Report

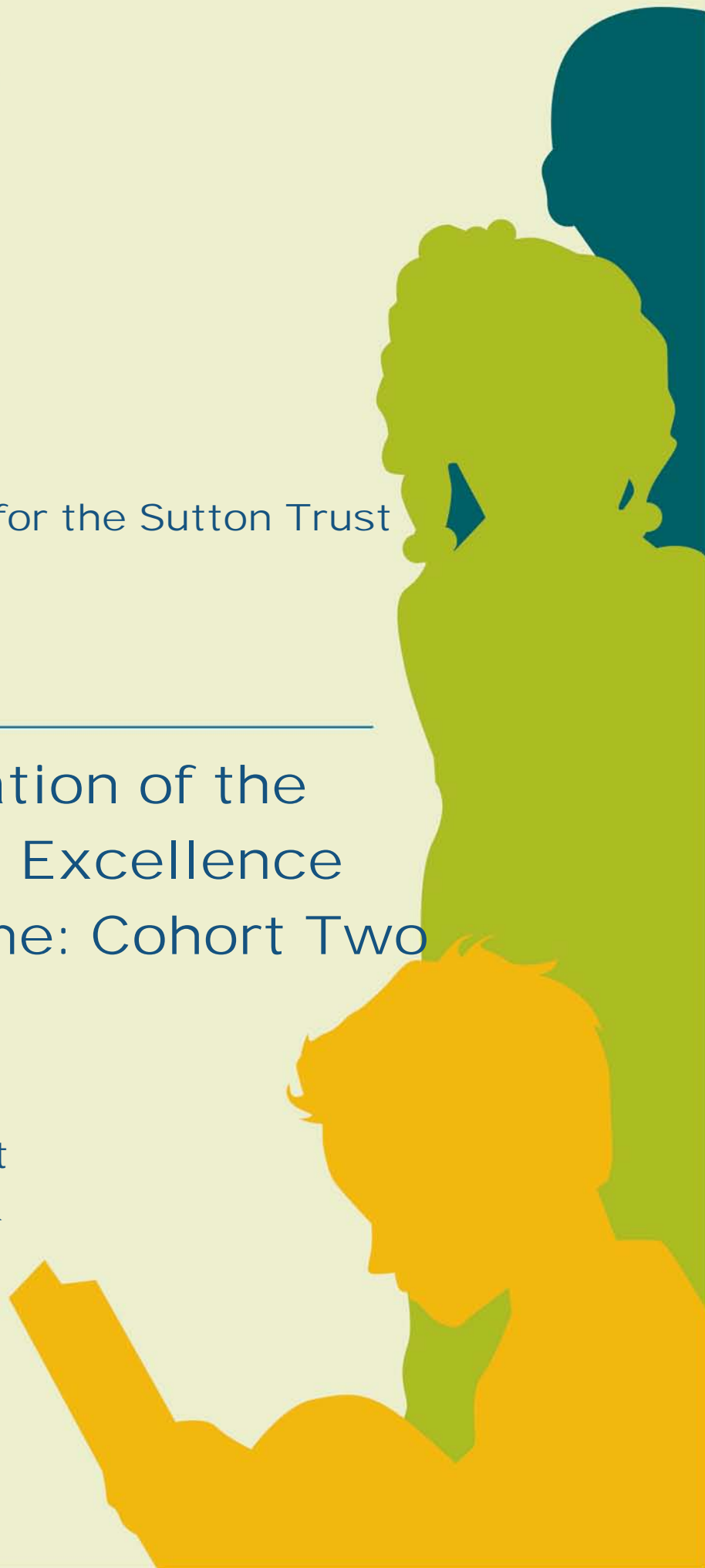## Final Report for the Sutton Trust

An evaluation of the Reach for Excellence Programme: Cohort Two

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Contents

Executive summary

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is carrying out a longitudinal evaluation of the Reach for Excellence (RfE) Programme. This summary sets out the key findings of the cohort two evaluation.

About the Reach for Excellence (RfE) programme

The RfE programme was set up in 2007 by the University of Leeds through funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation[1] and the Sutton Trust. The programme aims to help able young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Yorkshire to gain a place at a leading research university, and to ensure they enter Higher Education (HE) in general. Over the duration of the programme, 360 16-18 year olds will benefit from regular advice sessions and lectures, a summer school, university visits and individual mentoring, with the overall aim of raising the aspirations, achievement, confidence and self-esteem of the young people involved.

About the research

Commissioned by the Sutton Trust, to date, the evaluation has tracked the first and second cohort of students as they progressed from year 12 to year 13, supported by RfE. This report presents findings from the evaluation of cohort two, and builds on the evaluation of cohort one[2]. The cohort two evaluation has included a baseline survey (to gauge student aspiration at the start of the RfE programme) and a follow-up survey (at the end of the programme). Both the students involved in the programme, as well as a control group of peers, have been tracked. Predicted and achieved A-level grades and post-year 13 destinations have been gathered. A mid-way proforma and student focus groups have also informed the research.

Background to the RfE students

- Students on the RfE programme are largely female (75 per cent), and of Pakistani or White backgrounds (47 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).

- Just under half of the students (44 per cent) are from low academically achieving schools. Despite this, they are high academic achievers: 65 per cent have between 10 and 12 GCSEs as A* to C.

- Sixty-nine per cent of students would be first generation university applicants. The majority (96 per cent) are also from families with low household incomes.

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[1] Initially the HBOS Foundation until the banks merged in 2009.

[2] Lamont *et al.*, (2010a)

The impacts of RfE on HE choices and destinations

- At the time of the baseline survey, 96 per cent of the RfE students, and 89 per cent of the control students were planning to attend university. This suggests that the overwhelming majority of young people in the research were already setting their sights high and considering a university education

- At the time of the follow up survey, all RfE students intended to attend university, while for the control group the figure was 91 per cent. This represented a significant difference in intentions between the RfE and control students.

- The overall proportions of RfE and control students who went on to attend university this academic year, or who are planning to attend following a gap year are quite similar: 81 per cent and 83 per cent, respectively.

- At baseline, six of the top ten intended university destinations for RfE students, including the top three choices, were from the Russell Group[3] suggesting that the students were already aiming for top universities. In total, 17 of the Russell Group universities featured in the intended university destinations.

- Considering the total number of research intensive universities[4] that the students were planning to apply to at the time of the follow up survey, there is a significant difference between RfE and control students' intentions. RfE students were considering applying to an average of 2.3 research intensive universities, while control students were, on average, considering applying for 1.5 research intensive universities.

- RfE students have gone on to study at eight of the research intensive universities, whilst students from the control group have gone on to study at 13. This represents a similar breadth of destination research intensive universities to the previous RfE and control cohort. The University of Leeds stands out clearly as the most popular choice of research intensive university for RfE students.

- Proportionally more students from the RfE programme have progressed on to research intensive universities than their control counterparts (44 per cent versus 28 per cent, respectively). This difference is not statistically significant. However, when data from cohort 1 and 2 students are combined, significantly more RfE students have progressed on to research intensive universities than their control counterparts.

- At the time of the baseline survey, students appeared largely confident that university attendance will lead on to good jobs and better qualifications, and that it will be an enjoyable experience. At the time of the follow-up survey, there was still widespread agreement with these factors.

- By the time of the follow-up survey, a considerably larger proportion of RfE students (48 per cent, versus 40 per cent at baseline) and control students (53 per cent, versus 39 per cent at baseline) were concerned about ending up in debt as a result of attending university. This tends to suggest that concerns about university-related debt were affecting an increasing proportion of both RfE and

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[3] The 'Russell Group' universities include: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College, Kings College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queens University Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, and Warwick.

[4] Defined as the Russell Group and 1994 group universities. The 1994 group is comprised of: Bath, Birkbeck, Durham, East Anglia, Essex, Exeter, Goldsmiths, Institute of Education, Royal Holloway, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, Queen Mary, Reading, St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, Surrey, Sussex, York.

control students throughout the period between the baseline and follow-up surveys

- Concerns about moving away from home became more of an issue for both RfE and control students by the time of the follow-up than they were at baseline, though this trend was more marked for the RfE students.

The impacts of RfE on university preparation

- By the time of the follow-up survey, both RfE and control students rated advice about university from university staff, current students, RfE staff and teachers as more useful than they had done at baseline. The RfE programme provides access to the first three of these information sources.

- RfE students appear to be armed with more information about university study than their control counterparts and rate their knowledge of all aspects of university higher than the control students. However, none of these differences are statistically significant, suggesting that this year, unlike last, the RfE students are not showing marked differences in knowledge about university when compared to the control group. .

- Over the course of the programme, the RfE students showed greater development in their levels of knowledge about student maintenance grants and student bursaries than their control counterparts. Both RfE and control students show lower levels of knowledge about the financial aspects of a university education then they do about university more generally.

- RfE students are more prepared for university life in general than control students. Over the course of the programme, the RfE students also became significantly more prepared than their control counterparts for meeting new people, and for getting used to a new university campus or place of study.

- There is no significant difference in how happy the RfE and control students feel about the amount of information, advice and guidance they have received in order to help them to make decisions about university. It appears that students in the control group in cohort two appear happier with the guidance that they have received than those in cohort one.

The impacts of RfE on A-level achievement

- Analysis reveals that the RfE and control group do not significantly differ in the extent to which their predicated UCAS points were achieved. This is true regardless of whether average or total UCAS point scores are used and regardless of the combination of achieved grades.

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Reach for Excellence programme

In 2007, the University of Leeds was awarded funding from the Lloyds TSB Foundation[5] and the Sutton Trust to help able young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Yorkshire to gain a place at a leading research university, and ensure they entered Higher Education (HE) in general. The Reach for Excellence (RfE) programme was subsequently established as the only university access programme of its kind in England. Over the duration of the programme, 360 16-18 year olds from Yorkshire schools are intended to benefit from regular advice sessions and lectures, a summer school, university visits and individual mentoring, with the overall aim of raising the aspirations, achievement, confidence and self-esteem of the young people involved. The programme also seeks to provide appropriate and impartial guidance in an environment that will stretch bright and capable students who may not have considered entry to prestigious research-led universities.

1.2 Eligibility criteria

To ensure that the programme was targeted accurately, eligibility criteria were set for inclusion. Students were invited to apply for the programme from schools that had a low rate of progression to HE, but to take part in RfE, candidates must also:

- live in Yorkshire
- have the potential to achieve 3 or more A-levels at grade B or above and to be a candidate for study at a leading research-led university
- have gained 5 or more GCSEs (including English Language and Mathematics) at grade C or above.

Candidates were also required to meet at least two of the following criteria:

- to be in receipt of an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
- to be in public care
- to have had their studies disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in their personal, social or domestic life
- to be the first member of their family to apply to HE (excluding older brothers or sisters).

The Sutton Trust commissioned the NFER to carry out an evaluation of the RfE programme. This involved tracking the first cohort of 120 students as they progressed from year 12 to year 13, supported by RfE (see Lamont *et al.,* 2010a).

