



Plans, aspirations and realities: taking stock of higher education and career choices one year on

Findings from the Second Futuretrack Survey of 2006 applicants for UK Higher Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This report presents analysis of information collected via the second longitudinal questionnaire of the Futuretrack project, which 2006 UCAS applicants were invited to complete in summer and autumn 2007, a little over a year after most had embarked on their full-time higher education (HE) careers. Those who had deferred entry were entering their first year, and others had taken alternative routes that might or might not involve HE participation plans. The focus of the longitudinal survey is on career decision-making and the factors that determine opportunities and labour market outcomes.

Higher education expansion and the Futuretrack 2006 cohort

In **Chapter 1** the background issues and the context within which respondents were applying to study are discussed briefly – particularly, the impact of HE expansion and the changes in both the HE supply and demand that this has encompassed, related to wider socio-economic and technological change. The profile of respondents to the second questionnaire ‘the Stage 2 sample’ is summarised, and the circumstances under which they were experiencing HE, in terms of responsibilities for dependents and sources of funding accessed. In this chapter, we introduce a new classification of HE institutions (HEIs) based on average access tariff points of students who successfully enrolled at each HEI at the point when this cohort was applying for entry, designed to give as accurate as possible a representation of the patterned variation of HEI types attended by the students in the survey. Finally, we discuss the importance respondents placed on various personal characteristics that are part of their identities, and the implications of these for this stage of their career development and experience of HE, as well as for envisaged future options.

The Transition to Higher Education

Chapter 2 analyses respondents’ evaluation of their educational experiences during their first year in higher education. Their experiences of tuition and learning support, their HEI environment and their individual experiences are analysed. Students’ expectations of the amount and standard of work required compared to the reality they faced at university or college and how easy or difficult they found the standard of work required are explored. The day-to-day experiences of being a student, the amount of time spent studying and the types of assignments and other assessment methods used on their courses will be discussed. Finally, their evaluation of how well they had managed their finances and the extent to which they had found themselves inhibited in meeting the costs of HE participation and leisure are discussed, including the debts they had accrued, their expectations of debts to be accrued upon completion of their studies and concerns about these. The analyses show:

- Most students were content with the tuition and learning support they received on their course and with the HEI environment in terms of access to library resources and web-based facilities. However, a small but significant proportion of students reported negative experiences. There was a wide range of perceptions of and satisfaction with the required workload, feedback given and contact with academic staff, according to courses studied, as has been found in other recent investigations.
- Students at highest tariff universities and general HE colleges were more likely than those at other types of HEI to say that the standard of work and their workload was higher

than they had expected. Over the full range of criteria investigated, higher tariff HEIs did not uniformly receive higher ratings by students.

- There was some evidence of a lack of support for students who required special help, not only those with disabilities, but also students who came from non-traditional backgrounds. The likelihood that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and some minority ethnic backgrounds had been less well-informed about HE prior to embarking on their courses found in the Stage 1 investigation was reinforced. Such students were more likely to have been surprised by the standard of work required of them. However, this was true of the younger students as a whole, suggesting that better information about the differences between the HE and secondary school learning contexts, the range of HE experiences available and preparation for progression from school to HE academically is widely required.
- It is clear that levels of satisfaction across a range of issues varied according to HEI and course, but this variation was complex and not a 'good university....bad university' spectrum in the way that league tables implicitly suggest. It is not the case that the students at lower rated HEIs necessarily receive, or believe themselves to receive, an inferior standard of education. The quality of education received in relation to students' education needs and capacity to benefit clearly influences perceptions of opportunities and expectations. Students enter HE with a wide range of aspirations and anticipate different ranges of outcomes, as was mapped by the Stage 1 survey, but the extent to which experiences on ostensibly similar courses, whether vocational or more general, lead to different levels of satisfaction and access to opportunities beyond HE requires further investigation, and the longitudinal study will facilitate this. Given changes in student funding, increased individual contributions to the costs of HE and encouragement to see this period of their lives as an investment, the quality of HE experience is even more an equal opportunities issue.
- The most important forms of funding were loans, followed by personal savings and earnings from vacation work. A significant proportion of respondents were worried about paying 'essential' costs (e.g. for accommodation). As expected, a significant proportion of respondents were anticipating high levels of debt.
- Not surprisingly, most of the formal coursework took place on campus, as reported by 77 per cent of students, although 16 per cent of students stated that some of the formal coursework took place in a work context, and 8 per cent that it took place somewhere else. The range of coursework experiences highlights the heterogeneity of undergraduate education, including time spent in a very wide range of teaching locations that as well as lecture and seminar rooms, laboratories and studios, included an enormous range workplace environments, public institutions and outdoor contexts. For some students, components of their assessment related to overseas study and took place in other universities, and assessment ranged from traditional essays and assignments to performances, as might be expected given the diversity of subjects incorporated.

The non-academic aspects of undergraduate experience and their relation to study

Chapter 3 examines other aspects of student experience; the non-academic and extra-curricular aspects of higher education that can affect their academic development and general well-being: accommodation, time and distance from their HEI and travel options during term and extra-curricular activities and group memberships.

- Although the majority of Futuretrack Stage 2 respondents lived in traditional student halls of residence during their first year in higher education, a large number lived in other

types of accommodation, and in particular a large proportion had remained at home, normally with other family members. While it was older students who were most likely to be living in their own home, a significant proportion of even the youngest age group lived in their previous homes and communities. Students from particular ethnic groups were particularly likely to be living at home, regardless of their age, with Bangladeshi and Pakistani students being the most likely to have lived at home in their first year.

- Overall, a large majority of students rated their accommodation as at least 'adequate' across a range of measures. Cost of accommodation and value for money were the measures that were least likely to be regarded by respondents as 'adequate' or better. Students living in their own homes were more likely to rate their accommodation positively on issues related to comfort, noise, privacy and value for money, but less likely to rate their accommodation as 'adequate' or better on issues related to convenience, particularly convenience for their classes and the need to travel between HEI and home.
- The type of accommodation students were living in played an important role in their access to extra-curricular activities. Students who lived in their own homes often travelled long distances to attend their HEI and this meant that they were less able to take part in extra-curricular activities within their HEI than students who lived in other types of accommodation. Students living in their own homes, either with other family members or on their own were the least likely to agree that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around their HEI campus, whether or not they took advantage of these.
- Sports clubs and societies on campus were the extra-curricular activities most frequently attended, and activities taking place on campus were more popular in general than external activities, although this did vary by age and type of accommodation in particular.
- Students at the highest tariff universities and those from higher socio-economic groups were the most likely to take part in extra-curricular activities at their HEI, and to have been student representatives or office holders during their time in higher education. As these are important arenas for developing key skills and social and cultural capital, in this sense the HEIs can be regarded as perpetuating an existing advantage that particular groups of students had prior to entering HE.

Students as part of the flexible labour market

In **Chapter 4**, we investigate a controversial issue – the extent and patterns of students' paid and voluntary or unpaid work during term and during vacations.

