tariff institutions, as well as the performance of Sutton Trust 30 universities across the UK. Ancient universities in Scotland were compared with Russell Group universities in the rest of the UK. The analysis shows that there are important differences between the overall characteristics of the Scottish and English university sectors, with Scotland having a greater proportion of higher tariff, or more academically selective, institutions, whilst England has a higher proportion of lower tariff, or less selective institutions. This reflects the fact that England has a relatively large number of post-92 universities, providing more places for students with lower academic qualifications. Given the well-established association between social class background and educational attainment (Hills *et al.*, 2010),[123] the profile of the Scottish university system is more likely to militate against the inclusion of students from less advantaged backgrounds than that of other parts of the UK. This means that the institutional segregation by students' school type has slightly widened in Scotland in recent years.

All Scottish ancient and pre-92 universities, with the exception of Stirling and Strathclyde Universities, perform below their HESA benchmark in relation to the proportion of the student population from less advantaged backgrounds (Figure 6.4). Despite the absence of tuition fees in Scotland, higher tariff institutions in Scotland are at least as socially selective as similar types of institutions in other parts of the UK.

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[123] Hills, J., Brewer, M., Jenkins, S., Lister, R., Lupton, R., Machin, S., Mills, C., Modood, T., Rees, T., & Riddell, S. (2010). *An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK*. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.

SECTION 7: WIDENING ACCESS ACTIVITIES AND DEBATES

This section begins with a discussion of policymakers' views of the Scottish Government's approach to widening access, drawing on 32 interviews with Scottish university and college senior managers, politicians and other policy makers. These interviews were conducted in 2013–2014 as part of an Economic and Social Research Council funded project entitled, *Higher education, the devolution settlement and the referendum on independence* (ESK00705X/1), which took place at the University of Edinburgh.[124] We also provide an overview of widening participation initiatives in Scottish ancient institutions, drawing on an analysis of the first round of outcome agreements published in 2012/13[125] and the third round of outcome agreements covering the period 2014–2015.

Scotland has been slower than the rest of the UK to develop systems to regulate access to university, possibly because of the belief that the lack of tuition fees would automatically lead to improved participation rates by students from poorer backgrounds. However, bodies such as the Scottish National Union of Students have drawn attention to Scotland's relatively poor access record, reflected in significantly lower levels of expenditure by the Scottish Government on this group of students.[126] Responding to these criticisms, the Scottish Government passed the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2012 which came into effect in June 2013. Under the terms of the Act, university outcome agreements submitted to the SFC as a condition of grant must include detailed targets and action plans relating to widening access. Whilst the SFC, like OFFA, is able to enforce financial penalties on institutions failing to make adequate progress on widening access, this power has been used as the basis for negotiation rather than enforcement.

The SFC specifies that all universities must use the SIMD as the main indicator of disadvantage, which, as discussed earlier, is a neighbourhood rather than an individual measure of disadvantage. At the same time, institutions are permitted to use any other measure, or set of measures, for deprivation to demonstrate their success in improving access. As we shall see, debates continue about which groups should be targeted, how progress should be reported and the relationship between government and the university sector in the field of widening access.

Policymakers' perceptions of approaches to widening access

All interviewees supported the principle of widening access and most were willing to acknowledge that Scottish universities could do more to recruit a student body which was more representative of the wider population. Michael Russell, the then Cabinet Secretary of Education and Lifelong Learning, believed that free tuition was the route to widening access. However, he also acknowledged that insufficient progress had been made and that legislation was required to focus institutional attention:

> [The problem of unequal patterns of participation] is solved by taking specific actions and steps many of which we have begun to take through the post-16 Bill and the widening access outcome agreements. I've moved a long way on this argument. Four years ago I would have said that I thought this was an argument that we could win by voluntary persuasion of the universities. I now believe that we should have very strong powers available to us to allow widening access to take place. But widening access will not be improved by imposing student

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[124]Riddell, S., Weedon, E., & Minty, S. (Eds.) (2016). *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK: Diverging or Converging Systems?* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[125]Riddell, S., Edward, S., Boeren, E., & Weedon, E. (2013). *Widening Access to Higher Education: Does Anyone Know What Works? A Report to Universities Scotland*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity (CREID).

[126]Gallacher, J., & Raffe, D. (2012). Higher education policy in post-devolution UK: more convergence than divergence? *Journal of Education Policy, 27*(4), 467–490.

fees which is the extension of the argument you've got. We're almost looking at two different sets of problems.

University principals felt that progress had been made over recent years due to the growing importance of the widening access agenda, but conceded that more needed to be done:

> … if you look at the data on access, they're not great actually. And a lot of Scottish universities clearly perform badly in relation to that. The question is, however, what are the causes of that effect? Is it the universities performing badly or is the system not allowing them to recruit in the way they want to? …I think universities probably do need to make more of an effort. They need to engage more, for example, with that particular target population, at a much younger age. If you are looking at access schemes that are really targeting kids, sixteen and upwards, you're too late … So you really need to start at the primary level. (Interview with senior manager, post-92 university)

> Our university has been, over the last twelve years, steadily improving its position of the order of two thirds a percent a year. And we have a range of tools. Summer schools, mentoring, Pathways to the Professions, the football one, a whole lot of things that have been steadily improving the situation. It's not been improving as rapidly as I would have liked to have seen. But there's no questions [sic] it's improving. And obviously the use of contextual information, it's improving in response to the policy work we have done. (Interview with senior manager, ancient university)

Two interviewees pointed out that, with regard to widening access, English universities might be performing rather better than their Scottish counterparts:

> And again if you compare it with England, the English funding system is putting a real responsibility on the universities to provide financial support for students from less advantaged backgrounds. That hasn't emerged as an issue in Scotland because of the different system we've got. (Interview with senior manager, post-92 university)

It was also recognised that some universities were more successful than others in recruiting a diverse mix of students because of their history, location and mission:

> So you can mount the argument by organising statistics in the right way that Scotland's not doing quite as well as some other parts of the UK. And that was essentially used as a stick particularly to beat certain universities that are perhaps, I would say, performing less well than others in this arena. It's just that their mission does not lend them quite so well to being an attractive venue for people from a low economic background. (Interview with senior manager, pre-92 university)

One principal of an ancient university believed that his institution was performing well on widening access not just because of its location, but also because of efforts to change its culture:

> … we're also finding more less advantaged students coming from around Scotland to us. So I think it's not just about geography it's partly also about culture, it's where would these students feel comfortable. And we've been positioning ourselves as … an international university but one that's embedded within the civic fabric of a city like X and a country like Scotland. And that's our USP [unique selling point] and that's what we play on. (Interview with senior manager, ancient university)

College principals believed that their institutions were much more successful than universities in relation to widening access:

I think the college sector places a higher premium on that accessibility in terms of social class than the universities. Now I am not saying that the universities do not care about access from different social classes because I think they do. But I think because of the entry system and where culturally and economically the colleges have been in Scotland it's been much more important to the colleges being seen to be accessible to all and to have less barriers to entry than the university system. It has been easier to access the colleges for people wanting to study than it has been in the university. It has been less competitive if you like, that being able to get in through door. (Interview with senior officer, Scotland's Colleges)

Policymakers' perceptions of widening access outcome agreements

Widening access outcome agreements were strongly criticised by a number of university senior managers, particularly those from ancient universities, on the grounds that they were part of a wider agenda to reduce university autonomy:

I think they [outcome agreements] are ineffective and pointless. I don't think the people who are doing it are motivated by a very direct command and control [view of the world]. I think it's more they have some not very coherent notion of how universities would be if they were otherwise. And so obviously an imposed or a semi imposed code of governance, outcome agreements, whatever else they are, they are a reduction in autonomy. It stands to reason. If you tell institutions, 'We expect you to be governed this way', then you remove their autonomy to be governed some other way. If you tell a university, 'Whatever you do, you must meet this outcome agreement', even if the outcome is one that the university would agree is entirely desirable, in a logical sense you reduce their autonomy. (Interview with senior manager, ancient university)

A slightly different view was presented by a senior manager of a post-92 university, who felt that the goal should be 'responsible autonomy', so that universities were guided to pursue government objectives, but with safeguards:

I don't actually see any desire by Scottish Government to restrict university autonomy. I think they do understand fairly well … All governments can, of course, declare themselves to be supporters of autonomy and be tempted into trying to restrict that where it suits government priorities or where they think it does. I don't, at the moment, see that as something that's actually happening but it can happen anywhere. And so one of the priorities of the university system must always be to ensure that the guard is up … (Interview with senior manager, post-92 university)

Another principal believed that it was legitimate for the government to regulate widening access because of the amount of public money spent on universities:

We've got £30 billion to spend in Scotland. £1 billion of that is going on higher education. So a 30th, which isn't insignificant. Is that an investment worth our making? And a lot of it is pretty intangible but actually concentrating on some of the tangibles helps to justify that. (Interview with senior manager, post-92 university)

Policymakers' views of performance indicators

Much criticism of widening access outcome agreements centred on their use of a limited range of performance indicators measuring area rather than individual characteristics:

I do have a problem with the definition of widening participation…The definition of widening participation is completely based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. That is an index which by its very nature is heavily biased towards urban areas. There are almost no postcodes of a deprived nature in rural areas. Therefore X and X universities are heavily

disadvantaged despite the fact that a lot of effort is put into low progression schools to support people being the first generation to go to university from their family. And to those who have low household incomes. All those are important issues which are not taken into account by the current definitions. And therefore for some universities it is almost impossible to get high numbers. Whereas in areas like ours, rural areas, there are many poor people who are not discussed as such. (Interview with senior manager, ancient university)

Another interviewee defended the use of the SIMD as part of a basket of indicators, since it was more robust than many others and a common measure was needed to track progress over time:

It depends very much exactly how you are using SIMD. The problem is there aren't many other better indicators. It's certainly a more sophisticated indicator than free school meals or whatever used to be used widely. So it takes in a range of indicators. I suppose one of the main points to make, though, is there's almost a gradient of social disadvantage against attainment, so we are not really in a position where it is just one group at the very bottom end who are hugely disadvantaged and everybody else is fine. The disadvantage is also reflected at the second and third quintiles. (Interview with former civil servant)

Overall, the Scottish policy community was supportive of the government's widening access agenda and recognised that swifter progress might be desirable. However, there were disagreements about the locus of responsibility, with some respondents believing that universities were being held accountable for wider social problems associated with economic inequality. It was felt that universities could not tackle the problem alone, and schools needed to do more to boost the attainment of pupils from poorer neighbourhoods. There was some resistance to the use of outcome agreements as a means of regulating access on the grounds that these were part of a wider agenda to erode university autonomy. More specifically, SIMD was seen as a crude measure which flattered some universities because of their geographical location and penalised others. Some principals believed that institutions should be able to choose their own priorities and measures without government intervention.

Analysis of widening access outcome agreements in ancient universities

In the light of the debates identified above, we now examine ancient universities' widening access outcome agreements submitted for the first time in 2012–2013. The second and third rounds of agreements were intended to be more succinct and target focussed. Table 6.1 shows the outcomes and national measures specified by the SFC, whilst Table 6.2 summarises the types of widening access initiatives which have been adopted widely across the UK

Table 7.1: Aims and measures of widening access identified by the Scottish Funding Council

Outcome	National measure
More even patterns of participation of different groups of learners, including those from areas of deprivation, from protected characteristics groups and care backgrounds. An increase in the number of students articulating with advanced standing from HNC/HND to degree level study. More institutions applying best practice in contextualised admissions.	1.* The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing. 2.* The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes. 3. The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) (that is, schools with consistently low rates of progression to higher education). 4.* (where under-represented) The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants by different protected characteristics and care leavers.

Source: SFC (2014)[127]

Table 7.2: Common types of widening access initiatives across the UK

Type of intervention	Target group
Talks in low progression school to raise awareness and aspirations; Involvement of students as mentors and role models in community activities	Pupils in early years of secondary school, or even primary schools
Talks about subject choices, in school or on campus; Campus visits, involving current students	Pupils in S3 and S4
Campus visits; Discussions of options; taught subject sessions & lectures; Talks on budgeting and availability of bursaries; Guidance on applications and interviews; Mentoring from current students; Summer schools	Pupils in S5 and S6 about to make progression decisions
Talks and discussion groups with parents/carers	Parents/ carers, especially those with no prior HE experience
Talks in colleges, and on university campus; Summer schools; Opportunities for articulating students to form networks and use the university facilities before formal entry	Students moving from college to HE
Pre-entry summer schools	Mature entrants from access courses; pupils from under-represented groups about to start university courses

Source: Riddell et al. (2013: 55–6)[128]

Outreach work: Recruiting young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds

Widening access work in ancient universities, and across the sector more widely, is funded by the Scottish Funding Council, individual institutions and external bodies such as the Sutton Trust and

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[127] Scottish Funding Council. (2014). *University Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2014–15*. Edinburgh: SFC.
[128] Riddell, S., Edward, S., Boeren, E., & Weedon, E. (2013). *Widening access to higher education: Does anyone know what works? A Report to Universities Scotland*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre for Research in Education Inclusion and Diversity (CREID).

Robertson Trust. Much of the work focuses on improving recruitment by young students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Without exception, the outcome agreements list multiple strands of activity, including interventions in primary and secondary schools and colleges. The outcome agreements vary widely in the detail provided about their activities, the groups of pupils which they target, and their rationale for targeting them. Some of these initiatives are long-term, laying foundations for the future. For example, since 2002/3 Edinburgh University has undertaken pilot work with secondary students aged 11–13and with 11 primary schools which feed into secondary schools with low progression rates. A further initiative is *Educated Pass*, which works with local youth football clubs in collaboration with local colleges and the Scottish Youth Football Association to develop club based and on campus activities.

There are many other interventions with some evidence of success mentioned in the Outcome Agreements, including *Access to Creative Education in Scotland* (ACES), provided by the Universities of Edinburgh, Dundee, Robert Gordon University and Glasgow School of Art. *Reach Scotland* is an example of an SFC-funded project that aims to raise awareness and to encourage, support and prepare secondary school pupils wishing to pursue a professional degree at the University of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow or St Andrews. *Top Up* is the senior element in the FOCUS West programme, provided by the University of Glasgow, designed to help school pupils who are hoping to enter higher education to prepare for the transition from school and make informed choices about their futures.

Recruiting mature students
The University of St Andrews highlights both its evening degree programme which allows students to study part-time in the evening, and is open to 'those who do not present with traditional qualifications and have been constrained by social / educational circumstances'; and also its part-time day study programme, which enables 'those who are returning to study to start at a pace that may be more fitting to their needs before applying to go on to a full-time pathway if they so choose'.[129]

The University of Aberdeen has a 'strategic target (2011–15) to widen participation through flexible entry routes to our programmes, increasing the number of programmes offering further education articulation by 30%.'[130] College links are noted, along with some aspects of its partnership with Aberdeen College designed to ease the transition of articulating students:

- "taster" days on campus for potential students, and attendance at university lectures;

- University talks at Aberdeen College;

- discipline-based academic links and networks; and an annual joint staff event;

- focus groups to obtain feedback from students going through the university application process and with first year university students;

- all Aberdeen College students are associate students of the University of Aberdeen and therefore have automatic access to facilities including library and sports.[131]

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[129]*University of Aberdeen Outcome Agreement 2012/13*, p.18. Retrieved from http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Funding_Outcome_Agreements_2012-13/University_of_Aberdeen_Outcome_Agreement_2012-13.pdf
[130]Scottish Funding Council. (2014).*University Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2014–15*. Edinburgh: SFC, p. 2.

[131]*University of Aberdeen Outcome Agreement 2012/13*, p.6.

In its ambitions for 2014–15, the University of Edinburgh states its intention 'to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Edinburgh College to formalise sharing of best practice and increase college exposure to higher education'.

It is evident that the Scottish ancient universities are reluctant to make a firm commitment to increasing the number of students articulating with advanced standing from HNC/HND to degree level study, as desired by the Scottish Funding Council. The University of St Andrews, for example:

> … stands by the four-year degree as a model of educational excellence aligned with international norms. A certain flexibility in entry and exit points is allowed but, in practice, only a small minority of Undergraduates, even those from who in theory qualify to do so, avail themselves of direct entry to Second Year: the breadth of education and choice to pursue a variety of pathways attracts most students to begin their University career in First Year. Evidence shows that the intellectual and personal maturity and flexibility that we value in graduates from this system are also prized by employers.[132]

To summarise this section, we found extensive evidence in the outcome agreements of collaboration between universities, schools and colleges in SHEP, SWAP and hub partnerships. There has been more of a focus on young recruits than mature students. Whilst outreach activities have multiplied, less attention has been paid to monitoring and evaluation. Even when interventions appear highly successful, with many participants progressing to higher education, there are difficulties in establishing causality between intervention and outcome, since young people's decisions on post-school destinations are influenced by a myriad of factors (Mullen, 2010).[133]

Contextualised admissions policies and processes

All ancient universities referred to their use of contextualised admission policies in their outcome agreements. The University of Glasgow, for example, notes that its approach to admissions, including the use of contextualised progression agreements for pre-entry programmes, has earned it a place as a case study of best practice in a study by the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU).[134] In its 2014–15 outcome agreement, the University notes that it is refining its admissions process as part of its approach to recruiting the 200 places for less advantaged students funded by the SFC from 2013/14 to 2016/17. The university states its intention 'to select the most talented and deserving candidates from MD40 postcodes and schools across Scotland' [135]

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[132]*University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement, 2014–15*, p.7. Retrieved from https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/human-resources/equality-and-diversity/fairnessfunding/University%20of%20St%20Andrews%20SFC%20Outcome%20Agreement%202013-14.pdf

[133]Mullen, F. (2010). *Barriers to widening access to higher education*. Spice Briefing 10/07. Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament.