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[5] Initially the HBOS Foundation until the banks merged in 2009.

The research developed to track the progress of the second cohort, to explore the impact of the programme on the third cohort, and also to track students from cohort one and two as they progress into university education, or otherwise. The evaluation runs until the end of 2012.

This report sets out the findings of the evaluation of the second cohort of students (those who enrolled in 2008, and left the programme in 2010). It also makes comparisons with the evaluation of cohort one.

Cohort two was provided with a range of opportunities, including:

- the summer school, in July 2009
- study skills and personal development events (e.g. learning styles and memory skills, note-taking skills, exam preparation, and a motivational speaker)
- subject-specific events (e.g. a biological science conference, a medical engineering event, and sociology, history, English, dentistry and chemistry subject-specific sessions)
- higher education-oriented events (e.g. personal statement support, campus tour, 'ask a student', and a 'tips for applying for medicine' workshop).

Aims

The primary aim of the NFER evaluation is to ascertain how many pupils went on to a research-led university (as well as entering HE as a whole) because of the scheme, who would otherwise not have done so. In order to meet this aim, the study also explored the following research questions:

- Do pupils completing the RfE programme have a greater awareness of the options available to them, of the HE sector and of the funding available?
- How many pupils who complete the RfE programme enter higher education?
- How many pupils who complete the RfE programme secure a place and attend a research-led university?

1.3 Methodology

This report draws on five phases of data collection:

- a baseline survey
- collation of predicted A-level grades
- a mid-point proforma and summer school discussion groups
- a follow-up survey
- collation of achieved A-level grades and post-school/college destinations.

A summary of all data collected is provided in Table 1.

Baseline survey

From Late September 2008 until January 2009, all students who were introduced to the RfE programme completed a baseline survey (see Appendix 1). In total, 243 surveys were completed. Of these, 111 were from students who subsequently gained a place on the programme, and 132 were from students who were eligible to apply, but chose not to. This latter group formed the 'control group' for the research.

Collation of predicted A-level grades

In order to have a baseline measure of achievement, predicted A-level grades were requested for all students who filled in a baseline survey. This data was gathered in the spring of 2009, when the young people were just beginning the RfE programme. The data was provided by the young people's schools. In total, predicted grades were obtained for 196 students (61 RfE and 135 control).

The summer school proforma

In August 2009, an NFER researcher visited the RfE summer school. During this visit, 49 of the young people in attendance completed a proforma. This ascertained their current university intentions, the factors influencing their decisions, the usefulness of RfE to date, and levels of preparedness for university (see Appendix 2).

The summer school discussion groups

Two discussion groups, each comprising six young people, were also conducted. These provided the opportunity for more in-depth discussion on the issues covered in the proforma. The discussions also focused on financial considerations, parents' attitudes to university and impacts to date from participation in RfE.

The follow-up survey

In April/May 2010, 18 months after the second cohort of students had started the RfE programme, the young people who filled in a baseline survey were asked to complete a follow-up survey (see Appendix 3). Students who had enrolled in the RfE programme, but subsequently had only attended the RfE launch or had not attended any RfE events were moved into the control group After this adjustment, in total, 124 follow-up surveys were completed, 56 from young people on the programme (the RfE group), and 68 from the control group.

Collation of achieved A-level grades and destination data

In the Autumn of 2010, the A-level grades and post-school/college destinations of all students who filled in a baseline survey were gathered. In total, destination data was gathered for 76 per cent and grade-related data was gathered for 73 per cent of students.

Table 1.1:   Summary of data collected

Data	Number of RfE students	Number of control students
Baseline survey	111	132
Predicted A-level grades	61	135
Summer school proforma	49	N/A
Summer school discussion groups	12	N/A
Follow-up survey[6]	56	68
Achieved A-level grades	60	120
Actual destinations	68	119

1.4 The comparability of the students in the RfE and control group

The comparability of the RfE and 'control' group was tested. Analysis revealed that the two groups were very comparable on the basis of gender and ethnicity, university aspiration (at the time of the baseline survey), their GCSE attainment levels, type of school and parental attendance at university. As in cohort one, the only significant difference between the two groups was that the RfE students were more likely than their control counterparts to be in receipt of the maximum level of EMA (Educational Maintenance Allowance). This suggests that the RfE cohort were from more deprived families than the students in the control group.

1.5 Report structure

Findings are presented under the following chapter headings:

- Background of the RfE students
- Impacts of RfE on HE choices and destinations
- Impacts of RfE on university preparation
- Impacts of RfE on A-level achievement
- Conclusions.

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[6] Numbers after adjusting the groupings (the groups were adjusted so that students who had enrolled in the RfE programme, but subsequently had only attended the RfE launch or had not attended any RfE events were moved into the control group).

2. Background of the RfE students

> **Key findings**
>
> - Students on the RfE programme are largely female (75 per cent), and of Pakistani or White backgrounds (47 per cent and 30 per cent respectively).
>
> - Just under half of the students (44 per cent) are from low academically achieving schools. Despite this, they are high academic achievers: 65 per cent have between 10 and 12 GCSEs as A* to C.
>
> - Sixty-nine per cent of students would be first generation university applicants. The majority (96 per cent) are also from families with low household incomes.

In order to provide an overview of the types of students involved in the RfE programme, this section provides information on the following:

- background characteristics of the students
- the extent to which they met the RfE eligibility criteria
- levels of student engagement in the RfE programme.

2.1 Background characteristics

Background characteristics of the RfE cohort are given below. These are drawn from the baseline survey.

2.1.1 Gender

Seventy-five per cent of students on the programme who filled in a baseline survey are female[7].

2.1.2 Ethnicity

The ethnicity of the 111 young people attending the RfE programme who filled out a baseline questionnaire is provided in Table 2.1.

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[7] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy

Table 2.1:   Ethnicity of the 111 RfE students who filled in a baseline survey

Ethnic background	Number of students (n=111)	Percentage
Pakistani	52	47
White	33	30
Indian	13	12
Bangladeshi	3	3
Black African	3	3
Mixed race	3	3
Chinese	2	2
Prefer not to say	2	2

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Baseline Survey, 2008/9

As shown, just under half (47 per cent) of students on RfE are of Pakistani origin, while 30 per cent are identified as white. Students of Indian background make up the next most represented ethnic group (12 per cent).

2.1.3 Schools attended

Students on the programme are drawn from 28 schools across West Yorkshire[8]. Forty-four per cent of the students are attending schools where the average percentage of GCSEs achieved at grade A* to C in 2008 (including English and mathematics) is below the national average[9]. Nineteen per cent of the students are from schools that achieved less than half the national average GCSE scores in 2008. Fifty per cent of students are from schools that achieved above the national average[10], and six per cent are currently at sixth form colleges (where GCSE data is not applicable). This demonstrates that almost half of the students on RfE are from lower academically achieving schools. The percentage of students from lower achieving schools in cohort 2 (44 per cent) is lower than in cohort 1 (58 per cent).

2.1.4 GCSE achievements

Despite the fact that almost half (44 per cent) of the students attended a school where GCSE results were below the national average, 65 per cent of the students have between ten and 12 GCSEs at grade A* to C (12 per cent of the students have ten, 29 per cent have eleven, and 24 per cent have twelve). A further 19 per cent of students have between 13 and 18 GCSEs at A* to C. This indicates that, in line with the RfE entry requirements, the students on the programme are very high achieving (93 per cent have between nine and 18 GCSE's at A* to C).

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[8] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

[9] In 2008, 47.6 per cent of pupils nationally achieved GCSEs at grades A* to C (including English and mathematics).

[10] Of the 58 pupils who attend schools that achieve above the national average GCSE results, 20 are from one high performing school. This represents 17 per cent of the RfE cohort.

2.1.5 A-level subjects

The A-level subjects most commonly studied by students on RfE are listed in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Most commonly studied A-levels

A-level studied	Number of students studying (n=111)	Percentage
Biology	71	64
Chemistry	62	56
Maths	62	56
Psychology	45	41
English Literature	31	28
English Language	19	17
Sociology	19	17
Physics	15	14
History	14	13
ICT	13	12

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 108 respondents gave at least one valid response to this question
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Baseline Survey, 2008/9

Compared to cohort 1, more of the cohort 2 RfE students are taking biology, chemistry and maths A-levels.

2.2 Meeting the eligibility criteria

As laid out in Section 1.2, entry criteria were set to ensure that the programme was targeted at those intended. As well as being high achievers and capable of studying at a research-led university, students needed to have met at least two additional criteria from a list of four (to be in receipt of an EMA; to be in public care; to be a first generation university applicant; or to have had their studies adversely affected). Just over sixty per cent of students met three of the additional criteria (over three times as many as in cohort 1), and the remainder met two[11]. This is likely to be a result of the higher proportion of students who have had their studies adversely affected when compared to cohort 1 (see Section 2.2.4 below). The data therefore suggests that the second cohort of students is even more targeted than cohort 1.

2.2.1 Family attendance at university

Ninety-one per cent of students on RfE reported that neither their mother nor father[12] had attended university. Seven per cent of students were from families where either

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[11] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy

[12] 'Mother' and 'father' include step-mothers or step-fathers

their mother or father had attended university, and two per cent reported that both parents had attended.

Sixty-nine per cent of students whose parents had not attended university also reported that none of their siblings had attended. In this sense, they were the first person in their immediate family to attend university. Thirty-one per cent of students whose parents had not attended reported that their brother or sister (or both) had gone to university.

In 60 per cent of families where at least one parent had attended university, the students were the first of their brothers or sisters to attend (six students in total).

These results suggest that, in line with entry criteria, the majority of students on RfE are first generation university applicants. Fewer cohort two students are first generation applicants than in cohort 1.

2.2.2 Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Ninety-six per cent of the students are in receipt of an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) from the government[13]. Recipients of an EMA (at the time of the baseline survey) must come from families with a household income of no more than £30,810 per year. Eighty-two per cent received the maximum amount of £30 per week[14], allocated only to families where household income is no more than £20,817 per year. This indicates that the young people enrolled on RfE are from families with low household incomes. More of the cohort two students were in receipt of an EMA than the cohort one students.

2.2.3 Students in public care

None of the RfE students have been, or are currently, in public care[15].

2.2.4 Disruption to studies

Eighty of the young people on RfE have had their studies disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in their personal, social or domestic life[16] (68 per cent of the RfE cohort). This is more than double the proportion of students who had their studies adversely affected in cohort 1.

2.3 Engagement with the RfE programme

It was evident that some cohort 2 students attended more sessions than others, and that a proportion of the students did not maintain their attendance after being accepted, or after the initial launch event.

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[13] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

[14] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

[15] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

[16] Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

Table 2.3 shows the breakdown of RfE students by engagement level. In total, students could attend a possible 27 different events (some of which were run twice, but only counted as one event).