- The introduction of student loans and top-up fees has resulted in an increasing proportion of the undergraduate population undertaking paid employment during their studies. Additionally, employers and students alike see employment during HE as providing a useful chance to gain skills and experience that will be useful when the student enters the labour force, as well as providing students with the opportunity to clarify what kind of employment is most appropriate for them.
- The average number of hours worked per week during term time by those students who had undertaken some paid employment was just over nine.
- Only half of those respondents who said at Stage 1 that they planned to do paid work during term time actually did so, but 40 per cent of those who said they planned to only work in vacations ultimately worked during term time. Of those who said that they planned to do no

paid work at all during their time in HE, 30 per cent ended up working during term-time and a further 20 per cent during vacations.

- Students working during term-time and working long hours were more likely to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, minority ethnic groups and disadvantaged educational backgrounds. This raises questions about whether these students have access to the same HE experience as students from other groups who are less likely to work, particularly as working during term-time and working long hours were found to be associated with being less involved in extra-curricular activities and less overall satisfaction with their courses.
- Male students were more likely than women to say that they had not undertaken any paid work during their first year in HE, although those who had been employed worked longer hours during term than the female students who had been employed.
- Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds were less likely than those from lower socio-economic backgrounds to have been employed, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds worked more hours when they were employed. Students from the most selective universities were the least likely to have worked during term-time.
- Paying for essential living costs and books and study materials were the most common reasons given for undertaking paid employment during term time. Paying for essential living costs and leisure activities were the most frequently cited reasons for working during vacations.
- Two of the most commonly given reasons for doing voluntary or other unpaid work were related to personal development – learning new skills and gaining experience for a future career. The other two most commonly given reasons were a desire to help someone or contribute to a community of which they were a member and the work connecting to their own needs or interests.

Changing career plans throughout the first year of study and the extra-curricular experience as a full-time student

The longitudinal design of Futuretrack 2006 allows for tracking of the process of the decision-making, as career ideas are expressed during the application process can be set in contrast to experiences during the first year at higher education. **Chapter 5** explores a number of areas which relate to the process of forming or changing career plans: which guidance or support offers of the Careers Service were used, and by whom; how often students visited the Careers Service and how far were they aware of the careers guidance and information available to them, and what plans they have for after the completion of their current courses, particularly in terms of further study, and what influences had changed their aspirations and plans.

- The most frequently used form of careers information or careers guidance used by respondents in their first year were careers events organised by the Careers Service for first year students, followed by careers advice from family and friends, visit to the Careers Service website and careers events for students specifically studying for one discipline or subject. The first and third of these were likely to have been initiated by the careers service and/or particular academic departments, indicative of increased effort in HEIs to draw the attention of students to the range of career options and services available to them early in their HE careers.

- The use of the Career Service varied according to age, subject, type of HEI attended and domicile. Black and Asian students were more likely to have used it than white students and mature students, male students, black students, students studying discipline-based academic subjects, students studying at higher or medium tariff universities and European or other overseas students were more aware of the services it offered than other students.
- As far as plans for further HE study beyond current courses was concerned, at this stage of their courses, the most frequently reported plan was to enrol on a taught Master's degree postgraduate course, followed by a gap year. Fewer than a third of all degree students did not plan any further training or education after completion of their course of study.
- Changes in career plans varied by the degree to which respondents had opted for a vocational subject, with students on specialist vocational courses more likely to than others to have stated that their experience of higher education had reinforced their career plans. Students studying general discipline-based academic subjects most often reported that their perception of the occupation they would enter on completion of their courses was neither clearer nor less clear than before.

Widening access to HE- the case of mature students

Chapter 6 focuses particularly on the experiences of mature students during their first year in higher education; potentially a more radical transition than was the case for those progressing straight from secondary education. Mature students are a heterogeneous group, defined officially as those entering HE over the age of 21, so they range from students who have delayed entry to higher education for a few years to retired people making up for earlier lack of opportunity or adding to their qualification at the third age. For the purposes of this analysis, we subdivide these into those embarking on HE between the ages of 21 and 25, whom we label 'young mature students', and those entering at an older age – grouped as 'older mature students'.¹

- Three quarters of the students were less than 20 years old in September 2006 when they entered higher education. About 13 per cent were 21 to 25 years old, and the remainder were 26 years and older. It can be assumed that this age group had already fully finished the transition from secondary school to work and were likely to have gained at least some employment experience.
- The proximity of mature students to their higher education institution and their daily commute differs from their younger peers with the majority of mature students reporting that they lived at home with their family or partner and participated less often in extracurricular activities.
- Age at entry to HE appeared to be correlated with decreased confidence in computer literacy and numerical skills, somewhat less confidence in written communication skills, but greater confidence in spoken communication skills.

¹ We are very conscious that this is a wide and diverse group, but the data do not allow for robust analysis of a more detailed classification. The youngest respondent was 14 at course outset and the oldest 75, but only 2.5 per cent of respondents who had completed a year in HE were 17 or younger and the proportion of the sample aged over 50 was 0.5 per cent.

- Age at entry also appeared to be related to propensity for higher proportions to give all reasons for doing paid work, and less likely to do unpaid or voluntary work – and their reports suggested that this was often because they already did a substantial amount of unpaid work related to family or household responsibilities. In addition to other reasons, many mature students did paid work to maintain the continuity of their employment and professional contacts.
- Mature students were less likely to participate in careers events organised for first year students and more likely to take part in individual advice sessions.
- Mature students were less likely to plan further study after finishing their studies. A very high proportion stated that they had a clear idea about their future occupations.

Access to HE for those with disabilities and other long-term illnesses or conditions that might be seen to inhibit their career options

Chapter 7 examines the higher education experiences of students with a disability or long-term illness. Disabled people's participation in higher education has historically been low, with an 18 year old with a disability or health problem only 40 per cent as likely to enter HE as their non-disabled peers. The role that higher education can play in the inclusion of vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, who are at risk of social exclusion has been highlighted in various government White Papers and policies, and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act of 2001 makes it illegal for HEIs to discriminate against disabled students, either in the application process or while they are in higher education, but they remain under-represented. At Stage 2, we asked respondents to indicate if they suffered from a disability or long-term illness that restricted (or might be seen to restrict) their ability to do academic work.

Those citing possession of such characteristics are analysed by type of disability, but some of the identified groups are very small. Findings are nevertheless presented in this disaggregated format when it appears that there were clear differences between the responses provided by members of different sub-groups. The findings that follow are based on self-classification by respondents, and although it can be expected that there may be some degree of under-reporting of disabilities, the exact extent of reporting bias cannot be evaluated, so should be treated with caution.

- Dyslexia was the most common disability reported by respondents to the Stage 2 survey. Characteristics such as gender and age were skewed within the different disability groups, with, for example, the students with autistic spectrum disorders being predominantly young and male.
- Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were less likely than students with no disability to be attending highest and high tariff universities.
- Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were overall less likely to rate their experience of HE positively. This was true when they were asked to assess their academic classes, opportunities for extra-curricular activities, accommodation and finances.
- Disabled students were less likely than students with no disability to have undertaken employment during their course, but they were more likely to have engaged in voluntary work. It may be that these students are volunteering with organisations that work with disabled students because they have a greater awareness of the need these organisations have for

volunteers, but the difference in figures between disabled and other students may also suggest that disabled students are facing particular barriers to finding suitable paid employment.