[134] Equality Challenge Unit. (2012). *Equitable admissions for underrepresented groups*. London: Equality Challenge Unit. Retrieved from http://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/equitable-admissions-for-underrepresented-groups.pdf

[135] *University of Glasgow Outcome Agreement 2014–15 to 2016–17.* http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_329814_en.pdf,p.15

The University of Edinburgh makes reference to contextualised admissions as part of its 'fair, clear and transparent admissions strategy'.[136] The strategy is designed to admit 'the very best students from a wide range of backgrounds' The University's 2014–15 outcome agreement notes that:

> The University has for almost a decade been at the forefront of contextualised admissions, taking into account the context and circumstances in which academic achievements are made. SIMD was added into the contextual factors considered for the 2013–14 admissions cycle and the University continues to explore other geo-demographic low socio-economic classifications and indicators to capture students from groups underrepresented in higher education.[137]

The University of St Andrews states that it employs a range of metrics 'to capture potentiality and diversity' including 'pupil attainment, attainment environment (school), mature and young students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds; in-care and looked-after backgrounds, St Andrews pre-HE engagement, and refugee status'. Applicants who have the greatest potential and any diversity factors are flagged up to the Academic Admissions Officers through 'the transparent coding system for Admissions Officers'.[138] St Andrews also announces its intention of increasing intake of socially disadvantaged (in this case, SIMD20) students by 45%, to a total of 19 students per annum by 2014/15, anticipating that 'the School of Medicine will be very much a part of the increase in numbers'.[139] This emphasis on medicine reflects this University's pre-entry activity in medicine, not only through *Reach Scotland*, but also in the provision of *Medicine A104 Pre-Med*, a one-year science course for those wishing to study medicine who have 'just fallen short of entry requirements due to an element of disadvantage';[140] and *Pathway to Medicine*, offered in partnership with Perth College 'to enable mature students to study medicine where they have been prevented from doing so through either social or educational disadvantage'.[141] In its 2014–15 Outcome Agreement, the University declares its intention to review admissions procedures through an Equality Impact assessment in line with recommendations from the ECU and SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions). Relevant training will be given to admissions officers 'in order to ensure that best practice is enacted'.[142]

To summarise, it is clear from the latest round of widening access outcome agreements that Scottish universities accept the need for contextualised admissions, although there is considerable variation in the categories of students for whom they are designed and some differences between subject areas. Despite this endorsement, it is evident from university admissions web-sites that for the most part the

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[136] University of Edinburgh. (2012). *Strategic Plan 2012–2016*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, p. 38. Retrieved from http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/strategicplanning/201216/StrategicPlan201216.pdf
[137] *University of Edinburgh Outcome Agreement 2013/14*, p. 6.
[138] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2012). *University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement 2012–13*. Edinburgh: SFC, pp. 12–13. Retrieved from http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Funding_Outcome_Agreements_2012-13/University_of_St_Andrews_Outcome_Agreement_2012-13.pdf
[139] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2012). *University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement 2012–13*. Edinburgh: SFC, p.13.
[140] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2012). *University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement 2012–13*. Edinburgh: SFC, p.16.
[141] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2012). *University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement 2012–13*. Edinburgh: SFC, p.16.
[142] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2012). *University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement 2014–15*. Edinburgh: SFC, p. 6. Retrieved from http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Funding_Outcome_Agreements_2014-15/University_of_St_Andrews_Outcome_Agreement_2014-15.pdf

grade adjustments made for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are relatively modest and would not compensate for the extent of social class inequality in school attainment.

Retention strategies

Scottish universities' outcome agreements include plans to improve retention rates for disadvantaged students. For example, the University of St Andrews invites students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds to their pre-transitional summer schools, to help them form networks and have a positive start to their university experience. However, compared with the high volume of recruitment programmes, relatively little is said about what is done to help non-traditional students complete their course.

In its 2014–15 outcome agreement, the University of Glasgow acknowledges that the target of increasing the continuation figure for students from the most deprived backgrounds (SIMD20) from 81.5% in 2012–13 to 94% by 2017–18 was overly ambitious. The revised target is to increase the MD20 figure to 90% by 2017–18, which is ahead of the HEI median but behind the university's overall continuation figure. The new student information system MyCampus is intended to focus support on particular student groups, although how exactly this will be enacted is unspecified.

Despite Scottish universities' desire to improve retention rates, it is evident from a range of studies that students entering universities with non-traditional qualifications and from less advantaged backgrounds have a greater chance of dropping out, particularly from ancient universities.[143,144] Winterton sheds light on retention issues affecting adult access students.[145] Interviews with early leavers are used to elucidate their reasons for withdrawal, the nature of their decision to leave and the consequences of that decision. Reasons for withdrawal within the personal domain are categorised as unexpected events, financial pressures, levels of interest, levels of integration and levels of stress, while reasons for withdrawal linked to institutional processes include lack of understanding, inflexible support mechanisms, placement issues and difficult course arrangements. Her recommendations include the need for clarification of roles, particularly among support staff and those on placement; the provision of mentors as a way of solving early problems, the extension of counselling services; increased flexibility within institutions; and the provision of a mature students' society, both for peer support and to provide recognition and representation within their institution.

The use of performance indicators

As noted earlier, the Scottish Government intends the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to be used as the principal measure of disadvantage, but in parts of Scotland with fewer postcodes in the first and second quintile of SIMD, university managers regard it as a less appropriate measure. Aberdeen University's Outcome Agreement describes it as:

> …an entirely inappropriate measure of deprivation across a nation such as Scotland with a highly concentrated urban population and a large (in geographical terms) rural area. The use of MD20 provides biases in the reported data which are impossible to estimate scientifically. Therefore we urge the SFC either to use a more granulated indicator of disadvantage, or to

[143]Kadar-Satat, G., & Iannelli, C. (2016). *Beyond access to higher education: Widening access initiatives and student retention in Scotland*. Edinburgh: AQMeN, University of Edinburgh.

[144]Cree, V., Christie, H., & Tett, L. (2016, forthcoming). Relationships matter: The views of college entrants to an ancient Scottish university. *Scottish Educational Review.*

[145] Winterton, M. (2010). *SWAP East Tracking and Retention Project report: Exploring the dynamics of former students' progression through university*. Edinburgh: SWAP East.

promote the use of multiple measures of disadvantage so as to enable fair comparisons and an informed policy environment.[146]

Provision of institutional bursaries

Ancient universities' outcome agreements refer to the institutional bursaries offered, which sometimes differ for Scottish students and those from the rest of the UK. For example, in its 2014–15 outcome agreement, the University of Edinburgh commits itself to delivering 'sector-leading financial support to students, through our uncapped Scotland Accommodation bursaries and uncapped Edinburgh RUK (Rest of UK) bursaries'.[147] A further example is provided by the University of St Andrews, which aims to admit between 5 and 10 Scottish Widening Access Partnership (SWAP) students per year and provides guaranteed bursaries for all SWAP places of living costs between £500 and £2,000 per annum. Overall, there are differences in the amount of institutional bursaries targeted at socially disadvantaged students, with the University of Edinburgh having relatively generous support in place.

Measuring progress over time

All of the ancient universities have a high level committee to monitor the social profile of students and track change over time. For example, the University of Edinburgh monitors entrant profiles through the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Committee, with action being taken where necessary. The University of Glasgow states its intention to monitor progress in order to remain 'the leading university of choice for talented students from under-represented groups.'[148] Despite the slow pace of change indicated in earlier sections of this report, ancient universities tend to use outcome agreements to paint a picture of institutional transformation. For example, in summarising the outcomes to be delivered from 2014–17, the University of Edinburgh states its intention to 'sustain the step-change in entrants from under-represented groups achieved in 2013/14, including the 50 widening access places. This accelerates the 25% increase in SIMD40 entrants targeted in 2012–13'. [149]

Summary

Interviews with Scottish politicians, civil servants and university senior managers showed that there was strong support for the principles of widening access, but disagreement as to the root causes of inequality in participation and the location of responsibility for change. University principals adopted a defensive position, arguing that their institutions were doing all they could to address the issue, noting the wider problem of social inequality in school attainment. The Scottish Government, by way of contrast, believed that universities were 'dragging their heels' on widening access, justifying the need for tougher legislation and regulation to accelerate the pace of change. Scottish college principals also believed that universities paid lip service to widening access, but failed to take strong action to alter the social profile of the student body, in contrast to the college sector which they believed to be far more pro-active in including students from non-traditional backgrounds.

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[146] Scottish Funding Council (SFC). (2012). *University of St Andrews Outcome Agreement 2012–13*. Edinburgh: SFC, p.5.

[147] *University of Edinburgh Outcome Agreement 2013/14* http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/OutcomeAgreements/OutcomeAgreement2013_2014.pdf

[148] *University of Glasgow Outcome Agreement 2014–15 to 2016–17.* Retrieved from http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_329814_en.pdf

[149] *University of Edinburgh Outcome Agreement 2013/14.* Retrieved from http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/gasp/OutcomeAgreements/OutcomeAgreement2013_2014.pdf

Some university principals were critical of widening access outcome agreements, which were seen as intruding on institutional autonomy. There was also opposition to the use of the Scottish Government's preferred measure of disadvantage (SIMD) on the grounds that this failed to recognise rural poverty and the existence of poverty in more advantaged neighbourhoods. University senior managers believed that they should have more freedom to select the indicators which were most appropriate for their institution.