Table 2.3:   Levels of RfE engagement

Proportion of events attended (total = 27)	Percentage of students (n=116)
13 or more	3
7 to 13 events	13
3 to 6 events	42
0 to 2 events	42

Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy

As Table 2.3 shows, eighty-four per cent of students attended six events or less. The maximum number of events attended was 19, by one student.

3. Impacts of RfE on HE choices and destinations

> ### Key findings
>
> - At the time of the baseline survey, 96 per cent of the RfE students, and 89 per cent of the control students were planning to attend university. This suggests that the overwhelming majority of young people in the research were already setting their sights high and considering a university education.
>
> - At the time of the follow up survey, all RfE students intended to attend university, while for the control group the figure was 91 per cent. This represented a significant difference in intentions between the RfE and control students.
>
> - The overall proportions of RfE and control students who went on to attend university this academic year, or who are planning to attend following a gap year are quite similar: 81 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively.
>
> - At baseline, six of the top ten intended university destinations for RfE students, including the top three choices, were from the Russell Group[17] suggesting that the students were already aiming for top universities. In total, 17 of the Russell Group universities featured in the intended baseline university destinations, which is more than the 12 that featured during the cohort 1 baseline surveys.
>
> - Considering the total number of research intensive universities[18] that the students were planning to apply to at the time of the follow up survey, there is a significant difference between RfE and control students' intentions. RfE students were considering applying to an average of 2.3 research intensive universities, while control students were, on average, considering applying for 1.5 research intensive universities.
>
> - RfE students have gone on to study at eight of the research intensive universities, whilst students from the control group have gone on to study at 13. This represents a similar breadth of destination research intensive universities to the previous RfE and control cohort. The University of Leeds clearly stands out clearly as the most popular choice of research intensive university for RfE students.
>
> - Of those students progressing on to university, proportionally more students from the RfE programme have progressed on to research intensive universities than their control counterparts (44 per cent versus 28 per cent, respectively). This difference is not statistically significant. However, when data from cohort 1 and 2 students are combined, significantly more RfE students have progressed on to research intensive universities than their control counterparts.

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[17] The 'Russell Group' universities include: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College, Kings College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queens University Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, and Warwick.

[18] Defined as the Russell Group and 1994 group universities. The 1994 group is comprised of: Bath, Birkbeck, Durham, East Anglia, Essex, Exeter, Goldsmiths, Institute of Education, Royal Holloway, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, Queen Mary, Reading, St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, Surrey, Sussex, York.

- At the time of the baseline survey, students appeared largely confident that university attendance will lead on to good jobs and better qualifications, and that it will be an enjoyable experience. At the time of the follow-up survey, there was still widespread agreement with these factors.

- By the time of the follow-up survey, a considerably larger proportion of RfE students (48 per cent, versus 40 per cent at baseline) and control students (53 per cent, versus 39 per cent at baseline) were concerned about ending up in debt as a result of attending university. This tends to suggest that concerns about university-related debt were affecting an increasing proportion of both RfE and control students throughout the period between the baseline and follow-up surveys.

- Concerns about moving away from home became more of an issue for both RfE and control students by the time of the follow-up than they were at baseline, though this trend was more marked for the RfE students.

This chapter explores the impact of the RfE programme on students' HE choices and destinations. It considers university intentions at baseline and follow-up survey stages as well as the actual university destinations of RfE and control students, including their attendance at research intensive universities.

3.1 Progression to HE

This section explores the RfE and control students' intentions to progress on to HE or other destinations, and moves on to examine their actual destinations and rates of HE attendance. It also addresses the factors that have influenced students' decision over whether or not to progress into HE.

3.1.1 Intentions to progress to HE

At the time of the baseline survey, 96 per cent of the RfE students and 89 per cent of the control students were planning to go to university. This suggests that the overwhelming majority of young people in the research were already setting their sights high and considering a university education[19].

Table 3.1 shows the intended post-school destinations of the RfE and control students who filled in a follow-up survey. This was administered around 18 months after the baseline survey.

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[19] It should be noted that previous national surveys suggest that aspirations to study at university are not always translated into actual participation.

Table 3.1: Intended post-school destinations, follow-up survey

Intentions post year 13	Number of students		Percentage	
	RfE (n=56)	Control (n=68)	RfE	Control
Intend to go to university	56	62	100	91
Do not intend to go to university	0	6	0	9
Total	56	68	100	100

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2010
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

All of the 56 RfE students (100 per cent) intended to go to university immediately following school/college, or after a gap year, compared to 91 per cent of control students. This represents a significant difference in the intentions between RfE and control students.

To provide a slightly different picture of changes to university intentions, data for only those students who filled in both a baseline and follow-up survey can be compared to examine changes in the intentions for *individual students.* Using this approach, student responses from the baseline and follow-up surveys can be categorised as 'lowered' (i.e. initially intending to head to university, but no longer intending to go at follow-up stage), 'no change' (i.e. maintaining intention to go, or not go to university at baseline and follow-up) or 'raised' (i.e. not intending to go to university at baseline, then intending to go at the time of the follow-up survey.) Using this approach reveals that RfE students tended to either maintain (52 students) or raise (3 students) their university intentions. There appeared to be greater variability of intentions among the control students. While 54 did maintain their university intentions, six individuals lowered their university intentions, while 7 raised them.

3.1.2 Actual progression to HE

In the final stages of the project, NFER collected information on the actual destinations of students who had filled in a baseline survey. Destination data was received for 187 of the students: 119 control students and 68 RfE students[20]. Table 3.2 shows the destinations of these RfE and control students.

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[20] This excludes destination data returned by schools/colleges stating that they did not know where the students had progressed to.

Table 3.2: **Actual destinations of RfE and control students**

Destination	Number		Percentage (of those with known destinations)	
	RfE (n=68)	Control (n=119)	RfE (%)	Control (%)
University	50	95	74	80
Gap year, or gap year then university	5	3	7	3
Employment	1	3	1	3
Continue at school/college, or attending other FE	12	17	18	14
Other	0	1	0	1

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: Destination and grade data provided to NFER, 2010

Clearly, attending university was the most popular post-school/college destination for students in both the RfE and control groups: 74 per cent of RfE students had gone on to study at university compared to 80 per cent of the control group. Once the gap year figures are taken into account, the overall proportions of RfE and control students either heading to university this academic year, or planning to attend following a gap year are quite similar: 81 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively.

Previous research has suggested that students' intentions to attend university will often be higher than what is actually observed. This phenomenon appears to be present, but to be affecting the RfE group more than the control students. There was a drop of 19 percentage points in the numbers of RfE students who actually progressed on to university from the number who had intended to, based on responses to the follow-up questionnaire. For the control group, the corresponding fall was smaller, at eight percentage points. It should be noted that RfE students' university intentions came off a very high point (100 per cent) at the follow-up survey. This situation differs considerably from the research conducted for the first RfE cohort. For the first cohort, actual HE attendance for RfE students (96 per cent) did not fall away at all from what was intended at the time of the follow-up survey (95 per cent), while for the control students, the differential between actual HE attendance versus intentions at the follow-up survey was 14 per cent.

3.2 University destinations

One of the aims of the RfE programme is to encourage students to raise their aspirations to attend highly regarded, research intensive universities, such as those that are members of the Russell Group[21] or the 1994 Group[22]. This section examines

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[21] The 'Russell Group' universities include: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College, Kings College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queens University Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, and Warwick.

the RfE and control students' intended university destinations at the time of the baseline and the follow-up surveys, and then their actual destinations. In doing so, it looks at intentions for, and progression to, research intensive universities, as well as the geographical spread of their university choices.

3.2.1 Intended university destinations

Intended destinations at baseline

Although most RfE students knew that they wanted to go to university at the time of the baseline survey, they were less sure about where they would apply. Fifty-nine per cent stated that they knew where they would apply, the majority of whom (84 per cent) planned to apply for the University of Leeds. (More students in this cohort knew where they wanted to apply compared to cohort 1 – 59 per cent and 47 per cent respectively).

Table 3.1 sets out the top 10 university destinations of those 59 per cent who knew where they were planning to apply.

Table 3.3:   Intended university destinations of RfE Students at baseline

University destination	Number of students intending to apply (n=63)	Percentage
University of Leeds	53	84
University of Manchester	20	32
University of Sheffield	18	29
University of Bradford	14	22
University of York	10	16
Leeds Metropolitan University	6	10
University of Huddersfield	6	10
Newcastle University	5	8
University of Cambridge	5	8
Imperial College London	5	8

A filter question: all those who said they knew where they intended to apply
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Baseline Survey, 2008/9

Six of these universities, including the top three choices, are from the 'Russell Group' suggesting that the students were already aiming for top universities (in total, 17 of the Russell Group universities featured in the university destinations, which was more than the 12 that featured during the cohort 1 baseline surveys). Indeed, 94 per cent of those RfE students who knew which university they wanted to apply to chose a Russell Group University as one of their choices. This figure was slightly lower for the control students at 82 per cent. However, there appears to be a geographical

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[22] The 1994 Group is comprised of: Bath, Birkbeck, Durham, East Anglia, Essex, Exeter, Goldsmiths, Institute of Education, Royal Holloway, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, Queen Mary, Reading, St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, Surrey, Sussex, York.

bias (with the exception of Cambridge and University College London) to universities in Yorkshire or those within easy reach of the West Yorkshire region.

Intended university destinations at follow-up

At the time of the follow-up survey, students who indicated that they intended to go on to university were asked to list the universities to which they had applied. A total of 465 university applications were listed, which gives an average of just under four university applications per student responding. Table 3.4 shows the breakdown, by RfE and control students, of the 11 most frequently applied for universities.

Table 3.4:   Intended university destinations at follow-up

University	Number of students applying		Percentage	
	RFE (n=56))	Control (n=68)	RfE	Control
University of Leeds	42	34	75	50
University of Bradford	32	27	57	40
University of Manchester	17	13	30	19
University of Huddersfield	15	21	27	31
University of Sheffield	14	11	25	16
Leeds Metropolitan University	11	17	20	25
University of Leicester	8	2	14	3
University of York	7	4	13	6
University of Newcastle	6	9	11	13
University of Liverpool	5	8	9	12
University of Nottingham	5	5	9	7

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2010

At the time of the follow-up survey, similar universities dominated the top choices for both RfE and control students. Again, The University of Leeds was the most popular university choice. However, the proportion of RfE students who had applied to the University of Leeds was considerably more than that of the control students (75 per cent versus 50 per cent respectively). It is perhaps unsurprising that The University of Leeds was a popular choice for RfE students, as many will have become familiar with it through their attendance at RfE activities. Manchester University continued to be a popular choice for RfE and control students, but again, the proportion choosing this university was considerably higher amongst RfE students.

At the time of the follow-up survey, Huddersfield and Bradford Universities appear to have become relatively more popular choices for RfE students than some research intensive universities that are located further afield, such as Sheffield and Manchester. This may seem counter-intuitive, as the RfE programme aims to encourage young people to consider research intensive universities. However, it is worth considering students' intentions in light of the present concern about the costs

associated with attending university. It may be that some students who originally intended to attend university further afield had modified their intentions by the time of the follow-up survey to staying closer to home. Indeed, the trend remained that the most popular university choices for students in both the RfE and control cohorts were for institutions within easy reach of West Yorkshire. This mirrors the pattern observed amongst cohort 1 RfE and control students.