- Students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities tended to be the group that was most similar in their responses to the students with no disability, suggesting that disabilities that place physical limitations on students have a greater impact on their experience of higher education, and it is important to disaggregate disabilities to make sense of their impact on opportunities.

HE-led geographical mobility and the changing HE and graduate labour market boundaries

The UK has one of the most international student population within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with international students making up 14 per cent of the enrolments in tertiary education in the UK (compared to an OECD average of just under 7 per cent). In 2006, there was a 2.7 per cent increase in the total foreign student intake worldwide from the previous year, but the market share of the UK has remained about the same over the last six years. Eleven per cent of all students studying outside their home country study in the UK which makes it the world's second most popular destination for foreign students after the USA.

Chapter 8 discusses the experiences of Futuretrack respondents from the EU and other overseas countries, comparing them with each other and with the experiences of UK-domiciled students. The first year study experiences, participation in extra-curricular activities, financial issues and the long-term perspectives of non-UK students are considered in the chapter. Finally, the situation of non-UK applicants who did not proceed to UK higher education are discussed.

- The UK is one of the most important destinations for non-UK students from Europe or other overseas. The population of European and other overseas students is very diverse, according to their regional origin.
- Only about half of all accepted students from Africa completed their first year in HE in the UK, although about a quarter accepted a deferred place to start their course in the following year. More than a third of all African students found the standard of work on their course higher than they had expected and two thirds of African students reported that they were required to work harder than they had expected. Roughly half of all African students worked during term-time and/or during vacations, the most important reason being to gain general employment experience. After the completion of their courses, more than half of all students from Africa anticipated that they would enrol on a Master's degree. African students were also the most clear about the occupation they eventually wanted to enter and the qualifications required to do so which might reflect that they are older than the average students.
- Eighty per cent of accepted students from Asia completed their first year in higher education. Students from Asia were the least likely to report of undertaking any paid work. Half of all students from Asia plan to continue their studies and enrol on a taught Master's degree.
- There are similar patterns from non-UK students from Europe and from the North Americas. Ninety per cent of all accepted European and North American students completed their first year in higher education which was the highest proportion of the 'continental' student

group. They were less likely to report that they were required to work harder or much harder and that the standard of work was higher than expected. About two thirds of non-UK students from Europe and from the North Americas reported that they did paid work. Students from North America (40 per cent) and European students (25 per cent) were the most likely to anticipate applying for a postgraduate course outside the UK.

- The most important sources of funding for all non-UK students were non-repayable contributions from family or partner. Additionally, 40 per cent of non-UK students from European countries reported of getting statutory financial support tuition loans.
- Non-UK students from Europe and overseas were in general content with their course being good value for money.

Chapter 9 looks at those applicants who did not enter higher education, those who entered higher education but who were not currently registered as full-time HE students, those who changed courses but remained in HE and those who took gap years. The UK has consistently had an estimated graduation rate that is slightly higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, and graduation rates have not significantly declined as HEIs have attempted to widen participation, but previous research has indicated that students who leave higher education without completing their courses are most likely to do so during their first year.

- Over three quarters of Stage 2 respondents had completed a year in higher education, and almost 90 per cent of respondents who entered higher education in Autumn 2006 were still on the same course they started then.
- Students who had a clear career plan and who had chosen to enter HE because it was part of their long-term career plans were more likely to still be in HE and still on the same course than those who entered HE to get a good job more generally or because of an interest in a particular subject.
- Fourteen per cent of applicants took a gap year with plans to enter HE in 2007. Gap years took two forms, first, the traditional gap year that involved working and travelling, and second an often unplanned gap year where students spent some or all of the year studying with the aim of reapplying to a different HEI or for a different subject the following year in the light of examination results or a change of plan since their original application.
- The majority of applicants who did not enter HE or who entered but left were in paid work with those who did not enter HE at all more likely to be working full-time, and in higher level jobs. The most common jobs these applicants were currently doing were retail work, working in a bar and secretarial and admin work.
- While socio-economic background had a small effect on educational outcomes, associated factors, such as having parents who had completed higher education, appeared to be more important.
- Cost was a deterrent, and a large proportion of students who had not entered HE at all cited this as their reason. Students who entered HE but then left were most likely to say that they had personal reasons and that they had been disappointed with their experience of HE but were planning to reapply in the near future for courses or institutions they thought would be better.

- Students studying vocational subjects such as medicine, law, education and architecture were the least likely to have changed course. The most common reason students gave for changing their course was that they had not enjoyed it, followed by finding a different course that they thought they would prefer.
- As would be expected, students who had not changed course were more positive about their experience of HE, and they were also less likely to be worried about finances and to anticipate lower levels of debt than students who had changed course.
- It was clear that adequate information to make decisions about higher education careers plays a role in retention. Students who had changed courses and those who had entered HE but left, as well as those applicants who applied to enter HE but did not end up doing so perceived that they did not have enough information in making their original choices. They were less likely than students who had remained on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 to say they had all the information they required about HE courses, and more likely to say that they needed more help deciding which course to study.

Conclusion

In **Chapter 10**, we discuss the key issues and themes identified throughout the Stage 2 analysis:

- the heterogeneity of the HE population and the HE process, and the importance of taking this into account in evaluating policies, performance and outcomes;
- the interaction and pervasiveness of the key demographic, socio-economic and educational attributes in determining/influencing early career trajectories;
- the impact of policy-driven shifts in the management and funding of HE on the structure of HE on the choices made by students in the ways in which these affect the nature of their cumulative HE experience;
- the unintended consequences of changes in student funding and attitudes to debt on participation and behaviour while students; and
- the need to map HE so that inequalities in access to information about it can be reduced and the quality and outcomes of widely different kinds of undergraduate HE packages can be evaluated in their own terms, to produce better evidence on which to base future HE policies and provision and, maybe most importantly, individuals to make decisions about the implications of HE choices in terms of their own career development.

We draw together implications of the Stage 2 findings about the quality of HE experience and the extent to which it will enable the longitudinal analysis to throw light on the big questions that face stakeholders. Under what circumstances does HE increase equality of opportunity and facilitate participants to realise their potential, and what obstacles remain? How are the advantages and disadvantages with which students enter HE reinforced or challenged by their experience? How do the skills and knowledge developed on different HE programmes equip students to obtain appropriate employment and opportunities? What is the value of HE to individuals and the community – beyond simple economic returns? What kinds of information do HE applicants and students require, and which initiatives have been relatively successful and unsuccessful in achieving greater equality of opportunity and delivery of objectives? What are the consequences of changes in student funding for individual consumers of HE and for the economy? Most of these questions cannot be answered at this stage of the longitudinal study, but there is evidence that the type of university attended and inequalities of access to careers information and advice prior to embarking on HE are largely reinforced rather than reduced during the first year of HE participation. The detailed data being collected provide the potential to clarify these relationships as the respondents' move

further on in their career development, as the boundaries on the map of HE provision and experience are increasingly clearly defined.