An analysis of widening access outcome agreements showed that they varied in detail and clarity, with institutions drawing attention to the areas where they believed they were performing well, whilst paying less attention to areas where there might be room for improvement. There was a major focus on outreach activities, but little evidence of their effectiveness. Contextualised admissions approaches were endorsed, but there was a lack of detail about their use and effectiveness. Ancient universities differed greatly in their enthusiasm for and uptake of additional places made available by the Scottish Government for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Some ancient universities emphasised the recruitment of the most academically able students based on examination grades and appeared to be concerned about the erosion of their standards of excellence. Overall, there was a mismatch between universities' endorsement of widening access and the evidence presented earlier in this report, which suggests that pre-92 universities in Scotland are more socially exclusive than their counterparts in England.

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In this section, we draw out some over-arching themes from the preceding analysis and relate these to the recommendations of the Scottish Government's Commission on Widening Access, whose final report was published in March 2016.[150] Broadly, the Commission acknowledged that 'socio-economic inequality in higher education is a problem which spans the whole education system and beyond into wider social policy.'[151] To address the problem of social inequality in higher education, it was recommended that the Scottish Government should set and enforce much stricter targets in relation to the participation of students from the most deprived areas, so that by 2030, students from the most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to all types of college and university-based higher education. A Commissioner for Fair Access should be appointed by the end of 2016 to oversee progress and the Scottish Government should ensure that regulatory powers, including widening access outcome agreements, are used more effectively. Other key recommendations included a review of student funding in Scotland; the publication of student-level data; better information, advice and guidance for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their parents; and more consistent and transparent use of contextualised admissions. As we argue below, in order to achieve these recommendations it is important to take into account important features of the Scottish higher education system, in particular institutional inertia and the tendency for students from socially advantaged backgrounds to cluster in more selective institutions.

The social profile of Scottish universities and the university choices of students from different social class backgrounds

As discussed in Section 7, Scottish universities express strong commitment to widening access and emphasise the progress they have made. However, the analysis in section 5 of this report, which extends the work of Raffe and Croxford,[152] shows that there has been little change in the social profile of universities over time. Since 1996, students in both Scottish and English pre-92 universities have been drawn disproportionately from middle class and private school backgrounds. Scottish ancient universities are just as socially selective as English Russell Group institutions. Perhaps surprisingly, analysis of HESA benchmark data shows that even post-92 universities in Scotland are more socially selective than universities with similar profiles across the UK. Because the Scottish university system is generally more academically selective than its English counterpart, it is harder for students from less advantaged backgrounds to gain a university place given the strong and enduring association between social class background and educational attainment. Students from less advantaged backgrounds are more likely to gain access to higher education when the system is expanding, but the Scottish Government's policy to avoid tuition fees means that it is obliged to cap university places. In Scotland, demand for university places outstrips demand (Sections 2 and 3), with particularly negative consequences for less advantaged students.

In section 5, our analysis of university destinations by social background shows that there is an increasing tendency in Scotland for students from socially advantaged backgrounds to cluster in the

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[150] Scottish Government. (2016). *Final report of the Commission on Widening Access: A blueprint for fairness*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

[151] Scottish Government. (2016). *Final report of the Commission on Widening Access: A blueprint for fairness*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government, p.8.

[152]Raffe, D., & Croxford, L. (2015). How stable is the stratification of higher education in England and Scotland? *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36*(2), 313–35
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most selective institutions. To illustrate this point, Figure 5.5 shows that in Scotland in 2014/15, over two thirds (71%) of independent school entrants gained a place in one of the four ancient universities, compared with less than a third (29%) of state school entrants. Widening access policies are implemented in a context of growing financial insecurity, where middle class parents and young people are anxious to preserve their educational and social advantage.

Institutional ethos is likely to be one of the factors affecting the post-school choices of students from different social backgrounds and the fact that students at Scottish universities are drawn disproportionately from more socially advantaged backgrounds is therefore important. In its published data, the SFC focuses on the social characteristics of Scottish domiciled students only. However, it is also important to pay attention to the social characteristics of international students and those from the rest of the UK and the EU, since university ethos is affected by the total student body. The majority of students from outside Scotland are attracted to courses in older Scottish universities. For example, about a third of the undergraduate student population in the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrews are from the rest of the UK and the (uncapped) numbers are rising. Research has shown that international and EU students, as well as those from the rest of the UK, are likely to come from more socially advantaged backgrounds.[153,154 & 155] Whilst public discourse has emphasised the cultural benefits of recruiting students from the rest of the UK, the EU and internationally, it is important to remember that they contribute to the concentration of social advantage in older Scottish universities, which may lead students from less advantaged backgrounds to feel that they do not fit in (Section 7).

Comparing patterns of participation across the UK: HEIPR and the role of Scottish colleges

As shown in Section 4, comparisons of participation between Scotland and the rest of the UK based on HEIPR tend to paint a positive picture of Scottish higher education. However, because increased participation in Scottish HE by students from disadvantaged backgrounds has been in the college sector, it is important to consider the equivalence of college sub-degree programmes and university degrees. For the most disadvantaged, the size of the gap in entry rates through UCAS means that all forms of higher education provision in Scottish colleges would need to be considered equivalent to university degree programmes to fill the UCAS gap.

Data presented in this report suggests that we should be cautious in assuming such equivalence, as those articulating from college to university are disadvantaged in a number of ways. Overall, only half of those who enter a higher national college course subsequently move on to a university degree programme, and when they do it is usually in the post-92 sector. Of students who articulate, only half receive full credit. For students progressing into one of the ancient or pre-92 universities, this means that the process of obtaining a degree may take six years, with major implications in terms of loss of

[153]Whittaker, S., Raffe, D., & Croxford, L. (2016). Cross-border flows of students within the UK. In S. Riddell, E. Weedon & S. Minty (Eds.), *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK: Diverging or Converging Systems*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[154]Weedon, E., & Kong, C. (2016). The internationalisation of higher education in Scotland and the UK in Riddell, S., Weedon, E., & Minty, S. (Eds.), *Higher Education in Scotland and the UK: Diverging or Converging Systems* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[155]Weedon, E., & Riddell, S. (2012). Reducing or reinforcing inequality: assessing the impact of European policy on widening access to higher education. In S. Riddell & J. Markowitsch (Eds.), *Lifelong Learning in Europe: Equity and Efficiency in the Balance* (pp. 125–150), Bristol: Policy Press.

earnings. Women who subsequently take time out of the labour market to have children may experience a cumulative financial penalty, contributing to the persistent gender pay gap.

A further problem is that students who enter university with higher national (HN) qualifications[156] are more likely than others to drop out, particularly from ancient universities.[157] This is likely to reflect a lack of alignment between the academic requirements of college HN courses and university programmes.[158] For example, students on college courses are required to demonstrate the attainment of learning outcomes, which may often be practical rather than academic. Staff teaching on these college courses are generally less well qualified than those at university, and may not have a clear idea of the requirements of the university degree programmes. Particularly in ancient universities, relatively little attention has been paid to supporting articulating college students once they are enrolled. Even for those who articulate with no credit (this group of students undertake a college HN course and then move into the first year of a university degree programme), there may be challenges. First year teaching in some selective Scottish universities is at SCQF Level 8 (assuming attainment of Advanced Highers or A levels), so students entering these universities with Highers or HN qualifications are likely to find that there is a sudden increase in the level of academic work expected, with little additional support.

Quite apart from academic challenges, social barriers may also be encountered. Students entering the second or third year of a university programme after a college HN course may find that informal academic and social networks are already established. Breaking into these networks would be difficult for any student, but is likely to be particularly challenging for those from less advantaged backgrounds who may be the first in their family to attend university.

Finally, because most articulation routes are from college to post-92 universities, the choice of degree subjects available to this group of students is limited. For example, to gain access to a higher paying job in the field of law or medicine, it is necessary to study at an older university. Although the chances of being in employment are broadly similar for those with HN or degree level qualifications, those with degrees are generally likely to have significantly higher lifetime earnings.[159]

Higher education in Scottish colleges has become an increasingly central part of the system over time, and its advantages have often been emphasised. However, far less attention has been paid to its disadvantages, which have a disproportionately large impact on those from less advantaged backgrounds. For the reasons set out above, we should be cautious in assuming equivalence between college and university higher education programmes, particularly when those from less advantaged backgrounds are over-represented in the former.

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[156] Students who enter Scottish universities with Highers only, rather than a mixture of Highers and Advanced Highers, are more likely to drop out than other students. These students are more likely to be from less advantaged backgrounds (Kadar-Satat & Iannelli, 2016).
[157] Kadar-Satat, G., & Iannelli, C. (2016). *Beyond access to higher education: Widening access initiatives and student retention in Scotland*. Edinburgh: AQMeN, University of Edinburgh.
[158] Gallacher, J. (2014). Higher education in Scotland: differentiation and diversion? The impact of college-university progression links. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 33*(1), 96–107.
[159] Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). (2011). *The returns to higher education qualifications*. BIS Research Paper 45. London: BIS.

Which policy levers appear to be most effective?