3.2.2 Research intensive university intentions

As shown above in Table 3.3, at baseline, seven of the most frequently identified university destinations from RfE students were from the research intensive universities, suggesting that these students were already aiming for top universities (in total, 21 of the research intensive universities featured in the university destinations). The follow-up survey results, shown in Table 3.4, also show that research intensive universities continued to feature heavily in the intended university destinations of both the RfE and control groups.

The follow-up survey reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between the intentions of RfE and the comparison students to apply to at least one research intensive university. Of those students who filled in both a baseline and endpoint survey, at baseline, 58 per cent of RfE students and 46 per cent of the comparison group students intended to apply to at least one research intensive university, compared to 80 per cent and 67 per cent at follow-up. Neither the change in intentions nor the comparison between the two groups at baseline and follow-up are significantly different.

However, when looking at the total number of research intensive universities to which the students are considering applying, although there is no significant difference in their intentions at baseline, there is a significant difference between their intentions at follow-up (from an average of 1.4 research intensive choices for the RfE students and 1 for the comparison students, to an average of 2.3 and 1.5 respectively). This suggests that significantly more of the RfE students are applying to more research intensive universities. Hence, although the RfE programme does not initially appear to have led to significant differences in the university intentions of the young people involved, they are more likely than their control group comparison to be aiming for *more* of the 'top' universities.

3.2.3 Actual attendance at research intensive universities

Table 3.5 is based upon data received from schools/colleges and individual students on actual post-school destinations of RfE and control students. It lists the actual research intensive universities that the control and RfE students have gone on to attend.

Table 3.5: **Actual research intensive university destinations of RfE and control students**

Destination	RfE students (n=51)	Control students (n=92)
The University of Leeds	13	9
The University of Manchester	2	2
The University of Liverpool	2	1
Lancaster University	1	3
Durham University	1	2
The University of Reading	1	0
The University of Sheffield	1	0
The University of Cambridge	1	0
The University of York	0	2
The University of Birmingham	0	1
The University of Edinburgh	0	1
Imperial College London	0	1
Loughborough University	0	1
Newcastle University	0	1
The University of Oxford	0	1
The University of St Andrews	0	1

Source: NFER destination and grade data, 2010

Table 3.5 shows that the RfE students have gone on to study at eight different research intensive universities, whilst students from the control group have gone on to study at 13. This represents slightly fewer research intensive universities for RfE students compared to the previous RfE cohort (11 research intensive universities in cohort 1), and slightly more for the control cohort (nine research intensive universities in the first cohort). As predicted by the intentions at follow-up, the University of Leeds clearly stands out as the most popular choice of research intensive university for RfE students.

Table 3.6 shows the proportion of RfE and control students attending research intensive universities versus those not defined as research intensive.

Table 3.6: **The proportions of RfE and control students attending research intensive universities**

Destination	Number of students		Percentage	
	RfE	Control	RfE	Control
A research intensive university	22	26	44	28
A university not defined as research intensive	28	66	56	72
Total	50	92	100	100

Source: NFER destination and grade data, 2010

Proportionally more students from the RfE programme have progressed on to research intensive universities than their control counterparts (44 per cent versus 28 per cent, respectively). However, this difference is not statistically significant. A finding is said to be statistically significant if enough evidence has been gathered to demonstrate that it is unlikely to have occurred by chance (and in this case, the difference is instead likely to have occurred as a result of the RfE programme). Usually a result is deemed statistically significant if the probability it occurred by chance is calculated to be five percent or lower. It is interesting to note that the proportion of RfE students from this cohort going on to research intensive universities is quite similar to the previous cohort's corresponding figure of 45 per cent. It seems that proportionally more students from the current control group (28 per cent) went on to study at research intensive universities than was the case for the previous cohort, where just 21 per cent of the control group went on to study at a research intensive university. Hence, the RfE programme is producing a consistent number of research intensive progressions from students who are enrolled in the programme, but in this cohort, more of the control students have gone on to study at research intensive universities, and hence less of a difference is observed.

Analysis was conducted to look at trends when data from cohort one and two is combined. For both cohorts, a larger proportion of RfE students went on to study at a research intensive university compared to control students. For cohort one this finding was statistically significant, whereas for cohort two, as set out above, the difference between the two groups was slightly smaller and not significant. In combining the two cohorts, the difference between the RfE and non-RfE groups does not change substantially, however we are now basing our analysis on twice as much data. By considering both sets of evidence together, we reduce the chances that atypical individuals in either the RfE or control groups may be distorting the picture and causing the differences we have observed. As a result we find that the difference between the two groups across cohorts one and two together is highly statistically significant, and therefore, the young people who have passed through the programme to date are statistically more likely to have progressed onto research intensive universities than their control counterparts.

Students from both the RfE and control groups also went on to attend a wide variety of other universities. The most popular among these were local universities such as

Bradford University, the University of Huddersfield and Leeds Metropolitan University.

3.2.4 Geographical spread of universities attended

Analysis was conducted to explore the geographical spread of the universities that students went on to attend. There was a general tendency for students to opt for universities in the geographical region around Leeds, with approximately three-quarters of both control and RfE students choosing to study relatively locally (74 and 76 per cent of students, respectively) (e.g. less than 50 miles from Leeds, by road). Overall, there were no significant differences in the distances from Leeds of the universities attended by the RfE and control students.

3.3 Factors influencing university decisions

This section looks at the factors that have influenced students' decisions over whether or not to progress to HE, as well as the factors considered when choosing universities.

3.3.1 Factors influencing progression or non-progression to HE

Influential factors at baseline

In the baseline survey, students were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with a number of statements about university. Some of the statements related to concerns, or reasons that would militate against university attendance. Others related to positive reasons for attending university. The statements agreed with most strongly are shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7:   Agreement with factors that may affect university attendance

Statement	Percentage of students agreeing	
	RfE (n=111)	**Control (n=132)**
I want to continue studying	99	92
I want to get a higher qualification	98	94
I want to go to university	96	89
Going to university will enable me to get a good job	95	91
I think I would enjoy the studying	94	78
Going to university will allow me to get a well-paid job	93	89
I know people who have been to university	82	89

Source: NFER baseline survey, 2009

It is perhaps unsurprising that positive statements emerged most strongly, given that 96 per cent of RfE students and 89 per cent of the control students already planned to attend university (see Section 3.1). Largely, the students appeared confident that university attendance will lead on to good jobs and better qualifications, and that it will be an enjoyable experience. The RfE students, in particular, readily agreed that they would enjoy the study associated with attending university.

Of the more negative statements, Table 3.8 shows those that were agreed with most frequently by RfE students/control students:

Table 3.8:   Agreement with factors that may affect university attendance

Statement	Percentage of students agreeing	
	RfE (n=111)	Control (n=132)
I'm concerned I will end up in debt	40	39
I want to start earning as soon as possible	30	36
I don't want to leave home	23	27
I am not sure what university will involve	16	18

Source: NFER baseline survey, 2009

The statement 'I'm concerned I will end up in debt' was agreed with by two-fifths of the young people. This suggests that concerns over debt were quite common at the time of the baseline survey.

Both the positive and negative factors outlined above closely mirror those identified by the first cohort of RfE students. Overall, though, the second cohort of RfE students seemed slightly more positive regarding university. They tended to agree slightly more strongly with the positive factors, and agree slightly less strongly with the negative factors.

Influential factors at follow-up

Comparison can be made between the responses of RfE and control students at baseline and at follow-up. Students' responses revealed that there was still widespread agreement with the positive factors that might encourage university attendance. These included 'I want to get a higher qualification' (97 and 96 per cent agreement from RfE and control students) and 'I want to go to university' (95 and 96 per cent from RfE and control students). Unsurprisingly, students' agreement with these factors was still strong at follow-up, reflecting the finding that most of the RfE and control students still intended to go to university at the time of the follow-up survey. These findings contrast with the experience from the first cohort, where agreement from the control students seemed to wane in a reflection of their intentions to attend university, a phenomenon that was not observed in the control group for the second cohort.

Interestingly, agreement with the statement 'I want to continue studying' (91 per cent for both RfE and control students) reflected a fall from a very high 99 per cent agreement for RfE students at the time of the baseline survey. For comparison students, responses remained virtually unchanged: 92 per cent at baseline and 91 per cent at the time of the follow-up. This could be indicative of the slightly lower number of RfE students who actually progressed on to university that was observed in Section 3.2 above.

At follow-up, a large majority of students remained confident that university attendance would lead to a good job (93 per cent for both RfE and control students) and a well-paid job (89 per cent of RfE students and 92 per cent of control students). This bodes well given the recent changes to HE funding and the associated commentary, some of which has suggested that young people may be less likely to recognise the financial and other benefits of attending university.

Interestingly, by the time of the follow-up survey, a larger proportion of RfE students (48 per cent, versus 40 per cent at baseline) and control students (53 per cent, versus 39 per cent at baseline) were concerned about ending up in debt as a result of attending university. This tends to suggest that concerns about university-related debt were affecting an increasing proportion of both RfE and control students throughout the period between the baseline and follow-up surveys. The increase in concern about university-related debt is more marked for the control students, which perhaps reflects the additional information that RfE students have received through the RfE programme that has somewhat limited the trend among the RfE pupils (See Section 4.2.3). This increasing concern among RfE students about university-related debt contrasts to the findings from the cohort 1 study, where concern about debt fell from 66 per cent to 44 per cent amongst RfE students over the period between the baseline and follow-up surveys.

Concerns about moving away from home became more of an issue for both RfE and control students by the time of the follow-up survey than they were at baseline, though this trend was more marked for the RfE students. At the time of the baseline survey, 23 per cent of RfE pupils agreed they were concerned about moving away from home, while at the time of the follow-up survey the proportion had risen to 39 per cent. This may seem counter-intuitive, considering that the RfE programme contained information and guidance for students on what student life might involve. Perhaps, though, this finding may partly stem from the timing of the surveys. By the time of the follow-up survey, concerns over leaving home may have been more prominent in students' minds than was the case at the time of the baseline survey. This finding is also reinforced by students' actual university destinations, which did tend to centre on institutions close to students' homes.

3.3.2 Factors influencing HE destinations

The follow-up survey asked students to rank the relative importance of a series of six factors which might influence their choice of university. These included:

- the university's closeness to home
- how good it is for my chosen subject
- whether my friends are applying/ already attend
- the quality of student life there
- the reputation of the university
- the grades required to get in.