CHAPTER 1

One Year On: tracking the 2006 higher education applicants

Introduction

In 2008 we published the first report from this ambitious study covering information supplied by 128,260 students who had applied for places at UK higher education institutions (HEIs) (Purcell *et al.*, 2008). Their reasons for applying, and choices of university or college were outlined and analysed, along with the extent to which they had had access to - and had taken advantage of - careers guidance and advice to inform their choices. This was related to the outcomes of their applications, their educational and demographic characteristics, and their career ambitions and attitudes about the value of HE. The majority of the participants completed the first questionnaire in this longitudinal study between application and learning the results of their school and college final exams. They responded to a questionnaire, disseminated in Summer and early Autumn 2006. Additionally 7,591 participants responded in Winter 2006-7² to a second, shorter survey of those recorded by UCAS as not accepted to HE. All respondents who had agreed to be re-contacted (99 per cent of all respondents), were contacted again in Summer and Autumn 2007 and invited to participate in the Stage 2 survey. The Stage 2 survey asked respondents to update the research team about their experiences since completing the Stage 1 questionnaire and to provide information about their ideas and aspirations at that stage, in the light of their outcomes so far. This report is an account and analysis of that survey³.

The Futuretrack cohort applied for full-time HE courses at a point where HE participation had expanded substantially and the funding of HE in most of the UK countries was in the process of being significantly revised. In recognition of the high unit costs of courses and the assumed earnings premium and other advantages of higher education, the balance of financial responsibility for HE participation progressively shifted towards individual learners and their families, where it was perceived that they could afford to do so. Given this timing, the study will provide valuable information about the ways in which educational and later career outcomes are influenced by the changed financial situation that these 2006 HE applicants faced.

This chapter provides a brief summary of the socio-demographic attributes, distribution within HE and situation of respondents at the point when they completed the Stage 2 questionnaire. This is followed by a section on the conditions under which they were studying; in particular, the diverse learning contexts and facilities encompassed within the UK HE system. A new classification of HEIs has been developed to facilitate more sophisticated analyses of the relationship between the type of HEI attended and the experience of HE. We outline the rationale and methods used in constructing this classification, based on access tariff points. Finally, we introduce a range of qualitative indicators of the subjective perceptions that have been shown in previous studies to have relevance in helping to understand the diversity of interests, attitudes and pathways shown by students within HE.

² Some of these, in fact, turned out to have been late applicants who began courses in September or October 2006.

³ Further details about the sample and the methodology used are provided in Appendix 1.

Achieved sample and basic profile of the respondents in Futuretrack 2006 Stage 2

The Futuretrack Stage 2 survey was conducted in June-December 2007 at a time when the target group of students were mainly finishing their first year or were in the early stages of their second year in higher education. There were four mailings to the Stage 1 participants, the first one in June, followed by July, September, and the final mailing in December.

The central challenge of this project has been to minimise response erosion. HE applicants anticipating the start of their HE courses might have been expected to respond to an invitation to participate in such a survey, whereas as students, as they progress through their studies, they become less easy to contact and less likely to respond. Students receive many requests to participate in surveys – from their institutions and other interest groups. At the same time, they acquire an institutional email that might become their main or only email communication mode; they may see an invitation from a research team as less important to read than one from the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS), who invited HE applicants to participate in the survey on our behalf in Stage 1; and those who had not proceeded would be likely to see such an invitation as scarcely relevant to them. We anticipated that there would be a significant decline in response and despite a variety of measures to minimise this, the sample did reduce substantially, as is discussed fully in Appendix 1. Nevertheless, as is also shown there, it remains a sufficiently large and representative sample, which, because key characteristics of the population are known, can be weighted to provide robust analytic potential.

The Stage 2 survey had 49,555 usable responses. The basic profile of the Stage 2 respondent sample is shown below⁴.

Gender: 37% were males, 63% females.

Age: At the time of UCAS application, 51% were aged 18 or under, 26% were 19-20 years old, 12% were 21-25 years old, and 12% were 26 years or older.

Ethnicity: 80% were white, 11% Asian, 5% black and 3% of mixed ethnic group.

Disability: 6% stated that they had a long-term illness, health problems or a disability.

Dependants: 88% said they did not have any dependants, 8% had child dependants, and 5% had adult dependants.

Domicile: 86% were from the UK, 7% from EU countries, and 7% from other overseas countries.

Educational qualifications: 37% had high, 20% had medium, and 12% had low tariff points, and 32% were non-standard applicants.

Parental HE qualifications: 28% said both parents had experience of HE, and 24% said one parent had experience of HE.

Socio-economic background: 56% had parents in managerial or professional occupations, 21% in intermediate occupations, and 24% in routine and manual occupations.

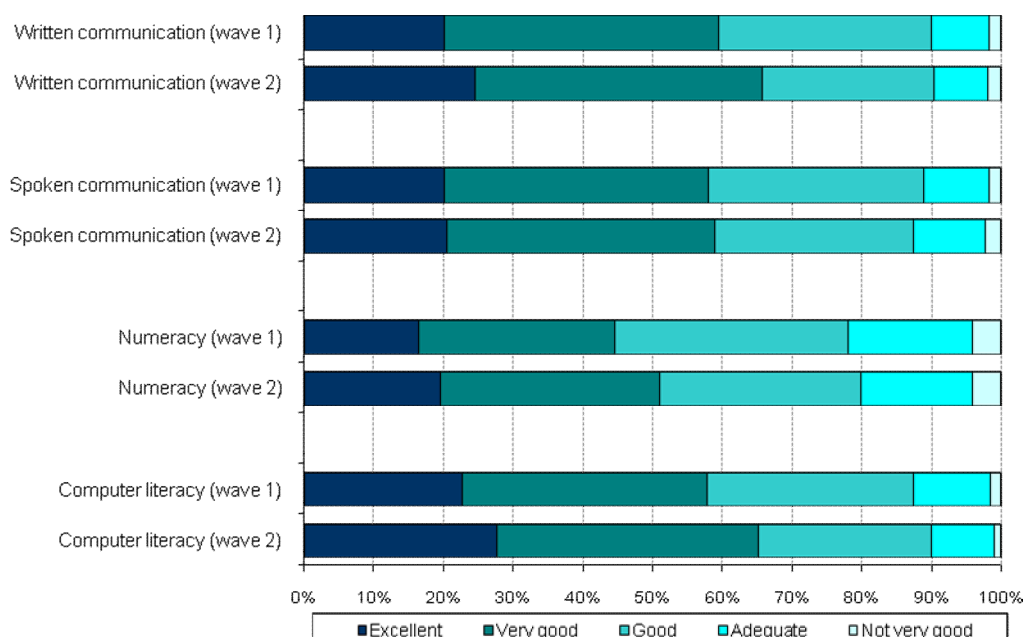
After applying for HE, 80% had completed a year as a full-time student, and of those who entered HE, at the time of the survey 90% were still full-time students on the course they started in Autumn 2006.