Free undergraduate tuition

In Section 1, we outlined the policy levers available to government to promote widening access in higher education and the Commission on Widening Access argues that the Scottish Government and SFC needs to be much more pro-active in promoting change. In Scotland, it has been assumed that free tuition would automatically lead to a more inclusive university system. Apart from the Conservatives, all political parties in the run-up to the Scottish parliamentary elections in May 2016 endorsed this policy, which has literally been carved in stone at Heriot-Watt University. There are clear upsides to this policy, not least in ensuring that one type of debt is removed from a generation of graduates facing high house prices and a tight labour market. However, it is equally important to recognise that the abolition of student tuition fees in 2000 and of the graduate endowment in 2007 did not lead to increased rates of university participation overall, or by students from less advantaged backgrounds. Improvements in participation have been largely driven by the growth of college HN provision in which students from poorer backgrounds are over-represented.

There are also a number of downsides to policy in the funding of higher education in Scotland. The commitment to resource universities from recurrent public funding has meant that the Scottish Government continues to cap university places. In England, by contrast, the funding of undergraduate student places through income-contingent loans means that, from 2016, the cap on student numbers has been lifted, leaving more scope for expansion. We know that students from less advantaged backgrounds are more likely to gain a place in higher education when the system is expanding.[160] The cap on university numbers in Scotland (and in Northern Ireland and Wales) means that competition for places is more intense than in England, disadvantaging non-traditional students. There is a need for a more nuanced discussion of Scottish higher education funding, recognising both the upsides and downsides of current policy choices. If the free tuition policy is retained, it is important that is accompanied by a stronger focus on access with targeted support such as reserved places for disadvantaged students. This issue is not addressed in the report of the Commission on Widening Access, although it recommends that the Scottish Government should commission research on how student finance impacts on the participation of disadvantaged learners in higher education and recognises that the issue of system capacity falls to the Scottish Government.

Student maintenance support: loans, grants and institutional bursaries

As shown in Table 1.1, across the UK arrangements for student support have been in a state of flux for many years, and relatively little is known about the impact of different maintenance support arrangements on widening access. In Scotland, the non-repayable means-tested maintenance grant has been severely reduced, whilst the repayable maintenance loan (also means-tested) has been increased. In England, the maintenance grant has been abolished altogether from 2016, with institutions expected to fund bursaries from tuition fee income, but with no arrangements for standardisation. In Scotland, most universities provide some form of additional financial support for home students from less advantaged backgrounds, although this is often very limited. In a small number of universities, additional support is available for poorer students from the rest of the UK, with one ancient university claiming to be a UK leader in this regard. As in England, institutional

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[160] Iannelli, C. (2011). Educational expansion and social mobility: the Scottish case. *Social Policy and Society, 10*(2), 251–64.

bursaries in Scotland appear to be highly variable, and to date little research has been conducted to explore their effectiveness in recruiting and retaining students from widening access backgrounds.

Additional ring-fenced places

As discussed in sections 2 and 3, the Scottish Government policy of funding additional ring-fenced places for socially disadvantaged students and those with HN qualifications appears to have been effective in terms of increasing participation by these groups, particularly in more selective institutions. In autumn 2015 the Scottish Government announced its intention to discontinue these places from 2016/17 onwards. Responding to this decision, Universities Scotland commented:

> The additional places are a good idea because they help reduce some of the competition for university places where demand far exceeds supply. If they are gone universities will be faced with difficult decisions between very able applicants from very different backgrounds. The extra places are one part of a much bigger rage [sic] of initiatives that universities run to widen access including working with schools and communities to widen aspiration and attainment … It would be very helpful to have a conversation with Government and the Funding Council about widening access to understand this decision in wider context.[161]

The decision appears to have been reversed in March 2016, however the additional places will have to be funded from within a declining SFC budget and it is not clear whether there is any intention to provide further places to sustain the scheme after the coming academic year.[162] Given the success of this measure, there is a need to analyse the impact of any discontinuation.

Widening access outcome agreements

There are ongoing debates within the social policy literature about the potential of social audit and regulation, including the use of targets, to promote social inclusion.[163] The dangers of minimal compliance and of 'producer capture' have been highlighted. Our analysis of widening access outcome agreements in Section 7 suggests that they have succeeded in focusing institutional attention on this area. However, there is no standardised format and universities are allowed to select their own indicators, as long as they make reference to SIMD. As a result, it is very difficult to make comparisons across institutions, or to be sure that institutions are making progress over time against the targets they have set. The Commission on Widening Access recommends that the Scottish Government should take a tougher approach to target-setting within outcome agreements, but to date these documents appear to have had only a limited impact in effecting institutional change.

Our analysis of university outcome agreements in Section 7 suggests that greater attention is focussed on recruiting students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds than on promoting their retention. Outreach activities are funded by the SFC, voluntary sector organisations and the institutions themselves, and, as noted by the Commission of Widening Access, this leads to the risk of duplication. There is also a lack of evidence in relation to the effectiveness of outreach and retention activities. As a result, despite the busyness of the field, it is difficult to be sure which measures are effective with which groups of students. For a robust scientific assessment of educational

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[161] Retrieved from http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/news/comment-on-funding-for-additional-widening-access-places/
[162]
http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/education/14379503.U_turn_over_cash_for_scheme_to_get_more_disadvantaged_young_Scots_to_university/
[163] Clarke, J., & Newman, E. (1997). *The Managerial State*. London: Sage.

interventions to take place, the assessment should be designed as part of the intervention. Otherwise in many cases it is impossible to assess the net effect of the intervention on the outcomes of interest.

All Scottish universities make reference to their use of contextualised admissions in their widening access outcome agreements. Again, there is a lack of detail about the nature of such measures and their effectiveness. At the time of writing (April 2016), researchers at Durham University led by Professor Vikki Boliver are conducting research on the implementation of contextualised admissions policies in Scottish universities. This work should shed further light on this important area.

If the proposed Commissioner for Fair Access is appointed by the Scottish Government, he or she should look closely at these issues and ensure that all universities have fair and transparent approaches to admissions, and that outcome agreements have a more consistent approach to access.

What are the implications for future policy and practice?

Implications for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council

Policy on widening access in Scotland has not been sufficiently driven by hard evidence. There is a need for national policymakers to gather evidence in a much more systematic fashion to examine which policies appear to have made a positive contribution to widening access. This evidence needs to be used to inform public debate in this area, with an emphasis on exploring the trade-offs between different policy choices. The intended and unintended consequences of two areas in particular require much closer scrutiny: the use of colleges as a means of widening access for disadvantaged students and the effect of free undergraduate tuition. Evidence should be used to identify measures which have been effective, such as the use of ring-fenced places for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. There is also a need to examine the outcomes of policies implemented in other parts of the UK, such as lifting the cap on student numbers in England.

The effectiveness of widening access outcome agreements to promote institutional accountability and inclusiveness needs to be examined. As noted above, the use of different formats and levels of detail in these documents makes it difficult to draw cross-institutional comparisons. Furthermore, the absence of benchmarks makes it difficult to assess the extent of progress.

Finally, the Scottish Government needs to focus not only on narrowing, but also on preventing the emergence of the social class gap in school attainment. This is one of the most important factors contributing to unequal participation in different types of higher education, and is indicative of wider social inequality. As recommended by the OECD,[164] academic research is needed to examine the extent to which Curriculum for Excellence is narrowing or increasing social class differences in educational outcomes.

Implications for higher education institutions

Universities and other higher education providers need to be much more pro-active in assessing the effectiveness of the measures used to recruit more students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, so that effort and resources are used to best effect and duplication is avoided. More effort needs to be devoted to retention measures, particularly targeted at non-traditional students in ancient universities.

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[164]Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2015). *Improving schools in Scotland: An OECD perspective*. OECD.

Ancient universities need to be aware that an elitist social intake may deter students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Given their relatively privileged social profile, both the upsides and downsides of recruiting more UK, EU and international students need to be considered.

Widening access outcome agreements tend to be used by institutions to present themselves in a positive light, rather than providing a more honest assessment of what has been achieved and what remains to be done.

Universities need to be aware of the unintended consequences of particular curricula decisions. For example, starting first year teaching at SCQF level 8 is likely to disadvantage students who enter the university with Highers or HNCs.

The impact of contextualised admissions policies needs to be examined at the institutional level. There is a need to ensure that policy is sufficiently generous to make a difference to the social profile of the student body, whilst at the same time ensuring that targeted support is available for students once they have been admitted.

Given the reduction of non-repayable maintenance grants, institutions need to increase bursary provision for students from poorer backgrounds to prevent drop-out for financial reasons. At the same time, how such bursaries are most effectively targeted need to be carefully assessed.

Implications for the publication of administrative data

This research has highlighted the need for better data gathering and more effective use of existing data sources to explore, for example, differences in higher education participation rates across the UK. Section 4 highlights some of the problems with the use of HEIPR, which in Scotland has not been broken down by type of institution and social background since 2012. We were unable to obtain data for England in relation to students taking higher education courses in colleges and in diverse forms of private provision. In future, there is a need to publish both Scottish and UK data on all forms of higher education in a more accessible manner, which will require better departmental communication across the UK.