Analysis revealed that the RfE and control students are influenced by slightly different factors when making decisions about university destinations. When choosing a university, both the RfE and control students tended to rate how good the university is for their chosen subject within their top two factors: 74 per cent and 89 per cent of the time, respectively. The reputation of a university was identified within the top two factors by a greater proportion of RfE students (49 per cent) than control students (39 per cent), perhaps showing the influence of the RfE programme encouraging students to aim for research intensive universities. Considering the grades required was rated in the top two factors more frequently by control students (50 per cent) than RfE students (43 per cent).

4. Impacts of RfE on university preparation

Key findings

- By the time of the follow-up survey, both RfE and control students rated advice about university from university staff, current students, RfE staff and teachers as more useful than they had done at baseline. The RfE programme provides access to the first three of these information sources.

- RfE students appear to be armed with more information about university study than their control counterparts and rate their knowledge of all aspects of university higher than the control students. However, none of these differences are statistically significant, suggesting that this year, unlike last, the RfE students are not showing marked differences in knowledge about university when compared to the control group.

- Both RfE and control students show lower levels of knowledge about the financial aspects of a university education then they do about university more generally. Over the course of the programme, the RfE students showed greater development in their levels of knowledge about student maintenance grants and student bursaries than their control counterparts.

- RfE students are more prepared for university life in general than control students. Over the course of the programme, the RfE students also became significantly more prepared than their control counterparts for meeting new people, and for getting used to a new university campus or place of study.

- There is no significant difference in how happy the RfE and control students feel about the amount of information, advice and guidance they have received in order to help them to make decisions about university. It appears that students in the control group in cohort two appear happier with the guidance that they have received than those in cohort one.

The RfE programme aims to prepare students for HE by providing impartial information, advice and guidance about university. As well as providing information on university choices and research skills to refine their decision making, RfE aims to furnish students with information on all aspects of university life. The evaluation sought to explore whether RfE students were more prepared for HE than their peers who were unable, or chose not, to be involved in the programme.

This section addresses the impact of RfE on university preparation. It covers the following:

- Sources of advice about university
- Knowledge about university
- Impacts on preparedness
- Satisfaction with information, advice and guidance received.

4.1 Sources of advice about university

This section sets out the sources of advice most frequently accessed by students. It also addresses how useful RfE and control students found the advice.

4.1.1 Sources accessed

At baseline, the majority of advice about university had been provided to both RfE and control students by parents or carers, or by teachers. By the time of the follow-up survey, the majority of advice was still being provided by parents and teachers. Both at baseline and at follow-up, the least frequently accessed sources of advice were employers and Connexions advisers.

4.1.2 Most useful sources of advice

At baseline, students reported that the most useful sources of advice about university that they had accessed were teachers, parents/carers and 'other' family members (e.g. siblings or cousins). The least useful sources were employers, school careers coordinators and Connexions.

Table 4.1 details the usefulness of advice received by the RfE and control students by the time of the follow-up survey.

Table 4.1:   Useful sources of advice at follow-up

Source of advice	Percentage of students accessing support who rated it as 'very useful' or 'useful'	
	RfE	**Control**
University staff	100	96
Current students	96	96
Teachers	87	87
'Other' family members	80	88
Parents/carers	68	82
Connexions	65	90
Employer	60	64
Schools careers coordinators	62	69

Figures refer to individual questions in each row so percentages do not sum up to 100
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Follow-up Survey, 2010

By the time of the follow-up survey, advice from university staff, current students, RfE staff and teachers was deemed more useful than previously – the most useful sources of advice for both groups of students were considered to be university staff and current students. Advice from RfE staff was also rated highly by the RfE students (49 out of 56 RfE students rated advice from RfE staff as 'very useful' or 'useful'). This suggests that the most beneficial sources of advice for young people

considering a university education are offered by the RfE programme (e.g. University staff, RfE staff and current students).

Thus, it appears that RfE is providing students with valuable sources of information about university. It is likely that access to this useful advice has helped to better prepare the students for a university education.

4.2 Knowledge about university

This section looks at whether the RfE students are more knowledgeable about university, and have a greater financial awareness, than their control counterparts. It also looks back at the types of information about university that students were requesting before the programme began.

4.2.1 Information required before RfE began

Results from the baseline survey (conducted in December 2008) revealed that 93 per cent of students (both RfE and control) indicated that they would benefit from more information about what going to university would involve. The types of information that they required are set out in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Information required by RfE and control students at baseline

Information required	Percentage of students (n=221)
The grades you need	78
The best universities for the subject(s) I am considering	73
What the subject(s) I am considering would involve	72
How much it would cost	72
What different universities are like	71
How to find out about courses	69
Financial support	67
Student loans	67
How to apply	59
What student life is like	51
How the study compares to school	50
What you need for the top universities	45

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Baseline Survey, 2008.

These initial results suggested that there was considerable hunger for information about what going to university would involve. Even information required by the lowest proportion of students was still thought be useful to just under half (45 per cent) of the students.

Seventy-three per cent of students required information about the best universities for the subjects they are considering. This suggested that the students may already have been aiming high. Seventy-two per cent also required information about costs, suggesting that how they would finance their time at university was a concern. This, along with a relatively high proportion of students seeking information on financial support and student loans (67 per cent in each case) might also reflect the relatively financially deprived backgrounds of the students (see Section 2).

RfE aimed to provide the students with all of the information listed in Table 4.2. A comparison between control and RfE students after involvement in the programme is explored in Section 4.2.2. The programme also aimed to improve the financial literacy and awareness of the students, and the extent to which this has been achieved is explored in 4.2.3.

4.2.2 Levels of knowledge about university after the RfE programme

The follow-up survey results suggest that RfE students are armed with slightly more information about university study than their control counterparts, but that few of the differences are statistically significant.

Regardless of whether or not they planned to go on to university, students were asked to rate how much they knew about a number of aspects of university study. Students were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that they knew 'a lot' about the area, and 5 meaning they knew 'nothing' about it. It is important to consider the effects when only those intending to go to university are included in the analysis. It is possible that students who do not intend to progress into HE would not have been seeking information about university, and they would therefore have ranked their knowledge as lower. Hence, Table 4.3 sets out the number and percentage of RfE and control students who intended to go to university who ranked their knowledge with a score of 1 or 2.

Table 4.3:   Levels of knowledge about university

Area of knowledge	Number of students rating their knowledge highly		Percentage	
	RfE	Control	RfE	Control
How to apply	52	57	93	93
The grades you need to get into university	52	56	93	92
How to find out about courses	49	53	88	87
What the subject(s) that interest you involve	45	49	82	80
The best universities for the subject(s) that interest you	44	42	79	69
How university study compares to school	43	38	77	62
What you need to get into the top universities	39	46	70	75
What student life is like	40	36	71	59
What different universities are like	35	36	63	59

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2010.
Not all students responded to each question so percentages are based are valid percents.

Overall, RfE students claimed to know more about almost every aspect of university than their control counterparts (the exceptions being how to apply and the grades they needed, where levels of knowledge were equal, and knowing what you need to get into the top university, where the RfE group knew less). However, none of the differences were statistically significant, suggesting that by the time of the follow-up survey, the RfE students were statistically no more likely than their control counterparts to be armed with information about aspects of university study.

It is worth noting that some of the schools and colleges from which RfE students are drawn, are known to provide good quality study skills and UCAS application sessions for their students. Therefore, some of the control students in the sample are usefully able to access this support. This may reduce the gap in knowledge between control and RfE students in some schools/colleges, and therefore reduce the differences in knowledge that can be observed between the control and RfE students overall.

4.2.3 Levels of financial awareness

As detailed in Table 4.2, before the programme began, significant numbers of students were keen to find out more about how much university would cost, about student loans and about financial support. At the mid-point of the RfE programme, it was evident that students at the summer school particularly valued the information on

the financial considerations surrounding university attendance (See Section 4.2.4 below).

The follow-up survey asked students to rate their levels of knowledge about different financial aspects associated with a university education. Again, students were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that they know 'a lot' about the area, and 5 meaning they know 'nothing' about it. Table 4.4 sets out the number and percentage of RfE and control students who intended to go to university who ranked their knowledge with a score of 1 or 2.

Table 4.4:   Levels of financial awareness

Area of knowledge	Number of students rating their knowledge highly		Percentage	
	RfE	Control	RfE	Control
Course fees	41	36	73	59
Maintenance grants	39	27	70	44
Student bursaries/scholarships/awards	31	24	55	39
What student loans offer/provide	35	29	63	48
Applying for student loans	33	33	59	54
Repaying student loans	28	26	50	43

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Follow-up Survey, 2010.

Table 4.4 shows that by the end of RfE, the RfE students showed a greater level of financial awareness than their control counterparts. Significant differences in levels of knowledge (amongst those who intended to go to university) were found for awareness of maintenance grants, with RfE students showing a statistically higher level of knowledge. Table 4.4 also shows that levels of knowledge about the financial aspects of a university education were much lower than levels of knowledge about university more generally (covered in Section 4.2.3). This shows that students (both RfE and control) feel less informed about finances and might still benefit from additional awareness-raising activities.

These findings are less positive than those found previously amongst the cohort one RfE and comparison students. However, the levels of engagement of the RfE students in cohort two were generally lower, and this might therefore reduce any potential differences in knowledge levels as a result of the RfE programme. The other possibility is that schools are becoming more familiar with the financial aspects of attending university, particularly those aspects that relate to students from more deprived backgrounds.

Notwithstanding this, RfE appears to equip students with useful information about how they might fund their time and access financial support whilst at university. Significant differences in knowledge are evident between the RfE and control group with regards to information on maintenance grants, suggesting that the RfE students have been provided with significantly more information about this aspect of university finances than the control group. Although some of the other differences in knowledge are marginal, a general pattern has emerged of RfE students rating their knowledge on each aspect more highly than control students.

More detailed analysis shows that over the course of the programme, the RfE students gained significantly more knowledge than their control counterparts about student bursaries/scholarships/awards and about maintenance grants. This analysis draws on individual-level data at baseline, compared to follow-up. Thus, RfE students showed greater gains in levels of knowledge in these areas than the control group (for whom there is equivalent data). Hence, the RfE programme is offering students more knowledge on some aspects of student finance, specifically that most pertinent to students from economically deprived backgrounds.

4.2.4 Aspects of RfE that students found most helpful

Students filling in the summer school proforma in July 2010 assessed how helpful the RfE programme had been across a wide range of areas, including providing information about different universities, financial matters and personal development. Students rated RfE's helpfulness on a scale of one to five, where one was 'not at all helpful' and five was 'very helpful'. Table 4.5 shows the aspects of RfE that the proforma enquired about, along with the frequency with which students responded with a four or a five on the five-point scale.