The largest subject groups were Interdisciplinary subjects (16%), Biology, Veterinary Science, Agricultural and related courses (10%) and Subjects allied to Medicine (9%); the **smallest** were Architecture, Building and Planning (2%), Languages (2%) and Mass Communication and Documentation (2%).

⁴ Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, N=49,555, data not weighted. The distributions were calculated from those cases where data were available.

Stage 2 and Stage 1 records were linked, which, together with the information via the UCAS application process, forms the foundation of a longitudinal study. Some indication of the power of longitudinal observation can be gained from Figure 1.1 below, which shows the self-rated changes in key skills that took place over the 12 to 18 month period between Stages 1 and 2. We can observe how this time in HE may have impacted upon written and spoken communication skills, numeracy and ICT literacy skills.

Figure 1.1: Self-rating of skills in Stage 1 and Stage 2



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset; Stage 1 data: all respondents who were accepted to HE, weighted Stage 2 data: all respondents who were students during Stage 2 and responded in both Stages, weighted

It is not possible at this stage to say definitively that HE has had a positive impact on skills, as this would require more detailed analysis to examine the changes in the scores each individual gave and by contrast with the group who were not accepted to HE in 2006. However, the proportions of respondents rating their written communication, numeracy and computer literacy as excellent or very good have increased noticeably at Stage 2. There was much less difference between Stages 1 and 2 when looking at spoken communication skills and in fact, the proportion of respondents rating their spoken communication skills as at least good has fallen. The reason for this was not clear. It may be that working in the more selective environment of HE has led some respondents to lose confidence, or to recognise that their communication skills are not as good as they had previously imagined, or it may be that respondents feel that their courses did not provide the opportunity to develop these skills. In Stage 3, we follow-up on this finding, asking questions about the skills respondents believed they had developed as a result of their HE experience, both in the classroom and in the wider context of their HE experience.

The conditions under which students were studying

We now move from attributes, self-perception and characteristics that HE participants bring into HE, to consider the impact of the conditions under which they undertook their courses. The first is the impact of dependents.

Other responsibilities while studying

Respondents were asked whether they had any dependants, as this is likely to affect their accommodation and migration options and the amount of time they could devote to academic studies, extra-curricular activities and paid or unpaid work. In total, 8 per cent of the Stage 2 respondents had child dependants and 5 per cent had adult dependants. Three per cent had children under five living with them, 5 per cent had children aged 5-12 living with them and 4 per cent had children aged 13-18 living with them. Five per cent of respondents had adult dependants living with them, and 2 per cent had adult dependants that did not live with them. Males were somewhat less likely to have dependants than females, with 89 per cent of males having no dependants, compared to 85 per cent of female respondents.

The changing patterns of HE funding

One of the important components of conditions of HE participation is the financial support to which participants have access. HE funding has changed significantly in recent years, related to changing government policies and higher education expansion. From 1962 until the 1980s, means tested grants were provided to undergraduate students from low-income households to cover living costs during their university studies (House of Commons, 1998) intended to be of a level that would adequately support the benefited students to be able to undertake their studies (Silver & Silver, 1997). In the 1990s, student loans were introduced as an additional source of funding, introducing a shift away from grants. It was not until the 1996-97 academic year that 'broad parity between the main rates of grant and loans was achieved (Student Loans Company, 2004:1). At the same time, the Dearing report (NCIHE, 1997)⁵ recommended that the then student loan should be an 'income contingent loan' - related to the income of the graduate rather than the then mortgage style loan - and the students and their families should pay tuition fees according to their household income. While the report also suggested that the current system of grants and loans to support students' living costs should be maintained, the elected Labour government in 1997 decided to replace the grants by loans and that students would pay tuition fees, with the exception of students from poor families (Callender, 2002).

In 2003, a White Paper was issued, detailing a number of reforms that were implemented in the 2004 Higher Education Act (DfES, 2003). A new higher education grant was introduced for new enrolments aiming to support the costs of participation in HE (Student Loans Company, 2004). 'Top-up fees' were introduced allowing universities to set variable fees rather than the previous fixed fee of £1,150 per annum for undergraduate courses as part of these reforms. The fixed fee was increased at the time these applicants were considering full time HE courses to a maximum of £3,000 per annum, but universities could charge more with the approval of the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education. Students would normally be required to pay the fees after they graduated and their income rose above £15,000 per annum, but if they failed to complete, they would be required to pay back the accrued loan and this may well have had a discouraging effect on those uncertain of the longer term outcomes or if full time HE was the right thing for them to do (Student Loans Company, 2007). Apart from this, a £2,700 grant would be paid from 2006 for full time undergraduate students coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (DfES, 2004).

The financial framework has been criticised for being based on level of income rather than socio-economic group – on the basis that the main beneficiaries would come from low-income

⁵ The Dearing Report was produced by the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE) which was established to make recommendations for the future regarding aspects of higher education including funding and student support.

middle class families rather than from low socio-economic groups (Pennell and West, 2005; Edwards *et al.*, 1989). The comparative analysis of results of the 2004/5 and the 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Surveys (Johnson *et al.*, 2009) revealed that among English-domiciled students, full time student income had increased overall by 12 per cent in real terms due to the higher income from tuition fee loans, but there had been no change in average earnings from paid work among full-time students.

Overall, the most frequently mentioned forms of funding cited by Stage 2 respondents were statutory financial support in the form of a maintenance loan or a tuition loan. A significant proportion of respondents also said that they were funding their studies through statutory financial support grants, non-repayable contributions from family or a partner, personal savings and earnings from vacation work. For many respondents, funding their time in HE appears to be rather piecemeal with funding coming from a variety of sources.

Table 1.1 shows the sources of funding respondents said they had used during their first year in HE by their age group.

Table 1.1: Sources of funding in the first year by age group (as at 30th September 2006)

	18 and under %	19-20 %	21-25 %	26 and over %	Total %
Statutory financial support grants	40.1	38.5	40.3	51.8	41.2
Statutory financial support maintenance loan	68.5	61.2	51.3	56.3	62.6
Statutory financial support tuition loan	66.3	58.3	45.0	43.7	58.3
Non-statutory grants from Local Authority	4.2	4.9	5.0	6.1	4.8
Non-repayable contribution from family/partner	38.9	33.7	22.6	14.4	32.1
Repayable contribution from family/partner	9.4	9.0	10.0	4.7	8.7
Hardship or access funds	1.4	2.4	5.0	9.1	3.1
Personal savings	45.1	42.6	41.7	37.3	42.9
Earnings from work during term	24.4	27.1	36.0	32.3	27.7
Earnings from vacation work	44.9	43.8	44.3	31.9	42.9
Other forms of borrowing	21.5	23.5	27.9	22.5	23.1
Grant/bursary from your university/college	26.7	24.3	25.6	34.8	26.9
Organisational/employer grant	1.3	1.5	2.0	3.3	1.7
Personal trust fund/income from investments, etc.	3.1	3.1	2.2	2.0	2.8
Other	3.6	4.4	5.8	8.2	4.7

Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Older respondents were less likely to have received statutory financial support in the form of maintenance or tuition loans, or non-repayable contributions from family members or partners. Surprisingly, they were also less likely to have used personal savings to pay for fees and living expenses. The older age groups were more likely than the younger ones to cite earnings from work during term time, and some of these respondents were likely to be in the same job they had before they entered HE.