As we argue in Sections 3 and 4, there is a need for organisations such as UCAS to publish more information illustrating the effect of major administrative changes on all its time series data. For example, it appears possible that the import of nursing, midwifery and education into UCAS in recent years accounts for over half of the increase in UCAS acceptances of Scots to Scottish HEIs since 2006. This does not take account of the incorporation of Elmwood, Barony and Oatridge Colleges into the Scottish Rural University College. UCAS might also be encouraged to publish some statistics on the level of HE course to which people have been admitted, by nation and by neighbourhood quintile.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX 1: UCAS DATA TABLES

Table A.1:   Application rates at age 18 Q1 and Q5 by UK domicile 2006–16

	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland: POLAR3		Scotland: SIMD		Wales	
	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5
2006	12.2%	45.8%	18.8%	57.3%	9.6%	43.1%	9.9%	48.5%	13.6%	45.1%
2007	13.0%	46.3%	17.5%	58.9%	8.9%	40.6%	10.1%	45.6%	12.5%	46.1%
2008	14.0%	47.2%	16.9%	58.8%	9.2%	41.0%	9.4%	46.8%	13.9%	44.8%
2009	15.2%	48.5%	17.8%	61.6%	9.8%	41.5%	10.0%	47.7%	14.4%	43.9%
2010	18.0%	50.7%	23.8%	61.8%	13.4%	45.2%	12.3%	51.5%	15.9%	45.6%
2011	18.6%	51.8%	21.9%	63.4%	12.1%	45.8%	12.6%	52.2%	16.6%	46.8%
2012	17.9%	48.7%	22.6%	62.3%	13.0%	45.6%	12.9%	51.9%	16.8%	46.8%
2013	18.9%	49.1%	23.4%	64.6%	13.2%	45.9%	13.2%	51.4%	16.5%	46.9%
2014	20.4%	50.8%	23.3%	62.3%	15.2%	45.6%	15.2%	50.8%	18.4%	46.7%
2015	21.0%	50.6%	25.5%	63.2%	15.6%	46.1%	15.0%	52.0%	18.9%	47.3%
2016	22.0%	52.1%	24.4%	61.9%	0.159	46.5%	16.3%	52.2%	20.4%	49.5%
Proportionate change 2006–16	80%	14%	30%	8%	65%	8%	65%	8%	50%	10%
% point change 06–16	9.8	6.3	5.6	4.6	6.28	3.4	6.45	3.7	6.8	4.4

Source: UCAS (2016), Figures 14, 15 and 16.[165]

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[165] UCAS. (2016). *UK application rates by the January deadline: 2016 cycle*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

Table A.2: Entry rates at age 18, POLAR3 Q1 and Q5 by UK domicile 2006–15

	England		Northern Ireland		Scotland: POLAR3		Scotland: SIMD		Wales	
	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5	Q1	Q5
2006	11.2%	41.3%	12.2%	45.7%	6.8%	37.2%	7.2%	42.0%	12.5%	43.2%
2007	11.7%	41.5%	12.2%	48.8%	7.1%	35.5%	7.6%	39.8%	11.5%	42.9%
2008	12.9%	42.3%	12.3%	49.9%	7.0%	36.2%	7.1%	41.4%	12.7%	41.6%
2009	13.6%	42.4%	13.1%	51.0%	7.0%	37.1%	8.0%	42.8%	13.4%	40.6%
2010	14.2%	41.8%	14.9%	46.7%	9.3%	37.0%	8.5%	41.7%	13.5%	39.2%
2011	15.1%	44.4%	13.6%	48.5%	7.9%	35.8%	8.1%	40.8%	13.4%	40.4%
2012	15.1%	41.7%	14.8%	46.9%	9.1%	36.2%	8.9%	41.2%	14.5%	42.0%
2013	16.4%	43.0%	15.4%	49.8%	9.3%	36.5%	9.5%	40.9%	14.6%	42.2%
2014	17.8%	44.4%	16.1%	47.0%	10.2%	35.6%	10.1%	39.7%	16.6%	42.1%
2015	18.5%	44.9%	15.7%	46.2%	10.4%	36.7%	9.7%	41.1%	16.6%	43.9%
Proportionate change 06–15	65%	9%	29%	1%	54%	-1%	35%	-2%	33%	2%
% point change 06–15	7.3	3.6	3.5	0.5	3.6	-0.5	2.5	-0.9	4.1	0.7

Source: UCAS. (2015), Figures 65 and 66.[166]

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[166] UCAS. (2015.) *End of Cycle Report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

Table A.3: Acceptances as a percentage of applicants 2006–2015, by POLAR3 quintiles, age 18, all UK nations

		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Q1	England	83%	82%	83%	81%	76%	78%	80%	82%	83%	84%
	Northern Ireland	63%	69%	71%	70%	62%	61%	65%	66%	68%	61%
	Scotland	66%	74%	67%	66%	66%	63%	67%	67%	66%	65%
	Wales	83%	82%	83%	84%	80%	77%	82%	84%	85%	84%
Q2	England	84%	83%	84%	83%	77%	80%	81%	84%	84%	85%
	Northern Ireland	73%	74%	78%	76%	69%	67%	66%	70%	71%	63%
	Scotland	73%	73%	75%	77%	68%	68%	68%	69%	67%	67%
	Wales	85%	84%	85%	86%	81%	79%	83%	87%	85%	86%
Q3	England	85%	84%	85%	84%	79%	81%	82%	84%	84%	86%
	Northern Ireland	74%	78%	81%	77%	71%	69%	70%	73%	72%	68%
	Scotland	76%	78%	77%	77%	72%	69%	71%	72%	71%	70%
	Wales	85%	87%	87%	86%	81%	81%	84%	85%	86%	88%
Q4	England	86%	85%	86%	84%	80%	83%	83%	85%	85%	86%
	Northern Ireland	76%	81%	83%	82%	73%	72%	72%	76%	74%	69%
	Scotland	78%	80%	79%	80%	76%	71%	73%	74%	72%	73%
	Wales	87%	88%	88%	88%	83%	82%	86%	88%	88%	89%
Q5	England	87%	86%	86%	84%	81%	84%	84%	86%	86%	87%
	Northern Ireland	79%	82%	84%	82%	75%	76%	75%	77%	75%	73%
	Scotland	83%	84%	84%	85%	80%	77%	78%	78%	78%	78%
	Wales	89%	89%	89%	88%	85%	85%	88%	88%	87%	90%

Sources:Calculated by author using UCAS *End of Cycle Report 2015 Applicants and acceptances by groups of applicants* POLAR3 by UK country (all applicants and acceptances).[167] Data for applicants and acceptances with no assigned POLAR3 status omitted (0.25% or less of cases in each nation).

Table A.4: Change in acceptances rates at age 18, Scotland, POLAR3

	% point change	Proportionate change
Q1	-0.8	-1.3%
Q2	-5.9	-8.1%
Q3	-5.4	-7.1%
Q4	-4.8	-6.2%
Q5	-5.4	-6.5%

Source: Calculated from Table A.4 above

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[167] Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). (2015). *End of cycle report 2015*. Cheltenham: UCAS.

APPENDIX 2:

The HEIPR figures are obtained by calculating the proportion of people aged 16 entering higher education for the first time, then the same for those aged 17 and so on, up to age 30, and summing the resulting percentages (the most recent data for Scotland are available at Table M here: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Statistical_publications_SFCST042015_HigherEducationStudentsand Qualifiersat/SFCST042015_HE_Students_and_Qualifiers_2013-14.pdf). For England, they are available at Table 2 here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/458034/HEIPR_PUBLI CATION_2013-14.pdf

In England, the calculation begins at age 17. The inclusion of 16 year olds increases the Scottish figure by a small amount: however, as the tables show, more people enter higher education before the age of 18 in Scotland. Excluding Scottish 16 year olds from the calculation would therefore tend to underestimate participation rates up to age 30 for Scotland compared to England.

In both Scotland and England, the HEIPR counts those who have undertaken at least 6 months of a higher education course which itself lasts at least 6 months. Individuals are only counted once, even if they subsequently drop out and re-enter, or begin their higher education at one institution and continue it later at another. Students on any level of undergraduate higher education are included. The figures include part-time students, including those studying at the Open University: OU students based in Scotland are counted in the Scottish figures.

APPENDIX 3: DETAILED SAMPLING STRATEGY

Participation of students from NS-SEC 4-7 backgrounds in the UK range from 15.7% (University of Cambridge) to 44.9% (University College Birmingham). In order to focus on universities with lower number of students from a widening access background, a benchmark cut-off point of 31% was identified, deliberately chosen to include all the ancient and old (pre-92) universities in Scotland. This cut-off point also included the Glasgow School of Art. It also had the effect of including all those institutions in Scotland whose benchmark falls below the actual UK average (33%) for NS-SEC 4-7. Other institutions with benchmarks below 31% were then identified across the UK, although the pre/post-92 cut-off is not necessarily reflected across the whole of the UK. Table A3.1 below lists all the UK institutions that fall into this group.