Table 4.5: **Things RfE has helped students with (1= not helpful at all, 5=Very helpful) (n=49)**

Type of help/information	Number of students indicating that RfE has been helpful (score of 4 or 5)
Financial Support	47
Student loans	46
Developing your social skills	46
How much it would cost	44
Building your confidence	44
What student life is like	44
How to apply	44
Teaching you study skills	43
Raising your aspirations for your future career	42
Practical advice/ information about applying to university	40
How to find out about courses	40
How the study compares to school	34
What grades you need	33
What the subject(s) you are considering would involve	33
What you need for the top universities	32
Giving your parents information about university	31
What different universities are like	26
The best universities for the subject(s) you are considering	24

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence summer school proforma, 2009

The majority of students felt that RfE was helpful across all areas and the frequency of 'helpful' ratings is very high. Areas concerned with financial help were amongst those deemed most helpful. This included 'financial support' (rated as helpful by 47 of the 49 students), 'student loans' (46) and 'how much it would cost' (44).

RfE students frequently identified areas of personal development as areas where RfE had been helpful. Developing social skills was identified as helpful by 46 of the 49 students, while the confidence building that occurred through RfE was felt to be helpful by 44 students. During one of the summer school focus groups, a student commented that his confidence was raised through involvement with RfE: '*It makes you think: because you're good enough to go on the programme, then you're good enough to go to a better university as well*.' Forty-three students felt that RfE had been helpful in the area of study skills, while 42 of the students identified the aspiration-raising aspects of RfE as helpful.

This mid-point picture of the useful aspects of RfE provides an insight into how much RfE is helping students to prepare for a university education. The levels of preparedness by the end of the programme is covered in Section 4.3 below.

4.3 Impacts on preparedness

In the baseline and follow-up surveys, as well as in the summer school proformas, students who intended to go to university were asked to indicate how prepared they felt for different elements of a university education.

At baseline, the RfE students reported that they felt most prepared for independent study and for meeting new people (85 and 83 per cent respectively classed themselves as 'very' or 'quite' prepared for these activities). They felt less prepared for living away from home and managing their finances. Indeed, 50 per cent of the RfE students stated that they felt 'not very' or 'not at all' prepared for living away from home. Forty-one per cent reported the same lack of preparedness for managing their finances. Around two-thirds of the RfE students felt that they were prepared for university life in general and for getting used to a new place of study/university campus (69 and 65 per cent respectively).

The responses of the RfE students who filled in a summer school proforma very closely reflected the results set out above at baseline. However, when compared to their baseline responses, there were marked differences in how prepared they were for university one year into the RfE programme. The changes in levels of preparedness are detailed below in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1:   Levels of preparedness for university at the time of the RfE summer school.

The percentage of RfE students who were prepared for the following aspects of university at baseline and at the time of the summer schoool (n=49)

■ BASELINE   ■ SUMMER PROFORMA

	Meeting new people	Independent study	Managing finances	Living away from home	New place of study	University life in general
BASELINE	84	84	53	47	64	71
SUMMER PROFORMA	98	84	78	69	92	92
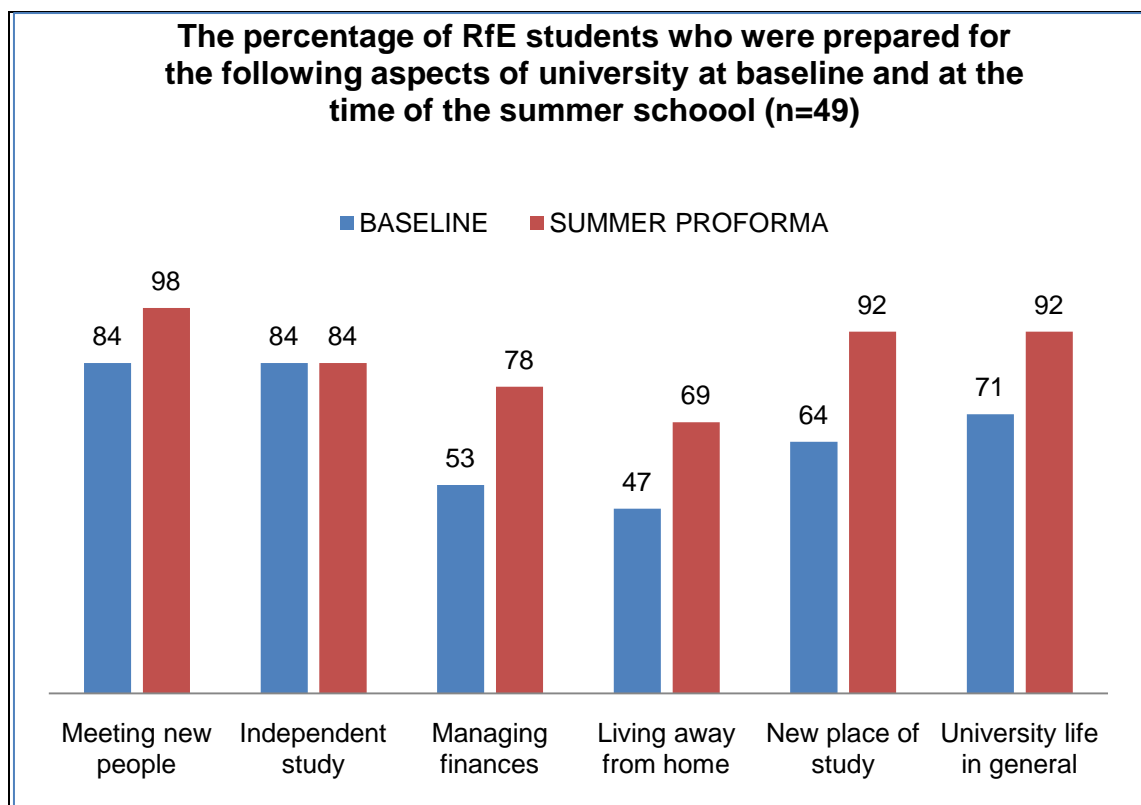
The biggest change was in how prepared pupils felt for getting used to a new university campus or place of study; closely followed by how prepared they were for managing their finances. The number of students stating that they felt prepared or very prepared for these things rose by 28 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. As can be viewed in Figure 4.1, the students also reported that they felt better prepared for living away from home (very possibly as a result of the summer school residential experience) and for university life in general. It is also noteworthy that all but one of the RfE students felt that they were prepared for meeting new people (again, perhaps a reflection of their positive RfE and summer school experiences. At the time of the summer school, these gains in levels of preparedness could not be compared to their peers in the control group.

Table 4.5 sets out the number and percentage of RfE and control students who ranked their levels of preparedness with a score of 1 or 2 by the time of the follow-up survey. These scores corresponded to the responses: 'very prepared' and 'quite prepared'.

Table 4.5: Levels of preparedness for university

Aspect of university education	Number of students feeling prepared		Percentage	
	RfE (n=56)	Control (n=62)	RfE	Control
Meeting new people	52	46	93	74
Independent study	50	55	89	89
University life in general	47	41	84	66
Getting used to a new university campus/place of study	45	43	80	69
Managing your finances	39	36	70	56
Possibly living away from home	22	29	39	47

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Cohort 2 Follow-up Survey, 2010.

Table 4.5 shows that the RfE programme is effective in successfully preparing students for university education. The RfE students appear more prepared than the control group for all aspects of a university education, except for the prospects of possibly living away from home, where the control group feel more prepared, and for independent study, where both groups appear similarly prepared. However, Table 4.5 shows that both RfE and control students who intend to go university appear to be less prepared for managing their finances and for living way from home than they do for other aspects of university study. This reflects the pattern picked up at the time of the summer school, and the baseline survey. Significant differences in levels of preparedness are also evident. The RfE group are significantly less likely than the control group to feel prepared for possibly living away from home. This is possibly a result of the number of RfE students who were planning to attend a university close to home. However, they are significantly more prepared for university life in general.

More detailed analysis explored individual-level data (e.g. it compared the changes in levels of preparedness for individual students who completed both a baseline and follow-up questionnaire). This analysis shows that over the course of the programme, the RfE students became significantly more prepared than their control counterparts for meeting new people, and for getting used to a new university campus or place of study. Overall then, the RfE programme is an effective vehicle for preparing students to enter Higher Education, which may, in the long term, contribute to the low attrition rates once RfE students move on to university (as observed in the longitudinal investigation of this programme[23]).

4.4 Satisfaction with information, advice and guidance received

The results from the cohort 1 evaluation showed that the RfE students in the first cohort (involved in the programme from 2007 until 2009) were significantly happier than their control counterparts about the amount of information and guidance they had had to help them to make decisions about university. The cohort 2 students were also asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: 'Overall, I am happy with the amount of information, advice and guidance I have had to help me to make decisions about university'. For the second cohort, there is no significant difference in how happy the RfE students were with the information they had received, when compared with the control group. Indeed, 88 per cent of the RfE students, as opposed to 79 per cent of the control students, stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The level of satisfaction amongst the control group is higher in cohort 2 than it was in cohort 1 (when 69 per cent of respondents were satisfied), again suggesting that cohort 2 students are receiving good quality information, advice and guidance from sources other than the RfE programme. The level of satisfaction remained roughly constant amongst the RfE group (dipping slightly from 89 per cent amongst cohort 1 students, to 87 per cent of cohort 2). When looking just at those intending to go to university, there is still no significant difference between the levels of satisfaction of the control and RfE students.

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[23] Lamont *et al.*, 2010a

5.   Impacts of RfE on A-level achievement

> **Key finding**
>
> - Analysis reveals that the RfE and control group do not significantly differ in the extent to which their predicated UCAS points or grades were achieved. This is true regardless of whether average or total UCAS point scores are used and regardless of the combination of achieved grades.

The cohort 1 evaluation looked at the achieved A-level grades of the RfE group, compared to the control group. The findings suggested that the RfE students were significantly more likely than their control counterparts to have achieved at least one A grade at A-level. Furthermore, proportionally, RfE students achieved more A and B grades than the control students.

The evaluation of the second cohort sought to explore the impact of the RfE programme on student achievement in a more detailed and robust way. To this end, shortly after the baseline surveys were completed and students had enrolled on the RfE programme (or were allocated to the control group), subject-specific predicted A-level grades[24] were requested from the schools of all students who had completed a baseline survey. The predictions were based on ALPS data[25]. In September 2010, once the students had left their school or college, the schools were approached again to provide subject-specific achieved A-level data.

In total:

- predicted grades were obtained for 196 students (61 RfE and 135 control), representing a response rate of 81 per cent
- achieved grades were obtained for 180 students (60 Rfe and 120 control), representing a response rate of 74 per cent.

This provided 169 sets of matched data (e.g. data provided at baseline and at follow-up). Data gathered in the baseline survey also demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the control and RfE students in the number of GCSEs achieved at A* to C. Both groups were high achieving (88 per cent of the control group and 92 per cent of the RfE group achieved between 9 and 18 GCSEs at grade A* to C).

In order to explore any differences in attainment as a result of involvement in the RfE programme, both UCAAS pints and grades were used for analysis purposes. Firstly,

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[24] In some cases, BTEC or GNVQ gradings were provided for students. However, given the small proportion of students this represented, analysis has been based purely on A-level and AS-level grades.

[25] Advanced Level Performance System – a system for predicting performance at AS and A-level.

predicted and achieved A- and AS-levels were converted to UCAS points scores, and the number of A- and AS-levels achieved by students were recorded.