Table 1.2 shows sources of funding by domicile. Among the EU countries, it was noticeable that the applicants from Scotland were less likely to be receiving maintenance and tuition loans, which reflects HE funding in Scotland, but surprisingly, they were also the national group who were the most likely to be funding their time in HE by working in term time and vacations, and to be resorting to using hardship or access funds. In Chapter 4 we look more closely at student employment during the first year. Students from outside the UK were more likely to be receiving repayable or non-repayable contributions from family members which may reflect the absence of other sources of funding, but they were less likely than UK students to be using personal savings.

Table 1.2: Sources of funding in the first year by domicile before entering HE

	England (%)	Wales (%)	N Ireland (%)	Scotland (%)	Europe ⁶ (%)	Other overseas
Statutory financial support grants	47.2	50.1	42.5	43.6	19.1	7.7
Statutory financial support maintenance loan	74.8	70.5	72.1	51.5	10.7	4.6
Statutory financial support tuition loan	68.6	62.7	59.6	37.2	33.1	5.9
Non-statutory grants from Local Authority	4.9	13.4	3.8	2.5	3.7	2.4
Non-repayable contribution from family/partner	28.4	28.9	22.0	28.2	47.9	51.1
Repayable contribution from family/partner	8.0	8.2	5.0	6.0	11.7	16.0
Hardship or access funds	3.0	3.7	3.4	9.1	1.5	1.4
Personal savings	43.1	44.1	43.6	45.1	41.7	31.7
Earnings from work during term	28.4	30.4	39.1	41.7	22.2	11.3
Earnings from vacation work	44.9	46.8	47.9	51.1	32.4	17.2
Other forms of borrowing	25.5	26.5	23.7	23.6	10.3	9.4
Grant/bursary from your university/college	33.5	26.2	30.3	12.1	7.6	9.9
Organisational/employer grant	1.4	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	5.1
Personal trust fund/income from investments, etc.	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.8	3.5	6.1
Other	3.8	3.2	2.4	4.9	8.7	10.6

Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

In Chapter 2 we discuss students' attitudes towards funding and debt, their impressions of how well they managed their money during their first year in HE and the amount of debt they expected to have after completing their courses.

HEI categories

The Futuretrack cohort applied to enter higher education during a period when the sector was in transition. Not only were more people applying to enter HE, but the HE institutions themselves were undergoing change. This has continued as the project has progressed. Some HEIs have gained university status, some have merged with other HE or FE

⁶ Non-UK European students are defined according to the UCAS definition of the EEA and Swiss nationals. The EEA is made up of all the countries in the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

institutions, and still others have changed their names to reflect differences in circumstances and priorities.

Potential students and employers seeking to recruit graduates often make use of rankings of HEIs in attempts to make sense of this changing situation. There have been many criticisms of approaches that have attempted to rank HEIs, whether this ranking was done on the basis of employment outcomes, student satisfaction, resources, or some combination of factors, and it is unquestionably the case that, as Leach (2006) commented in *the Guardian* of that newspaper's own league tables

'The tables on these pages measure none of the elations, hangovers, relationships or intellectual penny-dropping that makes up three or four years of many a university education'.

We saw at the Stage 1 survey that individual applicants' decisions to attend particular HEIs was influenced by a diverse range of factors, and an important criterion for one applicant might be completely irrelevant, or an off-putting characteristic, for others. Authors such as Brown (2007), Callender (2006) and Hutchings (2003) have noted that there is not a straightforward relationship between information and decision-making, and people having exactly the same information may come to very different decisions. 'The important point is that they should have an equally good opportunity to make as good as possible a decision for them in the light of their aspirations, abilities and other considerations, with the benefit of all available information. This may include information about standards, requirements and the opportunities that will be facilitated or obstructed by choosing or rejecting particular options. 'Other research has drawn attention to this need for a more precise estimate of the 'best' universities, in terms of public and professional perceptions of their relative quality and the implications of that for the opportunities to which they give access - and, more importantly, failure to study at one of which lower likelihood of gaining access to (e.g. Sutton Trust, 2005). Nevertheless, the use of the category termed 'Russell Group' universities has become a convenient proxy indicator of continuity and change in access to the UK's 'world class' universities (See Cabinet Office, 2009:40 for a recent example of this usage).

It was clear from the Stage 1 survey findings that ranking systems and the information and preconceptions that applicants have about institutional ranking and qualities played a significant part in many applicants' decisions about which HEI to attend. These rankings were likely to play a particularly important role where an applicant lacked other types of information, for example for applicants who were first generation students or who came from areas with low HE participation rates, which is of particular relevance given the widening-access agenda. Consequently, it will be important to be able to assess the extent to which differences in ratings do or do not reflect differences in the quality of educational opportunities available to students. HEIs themselves, even when their spokespeople are publicly sceptical about the value and accuracy of university league tables, take them very seriously. It would be invidious to cite particular examples, but this is apparent from an examination of almost any HEI's prospectus and their public relations activities, and the practice has spawned a range of published guides and 'unofficial' HEI handbooks and prospectuses aimed at the HE applicant market.

Although competing league tables are now available that rank HEIs by a range of measures, an orthodoxy is predominant when categorising HEIs, with Russell Group, 'Old' (pre-92) universities, 'New' (post-92) universities, and 'others' being the most commonly used categories. While conducting Stage 1 of the Futuretrack survey, it was observed that these categories did not always align very closely with the experiences and qualifications of applicants. While there was typically a core of similarity within each group, some HEIs were

outliers on a range of measures within their commonly-allocated category and appeared to have more in common with HEIs in other groups. This raised the question of whether it would be possible to group the HEIs in such a way that the groupings became more meaningful, both for students and graduate employers.

In constructing a new ranking of HEIs for the analyses shown in this report, we used average tariff points required for entry to a specific HEI. Applicants have various options open to them when they consider entering HE and the most significant determinant of these options was clearly tariff points. Regardless of the HEI they ultimately choose to attend, an applicant with higher tariff points normally has a wider range of options available to them than a candidate with lower tariff points – although subjects and the pattern of achievement are also very important. Consequently, the tariff points an applicant has can be considered in some respects to be a tangible measure of their educational capital, and the tariff points required by HEIs of applicants are generally indicative of the comparative status of the institution and the competition to enter it. Whether these are also reliable measures of accepted or rejected students' intellectual ability or potential, or the relative quality of the HE experience that the institutions offer, are controversial empirical questions that have been central to debates about the expansion of HE and changes in funding structures.

To create the access tariff variable, we drew on entry standards data from the UCAS application process, *The Times Good University Guide 2006* and *2007* and the data on tariff points collected during Stage 1 of the Futuretrack survey, and also considered comparable league tables (The Times Online, 2007). *The Times Good University Guide* uses the full UCAS tariff points score for all new students aged under 21, while the Futuretrack data includes all accepted applicants excluding international students.