Figure A3.1: Percentage of young first year students in higher/lower tariff institutions, in the four jurisdictions, 2014–15
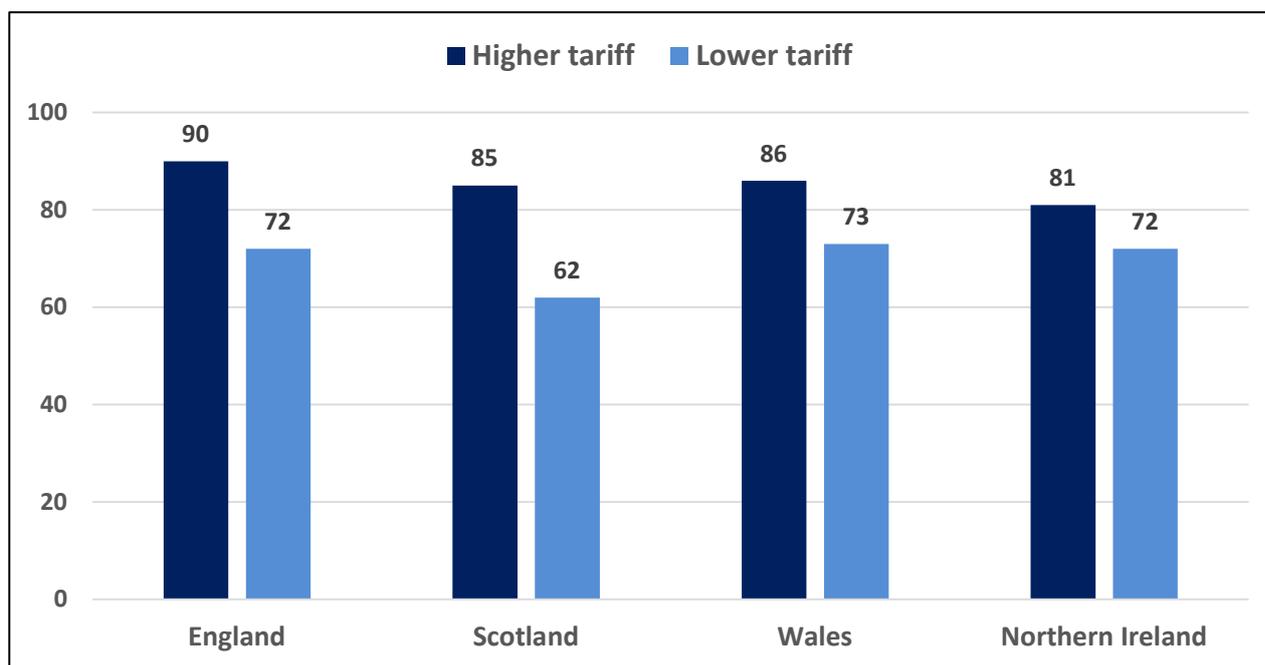
Source: HESA https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1b
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Figure A3.2: Percentage of *first degree* students from NS-SEC 4–7 in higher/lower tariff institutions in the four UK jurisdictions, 2014–15
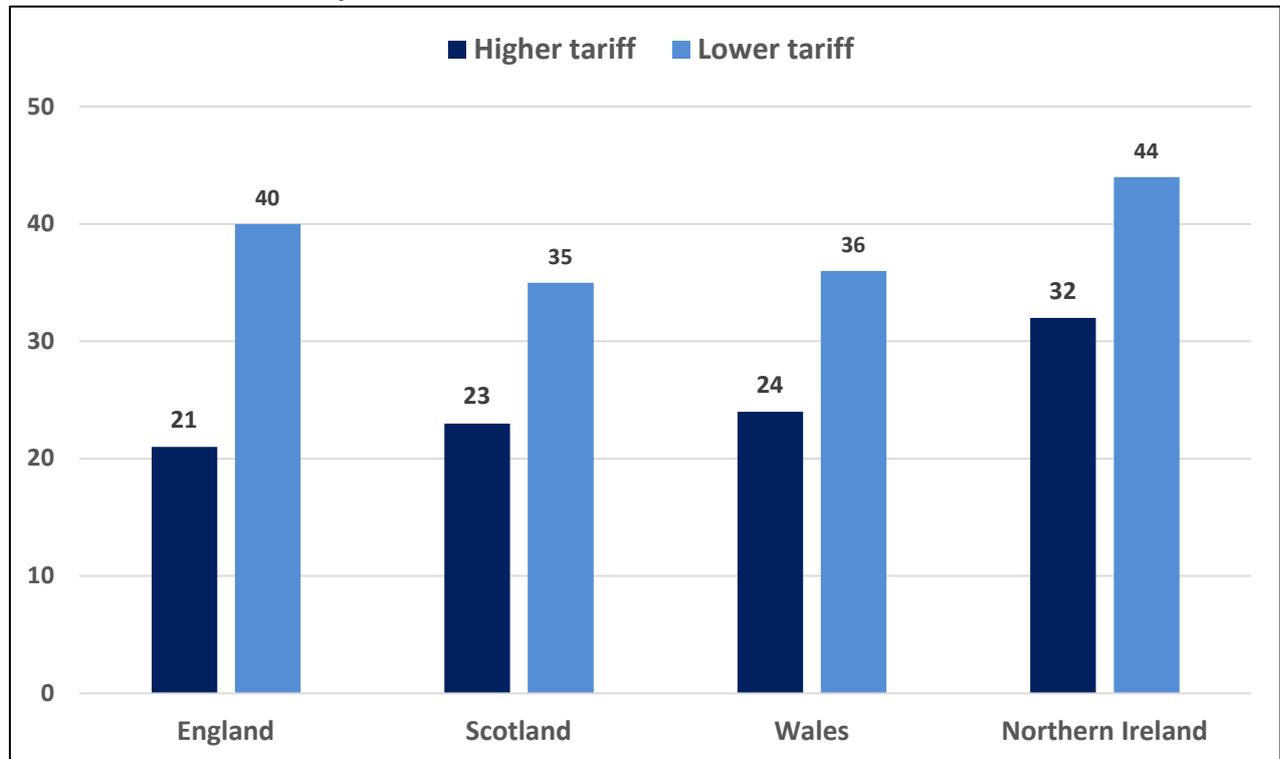
Source: HESA https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg, Table T1a
Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number

Table A3.1:   Percentage of NS-SEC 4–7 students in higher tariff institutions in the UK, first year young full-time undergraduates, 2014–15. (The percentage of NS-SEC 4–7 Scottish domiciled students in Scottish institutions are shown in italics)

Institution	Russell group	NS-SEC 4–7 %	Benchmark %	Standard Deviation %	First year young undergraduate degree	
					No	%
England						
University of Bath		18.2	22.7	0.91-	2515	95.6
University of Birmingham	R	22.8	23.9	0.67	5090	94.5
University of Bristol	R	14.7	19.6	0.71-	4005	93.7
University of Cambridge	R	10.2	15.7	0.83-	2580	95.8
*Courtauld Institute of Art		17.1	17.4	6.65	50	100.0
University of Durham	R	14.2	19.1	0.78-	3225	93.9
University of East Anglia		25.2	29.1	1.10-	2040	74.7
University of Exeter	R	15.5	22.0	071-	4120	93.3
*Harper Adams University		46.8	39.5	1.96+	585	92.4
*Heythrop College		24.1	29.6	4.86	95	83.0
Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	R	16.2	17.6	1.30	1195	89.6
King's College London	R	26.2	23.6	0.90	2645	79.2

Institution	Russell group	NS-SEC 4–7 %	Benchmark %	Standard Deviation %	First year young undergraduate degree	
University of Lancaster		24.0	26.8	1.10	1975	94.5
University of Leeds	R	22.5	24.6	0.65	5410	90.4
University of Leicester		26.9	27.7	1.01	2405	89.8
University of Liverpool	R	25.9	27.8	0.79	3740	87.6
London School of Economics & P.S.	R	21.1	16.2	1.63+	820	98.2
Loughborough University		21.9	27.9	0.88-	2910	96.3
University of Manchester	R	21.5	24.7	0.63-	5610	90.8
University of Newcastle	R	20.3	25.5	0.74-	3945	91.4
University of Nottingham	R	20.3	24.4	0.67-	4865	87.9
University of Oxford	R	10.0	15.9	0.84-	2560	97.1
Queen Mary University of London	R	36.9	26.0	1.04+	2535	86.5
University of Reading		27.3	30.4	0.99-	2480	88.2
*Royal Academy of Music		12.2	28.9	5.93	55	94.8
*Royal Agricultural University		32.3	37.6	2.92	280	82.9
*Royal College of Music		17.4	29.6	5.16	75	89.0
Royal Holloway & Bedford New College		28.4	28.9	1.25	1630	92.3
*Royal Northern College of Music		20.5	29.0	3.95	130	94.2
*Royal Veterinary College		27.1	29.0	2.61	285	84.5
*St George's Hospital Medical School		30.8	27.6	2.36	440	64.9
*School of Oriental & African Studies		35.8	26.4	2.50+	440	71.9
University of Sheffield	R	21.2	24.2	0.74-	4100	91.9
University of Southampton	R	23.1	25.8	0.81	3500	88.5
University of Surrey		28.5	30.2	1.06	2225	83.3
University of Sussex		22.5	28.6	1.04-	2135	88.1
University College London	R	19.0	19.4	0.90	2665	84.2
University of Warwick	R	19.3	20.0	0.91	2635	89.6
University of York	R	19.6	24.1	0.87-	2925	88.2
Scotland						
University of Aberdeen		25.0 *23.3*	26.6	1.16	1545	86.9
University of Dundee		29.1 *30.3*	30.1	1.22	1665	76.1
University of Edinburgh	R	18.7 *24.5*	20.9	0.79	3485	92.6
*Glasgow School of Art		23.6 *24.2*	29.9	3.31	200	70.3
University of Glasgow	R	21.4 *23.9*	23.5	0.89	2865	83.8
Herriot Watt University		26.1 *28.1*	28.2	1.38	1330	85.5
University of St. Andrews		14.2 *15.9*	18.2	1.27-	1290	96.6
University of Strathclyde		25.9 *26.0*	24.9	0.94	2655	85.2
University of Stirling		32.1 *32.8*	31.0	1.26	1575	72.4
Wales						
Cardiff University	R	24.0	27.2	0.73-	4225	86.4
Northern Ireland						

Institution	Russell group	NS-SEC 4–7 %	Benchmark %	Standard Deviation %	First year young undergraduate degree	
Queen's University	R	32.1	26.3	0.84+	3380	81.1

Source: HESA (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg), Table 1b, Scottish Funding Council, (http://www.sfc.ac.uk/PublicationsStatistics/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_indicators/Participation_indicator_for_Scottish_HEIs.aspx). Table 2.