The following measures were then explored:

- the average predicted points score
- the average achieved points score
- the total predicted points score
- the total achieved points score.

These measures were applied to data that included all subjects (e.g. including all subjects that were taken by the students), and then calculated only including those subjects for which each student had a predicted as well as a 'matched' achieved grade (e.g. in some cases, for example, a predicted grade was given for a specific subject but no achieved grade was provided, and vice versa).

Analysis revealed that the RfE and control group do not significantly differ in the extent to which their predicted UCAS points were achieved. This is true regardless of the measure used (e.g. regardless of whether average or total UCAS scores are used, or whether all subjects or just matched subjects are included in the analysis). There is also no significant difference in the number of subjects taken by the RfE and control students.

Secondly, analysis was performed by grade. This removed the possibility of any 'trade off' caused by getting higher grades in some subjects and lower in others (or taking more subjects), but still achieving the same UCAS points score overall. Predicted grades were firstly compared to achieved grades in each individual subject. Secondly, overall achievement was compared to overall predictions (e.g. so subjects could be switched around: predicted AAB in three subjects but achieved BAA). Again, there was no significant difference in the achievement of the students on the RfE programme when compared to their control group.

Therefore, the RfE programme does not appear to be making a difference to the achievement of the young people who have been involved with the programme. However, some caveats should be borne in mind. Data was not available for all of the students who were involved in the cohort 2 evaluation. Secondly, given the generally low level of engagement of the RfE cohort, it is perhaps unsurprising that an identifiable impact on achievement was not found. The results may also have been affected by the similar levels of achievement at baseline between the RfE and control students. Any differences observed last year, when predicted grades were not included in the analysis, could have been due to differences in attainment that already existed in achievement before the students enrolled in RfE.
It is also worth noting that the students involved in both the RfE and control groups were from generally more highly achieving schools than was the case in cohort one. Hence, a more uniform set of higher results was more likely this year.

6. Conclusions

This report shows that some encouraging strides have been made by the RfE students when compared to their control counterparts. For example, by the end of the RfE programme, the RfE students were significantly more likely to have aimed to study at more research intensive universities than the control group. They also became more aware of some of the financial aspects associated with higher education, and developed a greater level of preparedness for a university education over the course of the programme.

Proportionally more cohort 2 students from the RfE programme have progressed on to research intensive universities, than their control counterparts, but this difference is not statistically significant. However, when data from cohorts 1 and 2 is combined, significantly more RfE students have progressed on to research intensive universities than students in the control groups. This demonstrates that across both cohorts of students, the programme is meeting one of its key aims, and that participants are indeed progressing into some of the UKs leading universities.

Analysis of achievement levels has shown that there is no difference in how the two groups of young people performed over the course of the programme in relation to performance predictions. Given the complex multitude of factors that can influence achievement, and that the programme does not aim to specifically increase achievement levels (of a group of students who are already predicted to do well) this is perhaps not too surprising.

Overall, these findings would benefit from some consideration in light of the wider context of student progression to university and access schemes. The increasing concern over the future of university tuition fees was influential in the increased progression rates to UK universities more generally in 2010. Hence, it is possible that the national general trend of more young people opting for university has diluted the influence of the programme.

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Appendix 1: Cohort 2 baseline questionnaire

Career Awareness and Intentions Questionnaire

NFER is an educational research organisation. We have been asked to conduct a study concerning young people's choices about university. This survey is the first part of that study. We are asking you to answer the questions below, most of which will only require ticking the appropriate box.

Your identity and your answers will not be made known to anyone other than the members of the NFER research team. They will not be shared with your school. The questionnaire will ask you about:

- your personal details
- your attitudes towards university
- your understanding of your parents'/carers' or guardians' attitudes to university
- your aspirations and intentions
- matters that may affect your decisions concerning future education

We would also be grateful if you would provide contact details as we would like to follow up this questionnaire with another to see if your career plans have changed. Please complete in black or blue ink.

ABOUT YOU

1a. Name

1b. Gender *(Please tick)*   Male ☐   Female ☐

2. School

3. How many GCSEs have you achieved at grades A*-C?

(Please write the number in the box)

1

© National Foundation for Educational Research, The Northern Office, Genesis 4, Innovation Way, Heslington, York, North Yorks. YO10 5DQ Tel: (01904) 433435 **RFT**

4. **What A-levels/GCSEs/other course are you studying this year?**
   (Please list the subjects in the boxes below)

   A-Levels

   GCSEs
   (additional/re-takes)

   Other courses
   (Please provide details)

CAREERS ADVICE RECEIVED TO DATE

5. **Below is a list of people you might have spoken to about university.**
   (Please tick to indicate how useful their advice has been)

		Very useful 1	Useful 2	Not very useful 3	Not at all useful 4	No advice given 5
a)	Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b)	School Careers Coordinator	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c)	Connexions Adviser	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d)	Parent/Carer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e)	University Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f)	Employer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g)	Sister/Brother/Other Family	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h)	Other *(please specify below)*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2

6. **What are your parents'/carers' attitudes towards you going to university?**
(For each statement please tick the box that most applies to you)

		Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
a)	I don't know what my parents/carers think	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b)	My parents/carers would like me to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c)	My parents/carers cannot advise me as they don't know what university is like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d)	My parents/carers want me to get a job rather than go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e)	My parents/carers want me to do some work-based training (e.g. apprenticeship)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f)	My parents/carers want me to take some time out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g)	My parents/carers are leaving the decision to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

YOUR CURRENT INTENTIONS POST YEAR 13

7. **What do you intend to do when you leave school?**
(Please tick the option which most applies to you)

Go to college ☐ 1   Take a year out then go to university ☐ 6

Get a job ☐ 2   Do voluntary work ☐ 7

Go to university ☐ 3   Don't know ☐ 8

Go on a training programme/apprenticeship ☐ 4   Other - *(please specify below)* ☐ 9

Take a year out then get a job ☐ 5

(If you intend to go to university, please go to Qu.8. Otherwise, please go to Qu.12)

8. **Do you know which universities you want to apply for?**
(Please tick Yes or No)

Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2

(If yes, please list the universities you are considering in the box)

3

9. **Do you know which subject(s) you would like to study at university?**
(Please tick Yes or No)

Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2

(If yes, please list the subject(s) you are considering in the box)

10. **Below is a list of factors that you might be considering when choosing a university. Please rank how important each of the factors are in deciding on your university choices. 1 would be the <u>most</u> important factor, and 6 the <u>least</u> important factor.**

(Please put one number (1,2,3,4,5 or 6) into each box below to show how important that factor is to you)

a) The university's closeness to home ☐

b) How good it is for my chosen subject ☐

c) Whether my friends are applying/already attend ☐

d) The quality of student life there ☐

e) The reputation of the university ☐

f) The grades required to get in ☐

11. **This question aims to see how 'prepared' you are for a university education. Being 'prepared' would mean you felt you had the necessary experience, knowledge, confidence or skills to handle the elements of university education that are listed below.**

How prepared/ready do you feel you are for the following aspects of a university education? *(Please tick the box that most applies to you)*

	Very prepared	Quite prepared	Not very prepared	Not at all prepared	Don't know/not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Meeting new people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Independent study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Managing your finances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Possibly living away from home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Getting used to a new university campus/place of study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) University life in general	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4

12. **Below are a number of statements about why you might want to or not want to go to university or be undecided.** *(Please tick the response to the following statements that most applies to you)*

	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
a) I'm not sure what university would involve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) I want to continue studying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) I think I would enjoy the studying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) I think I will get the grades needed for university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) I want to get a higher qualification	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) I know what course I would do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g) I want to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h) I don't need to go to university to do the job I want to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i) Going to university will enable me to get a good job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j) Going to university will enable me to get a well paid job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k) I think university study would be too hard for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l) I don't know what else to do at this stage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m) I would fit into student life well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n) I don't want to leave home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o) I want to start earning as soon as possible	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p) I want to get a job soon	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q) None of my friends are going to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r) I can afford to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
s) I'm concerned I'll end up in debt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
t) I have heard good things about university from my friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
u) I would find it easy to make new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
v) I know people who have been to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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13. What would encourage/futher encourage you to go to university? *(Please tick the response that most applies to you)*

		True for me 1	Not true for me 2	Don't know 3
a)	Not to have to worry about being in debt	☐	☐	☐
b)	If my parents were more encouraging	☐	☐	☐
c)	If I had more information and support to research the options	☐	☐	☐
d)	Finding a course which really interested me	☐	☐	☐
e)	If I knew it would enable me to get a good job	☐	☐	☐
f)	If I knew I would be better paid in the end	☐	☐	☐
g)	If my friends were going	☐	☐	☐
h)	Nothing would encourage me to go to university	☐	☐	☐

Other [   ]

14. Would you benefit from more information about what going to university would involve? *(Please tick Yes or No)*

Yes ☐ 1   No ☐ 2

If you answered Yes, please go to Qu.15. Otherwise, please go to Qu.16

15. What information do you require about university? *(Please tick as many options as apply to you)*

How to find out about courses ☐ 1		The best universities for the subject(s) I am considering ☐ 8	
What different universities are like ☐ 2		What you need for the top universities ☐ 9	
How the study compares to school ☐ 3		How much it would cost ☐ 10	
The grades you need ☐ 4		Student loans ☐ 11	
How to apply ☐ 5		Financial support ☐ 12	
What student life is like ☐ 6		Other - *(please specify below)* ☐ 13	
What the subject(s) I am considering would involve ☐ 7		[ ]	

6

16. How much do you feel you know about the following aspects of funding for university study? Do not worry if you have not heard about these before. *(Please tick to indicate how much you feel you know)*

	A lot	Quite a lot	A bit	Not very much	Nothing
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Applying for student loans	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) What student loans provide/offer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Repaying student loans	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Course fees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Student bursaries/scholarships/awards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) Maintenance grants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

OTHER INFORMATION

17. Have any of the following members of your family been to university?
(Please tick the answers which apply to you)

Mother ☐ 1	Cousin(s) ☐ 5	None of my family have been to university ☐ 9
Father ☐ 2	Carer ☐ 6	Other adult family members ☐ 10 - *please specify below*
Step-mother ☐ 3	Brother(s) ☐ 7	
Step-father ☐ 4	Sister(s) ☐ 8	

7

18. **Are you receiving an Educational Maintenance Allowance?** *If yes, please say how much you are receiving a week* (Please tick the response below which applies to you)

YES £10 a week ☐ 1

YES £20 a week ☐ 2

YES £30 a week ☐ 3

I am not receiving an Educational Maintenance Allowance ☐ 4

19. **Your ethnicity** *(Please tick as appropriate)*

Black Caribbean ☐ 1   Black African ☐ 4   Black other ☐ 7

Bangladeshi ☐ 2   White ☐ 5   Chinese ☐ 8

Pakistani ☐ 3   Indian ☐ 6

Mixed race ☐ 9   *Please specify* [   ]

Other ☐ 10   *Please specify* [   ]

Prefer not to say ☐ 11

20. **Please can you give us your email address, mobile number and postal address so that we can keep in touch regarding your career progress.**

Email address: [   ]

Mobile number: [   ]

Address: [   ]

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

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Appendix 2: Summer school proforma

nfer

Evaluation for the Reach for Excellence Programme

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is carrying out an evaluation of the Reach for Excellence programme. We are hoping to find out if being involved in the programme has had any impact on your choices about higher education.