The HEIs were ranked according to the data provided in each of these sources, summed to give an overall ranking. The HEIs were then divided into groups based on this ranking. When HEIs were close to a border between groups, or when a particular HEI appeared to have an anomalous rank in one data source, other data from the Futuretrack survey, including the proportion of students with non-standard entry qualifications, was used to determine the most appropriate grouping. Using this system, six distinct groups were identified, as Table 1.3 shows:

Table 1.3: Number of HEIs in each access category

Access category	Number of HEIs	Stage 2 respondents in category (%)
Highest tariff	28	26.0
High tariff	36	24.4
Medium tariff	39	27.8
Lower tariff	36	11.9
General HE college	92	2.9
Specialist HE colleges	46	3.6
Overseas HEIs	-	3.4
Total UK HEIs included	Total current HE respondents (364,615*)	100.0

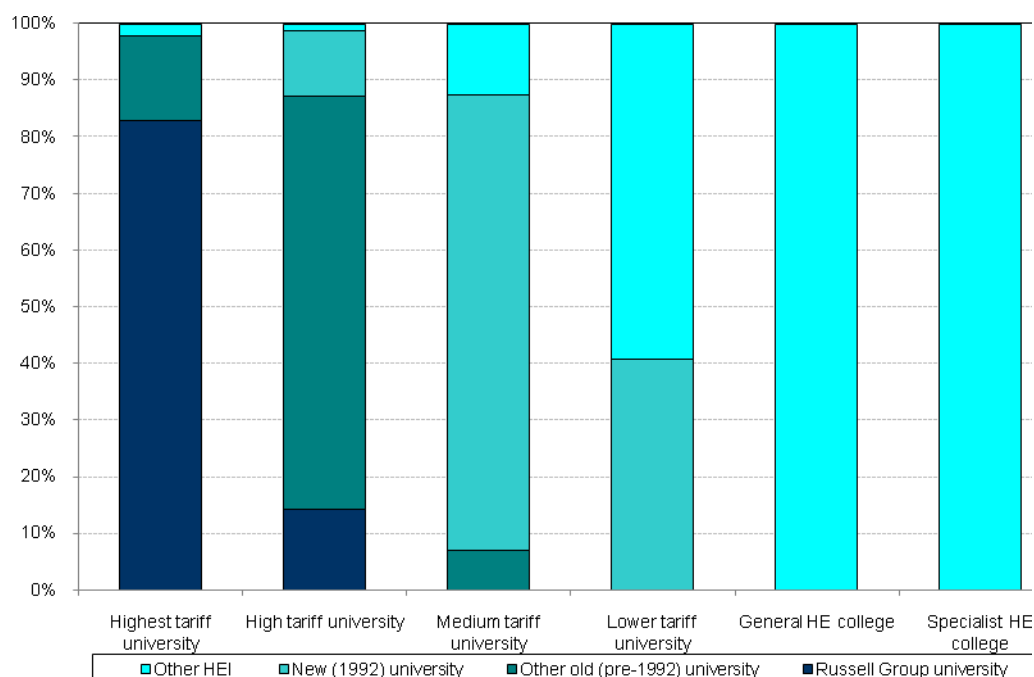
*Weighted

Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

The category, 'overseas universities', was added primarily for exclusionary purposes so that UK-domiciled students not studying at UK HEIs could be removed for certain analyses.

Figure 1.2 compares the distribution of HEIs on the basis of this new 'HEI access tariff' classification and their places in the 'Russell, etc.' grouping that we and others have used in the past.

Figure 1.2: HEI access tariff categories by 'Russell Group' classification



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

The 'Highest tariff' group contains all but three of the Russell Group universities, but it also includes five universities previously classified as 'other old universities', as well as four medical schools, a veterinary school and an institute focussed on languages. Although these last six institutions are specialist colleges, it was clear that tariff points had played an equally important role in access to these institutions as for those classified in the 'specialist HE colleges' group, and so they, and some other similar institutions, were classified according to the tariff points required for entry rather than the range of courses they offered.

The 'High tariff' group contains the remaining three Russell Group universities, all except four of the remaining 'other old universities', four 'new universities', a new university that was not a former polytechnic, and three specialist institutions classified on the basis of the average tariff points required for entry.

The 'Medium tariff' HEIs were diverse in terms of their status using the original schema. The group includes four 'old universities', 25 'new universities' and 10 new universities that were not polytechnics. The 'Lower tariff' group was similarly diverse, containing eight 'new universities', 13 new universities that had not been polytechnics, five former HE colleges and 10 other HEIs, the majority of which were currently University Colleges.

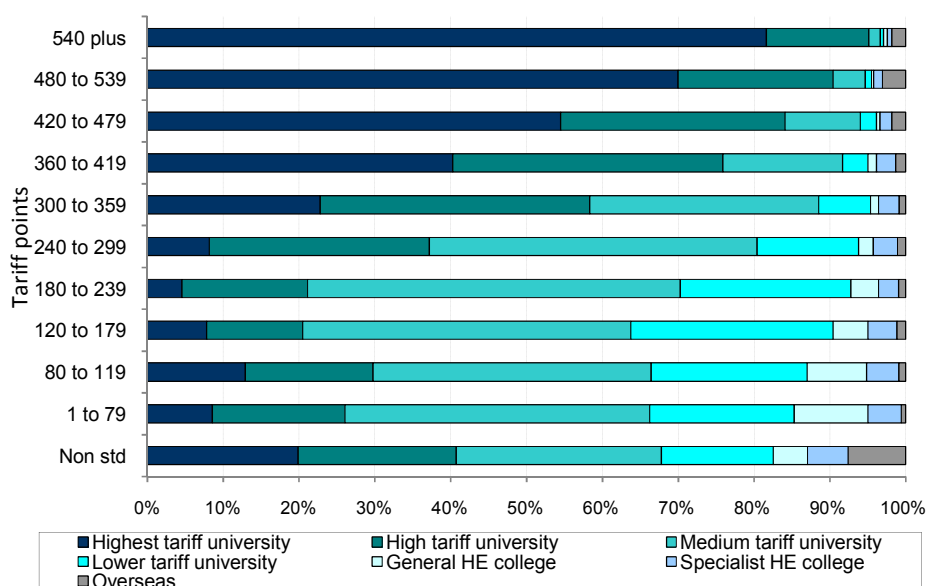
While the 'General HE colleges' group contains a large number of HEIs, a relatively small proportion of the Futuretrack cohort attend these institutions, primarily because many of them do not require prospective students to apply through UCAS.

The 'Specialist HE colleges' group includes institutions specialising in a wide range of subject areas. Arts, including fine art, music, dance and drama, were the most common specialisation, although the group also includes institutions specialising in agriculture and other land-based subjects, business, law, osteopathy and religion.

The diversity within these groups, particularly in the distribution of the 'New (post-92) universities', illustrates how, as the HEI sector continues to evolve and change in composition and development, it is increasingly inappropriate to group HEIs together based on their status 17 years ago. As in sporting leagues, nationally and internationally, performance quality and ambitions change along with successes, failures and – of course – strategic planning and investment in development.