Note: Institutions highlighted in green perform statistically significantly below benchmark; institutions highlighted in grey perform statistically significantly above benchmark

Table A3.2: Percentage of NS-SEC 4–7 students in lower tariff institutions in the UK, first year young full-time undergraduates, 2014–15. (The percentage of NS-SEC 4–7 Scottish domiciled students in Scottish institutions are shown in italics)

Institution	NS-SEC 4–7 %	Benchmark %	Standard Deviation %	First year young undergraduate degree	
				No	%
England					
Anglia Ruskin University	39.1	40.6	1.08	4585	60.2
Aston University	41.9	33.6	1.18+	2260	90.5
Bath Spa University	33	35.1	1.18	1970	80.3
University of Bedfordshire	50.1	43.7	1.36+	3090	58.9
Birkbeck College	43.6	38.1	3.03	1000	32.4
Birmingham City University	47.2	40.8	0.88+	5825	69.2
University College Birmingham	53.2	44.9	1.73+	1380	60.2
Bishop Grosseteste University	43.9	40.2	2.36	690	68.3
The University of Bolton	50.3	43.1	2.11+	1620	51.4
The Arts University Bournemouth	30.4	34.2	1.86	830	91.7
Bournemouth University	31.6	37.9	0.9-	4090	77.6
The University of Bradford	58.3	40.7	1.3+	2145	73.4
The University of Brighton	34.5	37	0.82	4680	73.2
Brunel University London	43.3	35.5	1.09+	2420	88.3
Buckinghamshire New University	46.3	42.7	1.53	2170	62.6
The University of Buckingham	25	36.5	6.96	210	49.5
Canterbury Christ Church University	40	40.2	1.01	3675	64.8
The University of Central Lancashire	45	40.7	0.89+	6215	65.9
University of Chester	34.2	38.6	0.94-	3265	77.5
The University of Chichester	31.7	40	1.5-	1530	77.4
The City University	46.2	35.2	1.35+	2295	73.9
Coventry University	42.5	39.3	0.88+	5350	80
University for the Creative Arts	39	36.8	1.57	1405	82.6
University of Cumbria	41.6	42.1	1.5	2050	62
De Montfort University	43.1	40.2	0.88	4775	77.5
University of Derby	38.7	41.6	0.97	3635	71.5
The University of East London	54.7	43	1.34+	3635	51.1
Edge Hill University	39.4	41.1	1.04	3745	71.3
The University of Essex	37.9	36.3	1.13	2830	77.2
Falmouth University	27.5	34.8	1.36-	1490	87.1
University of Gloucestershire	36.5	39.3	1.26	2250	74.4
Goldsmiths College	30.8	33.1	1.49	1540	75.4
The University of Greenwich	54.4	40.6	0.99+	4605	60.3

Institution	NS-SEC 4–7 %	Benchmark %	Standard Deviation %	First year young undergraduate degree	
University of Hertfordshire	42.5	39.3	0.85+	5150	78.5
The University of Huddersfield	46.1	39.5	0.97+	3950	78
The University of Hull	33.7	36.2	1.04	3530	70.8
The University of Keele	32.1	33.2	1.28	1890	84.1
The University of Kent	32.7	33.2	0.86	3965	89.9
Kingston University	47.5	39.7	0.93+	5555	63.3
Leeds College of Art	38.2	32.8	2.6	405	88.6
Leeds Beckett University	35.4	40.2	0.7-	6385	84.9
Leeds Trinity University	42.3	41.1	1.87	990	80.4
The University of Lincoln	37.1	37.1	0.99	3045	86.6
Liverpool Hope University	43.2	40.6	1.49	1320	81.9
Liverpool John Moores University	39.6	38.9	0.7	6105	79.7
The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts	26.6	36	3.79	175	88.1
University of the Arts, London	33.2	33.5	0.87	3235	75.8
London Metropolitan University	51.1	43.6	1.68+	3330	40.7
London South Bank University	50.8	42	1.45+	3410	46
The Manchester Metropolitan University	41.6	39.3	0.65	8100	81.7
Middlesex University	56.3	43.4	1.26+	3535	62.1
Newman University	56.4	42.2	2.47+	710	73.6
The University of Northampton	41	41.5	1.16	3305	64.7
University of Northumbria at Newcastle	37.1	37.5	0.72	5580	80.2
Norwich University of the Arts	37.6	35.7	2.2	660	85.9
The Nottingham Trent University	33.2	37.1	0.63-	7185	88.1
Oxford Brookes University	29.6	35.4	0.96-	3640	66.9
Plymouth College of Art†	51.3	38.9	3.47+	425	59.2
University of Plymouth	33.9	37.3	0.77-	7125	63.6
The University of Portsmouth	33.1	38.5	0.78-	5030	84.5
Ravensbourne	39.5	37.7	2.06	705	87.3
Roehampton University	42.9	39.6	1.34	2170	77.8
Rose Bruford College	21.1	36	3.93-	185	85.3
The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama†	30.9	33.4	4.09	200	79.3
St Mary's University, Twickenham	39.4	40.5	1.52	1380	76.8
The University of Salford	42.1	39.5	1.01	4705	64.9
Sheffield Hallam University	41.1	38.9	0.66	7230	79.4
Southampton Solent University	43.9	41.4	1.03	3130	77.2
Staffordshire University	48.8	43	1.18+	3230	65.4
University of St Mark and St John	37.8	42.5	2.48	775	59.7
University Campus Suffolk	45.3	42	2.1	1505	38
The University of Sunderland	45.7	40.2	1.27+	2825	68.3
Teesside University	46.4	42.7	1.1+	3475	61.8
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance	25.4	33.5	4.01	180	89.5
University of the West of England, Bristol	30.3	37	0.78-	5915	70.9
The University of West London	49.3	42.7	1.73+	2285	49.7
The University of Westminster	49.3	38.8	1+	3955	79.1
The University of Winchester	30.4	36.8	1.24-	1905	85.4
The University of Wolverhampton	56.9	44.2	1.06+	5090	60.5
University of Worcester	37.4	41.1	1.21-	2800	57.2
Writtle College	32	41.3	3.22	310	69.8

Institution	NS-SEC 4–7 %	Benchmark %	Standard Deviation %	First year young undergraduate degree	
York St John University	35.1	37	1.34	1700	84.5
Scotland					
University of Abertay Dundee	33.8	34.9	2.1	945	62.9
Edinburgh Napier University	31.1	33.1	1.19	2820	64.3
Glasgow Caledonian University	34.7	33.5	1.04	3785	61.4
Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh	34.4	34.1	2.25	790	69.7
The Robert Gordon University	32	33.1	1.3	1985	75
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	19	31.2	4.78	205	83.5
SRUC	42.3	39.2	2.12	835	65.9
University of the Highlands and Islands	51.7	42.1	1.3+	2360	61.6
University of the West of Scotland	40.3	36.3	1.33+	3330	49.9
Wales					
Aberystwyth University	34	36.2	1.26	1860	90.5
Bangor University	35	37.7	1.22	2200	79.3
Cardiff Metropolitan University	38.5	40.7	1.08	2640	79.9
Glyndŵr University	46.8	42.6	2.99	1170	35.4
Swansea University	27.9	33.9	0.91-	3655	83
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	43.2	41.7	1.69	2120	57.3
University of South Wales	42.6	39.3	1.03+	4890	66.5
Northern Ireland					
St Mary's University College	46.2	32.2	3.18+	255	91.7
Stranmillis University College	30.6	34.4	3.12	300	82.7
University of Ulster	44.5	36.1	0.84+	5565	69.5

Source: HESA (https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/urg), Table 1b, Scottish Funding Council, (http://www.sfc.ac.uk/PublicationsStatistics/statistics/higher_education_statistics/HE_performance_indicators/Participation_indicator_for_Scottish_HEIs.aspx). Table 2.