We are really interested to hear your views and would appreciate it if you were willing to fill in this short questionnaire. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

---

1. **When you started RfE, how did you feel about applying to university?**
   Please tick one response.

   I wanted to go to university ☐   I wasn't sure if I wanted to go or not ☐

   I didn't want to go to university ☐   Other ☐

2. **Now you are on RfE, what are your plans?** Please tick one response.

   I want to go to university ☐   I am not sure if I want to go or not ☐

   I don't want to go to university ☐   Other ☐

   Please explain below why your plans have/have not changed

   ┌───┐
   │   │
   │   │
   │   │
   └───┘

3. **If you are planning to go to university, where are you currently thinking of applying to? Please list:**

   1. _____   2. _____   3. _____

   4. _____   5. _____   6. _____

1

4. **Are these university choices different to those you had at the start of RfE?**

Yes ☐   No ☐   Don't know ☐   Not applicable ☐

If yes, what are the reasons behind the change(s)?

```
[                                                    ]
```

5. **Has RfE helped you to decide which universities you might like to go to?**

Yes ☐   No ☐   Don't know/ can't say ☐

Please explain your reasons for this answer:

```
[                                                    ]
```

6. **Please rank (from 1 to 6) how important each of the following factors are to you in deciding on your university choices. 1 would be the most important factor, and 6 the least important factor.** Please put one number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) into each box below to show how important each factor is.

The university's closeness to home ☐

How good it is for my chosen subject ☐

Whether my friends are applying/already attend ☐

The quality of student life there ☐

The reputation of the university ☐

The grades required to get in ☐

2

7. Some of the things that RfE might have helped you with are listed below. Please circle one number on each line to indicate how helpful RfE has been for each of the areas.

	Not at all helpful				Very helpful
How to find out about courses	1	2	3	4	5
What different universities are like	1	2	3	4	5
How the study compares to school	1	2	3	4	5
What grades you need	1	2	3	4	5
How to apply	1	2	3	4	5
What student life is like	1	2	3	4	5
What the subject(s) you are considering would involve	1	2	3	4	5
The best universities for the subject(s) you are considering	1	2	3	4	5
What you need for the top universities	1	2	3	4	5
How much it would cost	1	2	3	4	5
Student loans	1	2	3	4	5
Financial support	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching you study skills	1	2	3	4	5
Building your confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Raising your aspirations for your future career	1	2	3	4	5
Developing your social skills	1	2	3	4	5
Giving your parents information about university	1	2	3	4	5
Practical advice/information about applying to university	1	2	3	4	5

3

11. This question aims to see how 'prepared' you are for a university education. Being 'prepared' would mean you felt you had the necessary experience, knowledge, confidence or skills to handle the elements of university education that are listed below.

How prepared/ready do you feel you are for the following aspects of a university education? (Please tick the box that most applies to you)

	Very prepared 1	Quite prepared 2	Not very prepared 3	Not at all prepared 4	Don't know/not applicable 5
Meeting new people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Independent study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Managing your finances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Possibly living away from home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Getting used to a new university campus/place of study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
University life in general	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please could you fill in your name and contact details. This is for NFER's use only and your answers will not be shown to anyone on the RfE programme or your schools.

Name:

E-mail:

Phone:

Thank you very much for your time

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Appendix 3: RfE follow up survey

nfer

Evaluation for the Reach for Excellence Programme

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is carrying out an evaluation of the Reach for Excellence programme. We are hoping to find out if being involved in the programme has had any impact on your choices about higher education.

We are really interested to hear your views and would appreciate it if you were willing to fill in this short questionnaire. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

---

1. **When you <u>started</u> RfE, how did you feel about applying to university?**
   Please tick one response.

   I wanted to go to university ☐   I wasn't sure if I wanted to go or not ☐

   I didn't want to go to university ☐   Other ☐

2. **<u>Now you are</u> on RfE, what are your plans?** Please tick one response.

   I want to go to university ☐   I am not sure if I want to go or not ☐

   I don't want to go to university ☐   Other ☐

   Please explain below why your plans have/have not changed

3. **If you are planning to go to university, where are you currently thinking of applying to? Please list:**

   1. _____   2. _____   3. _____

   4. _____   5. _____   6. _____

1

Career Intentions and Awareness Questionnaire

Your chance to win a £50 High Street Voucher

NFER is an educational research organisation. We have been asked to conduct a survey concerning young people's choices about their career intentions and university choices. You may remember that back in autumn 2008 you kindly filled in a questionnaire very much like this one.

We are interested in finding out what your current career intentions are, and would appreciate it if you were willing to fill in this follow-up questionniare. Most of the questions only require ticking the appropriate box.

To thank you for your time, all questionnaires returned will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 High Street voucher.

Your identity and your answers will not be made known to anyone other than the members of the NFER research team. They will not be shared with your school.

The questionnaire will ask you about:

❖ any careers advice you've received to date
❖ your current intentions after leaving year 13
❖ how you made decisions over whether or not to go to university

We would also be grateful if you could please provide us with your contact details. We would really like to follow your progress over the next few years and hope you would be willing to continue to help us out with the research.

Please complete the questionnaire in either black or blue ink. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Lamont at e.lamont@nfer.ac.uk or on 01904 433435.

ABOUT YOU

1. **Name**

2. **School/college**

1

CAREERS ADVICE RECEIVED TO DATE

3. **Below is a list of people you might have spoken to about university.**
(Please tick to indicate how useful their advice about university has been. <u>If you have not spoken to these people</u>, please tick 'not asked').

		Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Not asked
		1	2	3	4	5
a)	Teacher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b)	School Careers Coordinator	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c)	Reach for Excellence staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d)	Connexions Advisor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e)	Parent/Carer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f)	Other family member (e.g. sister/brother/other)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g)	Employer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h)	University Staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i)	Current university student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j)	Other *(please specify below)*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

_____

4. **What are your parents'/carers' attitudes towards your decision about whether or not to go to university?** *(For each statement please tick the box that most applies to you)*

		Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
a)	I don't know what my parents/carers think	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b)	My parents/carers would like me to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c)	My parents/carers cannot advise me as they don't know what university is like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d)	My parents/carers want me to get a job rather than go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e)	My parents/carers want me to do some work-based training (e.g. apprenticeship)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f)	My parents/carers want me to take some time out	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g)	My parents/carers are leaving the decision to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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YOUR INTENTIONS AFTER FINISHING YEAR 13

5. **What do you intend to do when you finish year 13?** *(Please tick the option which most applies to you)*

Get a job	☐	1	Take a year out then go to university	☐	5
Go to university	☐	2	Do voluntary work	☐	6
Go on a training programme/apprenticeship	☐	3	Don't know	☐	7
Take a year out then get a job	☐	4	Other - *(please specify below)*	☐	8

_____
_____
_____

If you intend to go to university, please go to question 6. Otherwise, please go to question 10.

6. **What universities have you applied for?** *(Please list in the box below)*

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. **What course/subject have you applied for?** *(Please list in the box below)*

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3

8. **Below is a list of factors that you might have considered when choosing a university. Please rank how important each of the factors were in deciding on your university choices. 1 would be the <u>most</u> important factor, 2 the next most important and so on.** *(Please put one number (1,2,3,4,5 or 6) into each box below to show the level of importance to you of each factor)*

a) The university's closeness to home ☐

b) How good it is for my chosen subject ☐

c) Whether my friends are applying/already attend ☐

d) The quality of student life there ☐

e) The reputation of the university ☐

f) The grades required to get in ☐

9. **This question aims to see how 'prepared' you are for a university education. Being 'prepared' would mean you felt you had the necessary experience, knowledge, confidence or skills to handle the elements of university education that are listed below.**

   How prepared/ready do you feel you are for the following aspects of a university education? *(Please tick the box that most applies to you)*

	Very prepared	Quite prepared	Not very prepared	Not at all prepared	Don't know/not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Meeting new people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b) Independent study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c) Managing your finances	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d) Possibly living away from home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e) Getting used to a new university campus/place of study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f) University life in general	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

4

10. Below are a number of possible statements to describe why you may or may not have chosen to go to university. *(For each statement, please tick one box to show your level of agreement)*

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
a)	I'm not sure what university would involve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b)	I want to continue studying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c)	I think I would enjoy the studying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d)	I think I will get the grades needed for university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e)	I want to get a higher qualification	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f)	I know what course I would do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g)	I want to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h)	I don't need to go to university to do the job I want to do	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i)	Going to university will enable me to get a good job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j)	Going to university will enable me to get a well paid job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k)	I think university study would be too hard for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l)	I don't know what else to do at this stage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m)	I would fit into student life well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n)	I don't want to leave home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o)	I want to start earning as soon as possible	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
p)	I want to get a job soon	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
q)	None of my friends are going to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
r)	I can afford to go to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
s)	I'm concerned I'll end up in debt	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
t)	I have heard good things about university from my friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
u)	I would find it easy to make new friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
v)	I know people who have been to university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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11. <u>**Regardless of whether or not you plan to go on to university**</u> **how much do you feel you know about the following aspects of university study?** *(Please tick on a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate how much you feel you know. Don't worry if you haven't heard about these before).*

		A lot		A bit		Nothing
		1	2	3	4	5
a)	How to find out about courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b)	What different universities are like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c)	How university study compares to school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d)	The grades you would need to get into university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e)	How to apply	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f)	What student life is like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g)	What the subject(s) that interest you involve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h)	The best universities for the subject(s) that interest you	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i)	What you need to get into the top universities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j)	Applying for student loans	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k)	What student loans provide/offer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
l)	Repaying student loans	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
m)	Course fees	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
n)	Student bursaries/scholarships/awards	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
o)	Maintenance grants	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. **Please tick to indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Overall, I am happy with the amount of information and guidance I have had to help me to make decisions about university.**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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OTHER INFORMATION

13. **Your ethnicity** *(Please tick as appropriate)*

Black Caribbean ☐ 1	Black African ☐ 7	Black other ☐ 10
Bangladeshi ☐ 2	White ☐ 8	Chinese ☐ 11
Pakistani ☐ 3	Indian ☐ 9	

Mixed race ☐ 4 *Please specify* [   ] _____

Other ☐ 5 *Please specify* [   ] _____

Prefer not to say ☐ 6

14. **We would really appreciate it if you could give us your email address, mobile number and postal address so that we can keep in touch with you regarding your career progress.**

Email address:

Mobile number:

Address:

Thank you very much for your time.

Providing independent evidence to improve education and learning.

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