An important caveat is that within, as well as between, HEIs, the tariff points required vary according to subject. Subjects that receive more applicants per place, or those that tend to attract applicants with higher grades, are able to ask for higher tariff points, and to make additional requirements, such as that applicants demonstrate that they will benefit from the course. This goes some way towards explaining the pattern shown in Figure 1.3. Although students with higher tariff points were most likely to be studying at HEIs that required higher average tariff points and those with lower tariff points were likely to be studying at HEIs that required lower average tariff points, this was not universally the case (quite apart from the growing significance of non-standard qualifications, as alternative entry routes have opened and the population has become more diverse, both in terms of widening access and the globalisation of HE). It may be that 'lower tariff' applicants at high tariff HEIs were exceptional cases and were made lower offers than was usual for their courses because of particular personal circumstances, but this pattern also reflects the diversity of requirements *within* HEIs for different subjects. Similarly, some predominantly lower tariff HEIs have very prestigious and highly competed-for courses in particular subjects and disciplines. As with families and individuals, the old 'class structure' of HEIs is evolving. However at any point in the evolution, it is pertinent to investigate the impact of HEI category on the quality of experience and standards of HE provision that students receive.

Figure 1.3: Tariff group outcomes by HEI type

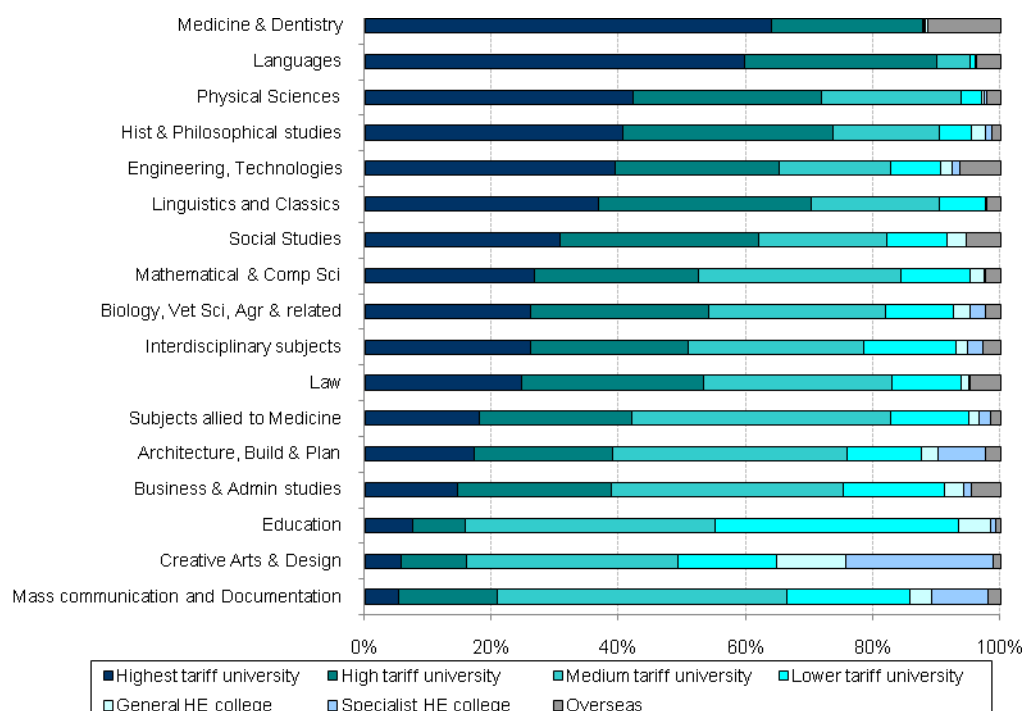


Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Figure 1.4 shows the subject groups by the new HEI tariff access profile. As can be seen, there were some subjects that were heavily concentrated in particular types of HEI. For example, almost 90 per cent of respondents studying medicine and dentistry were at highest or high tariff universities, with almost two thirds being at HEIs in the highest tariff group. Similarly, more than two thirds of respondents studying subjects such as physical sciences, historical and philosophical studies, and linguistics and classics were at HEIs in the highest or high access tariff groups. Conversely, law, which is usually associated with requiring high tariff points has a fairly even spread across the different HEI types, and is not particularly concentrated at HEIs requiring high tariff points. This is likely to reflect the diversity of law courses available, and it may be that if this group was broken down into different types of course, we would see a concentration of different types of course at different types of HEI.

Less than a third of respondents studying mass communications and documentation, creative arts and design, and education were at HEIs in the highest and high access tariff groups, although in the case of creative arts and design and certain subjects within mass communication and documentation, the possibility of studying these subjects at specialist colleges, and the relatively large proportion of students in these areas who do so, tends to skew the overall picture. Education was the subject with the highest proportion of students studying at lower access tariff HEIs. Thirty eight per cent of students studying education were at lower access tariff HEIs, while the set of subjects with the second largest proportion of students at lower access tariff HEIs, mass communication and documentation, has only 19 per cent.

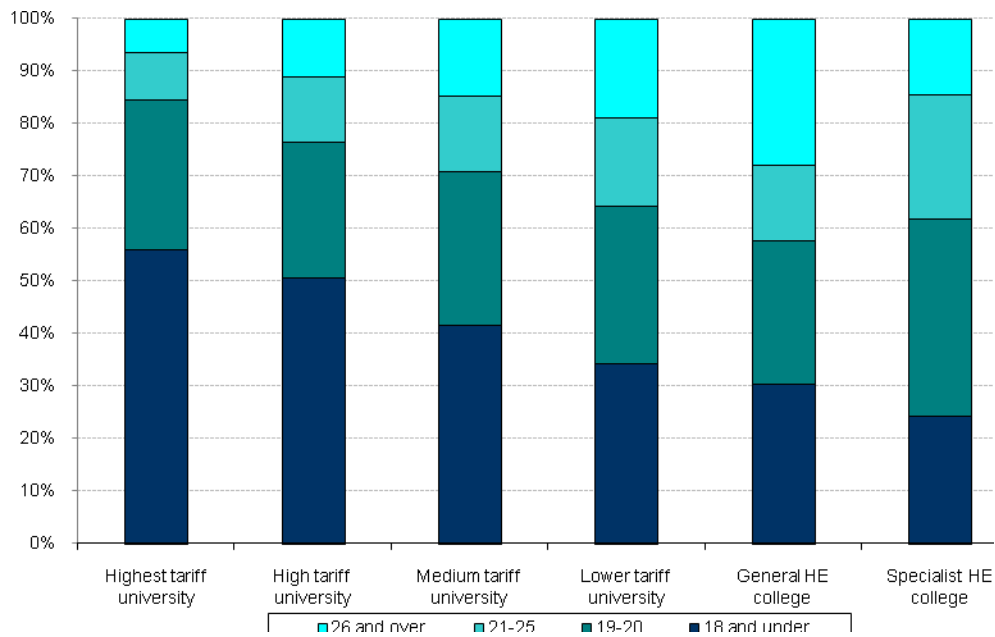
Figure 1.4: Subject groups by HEI access profile



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

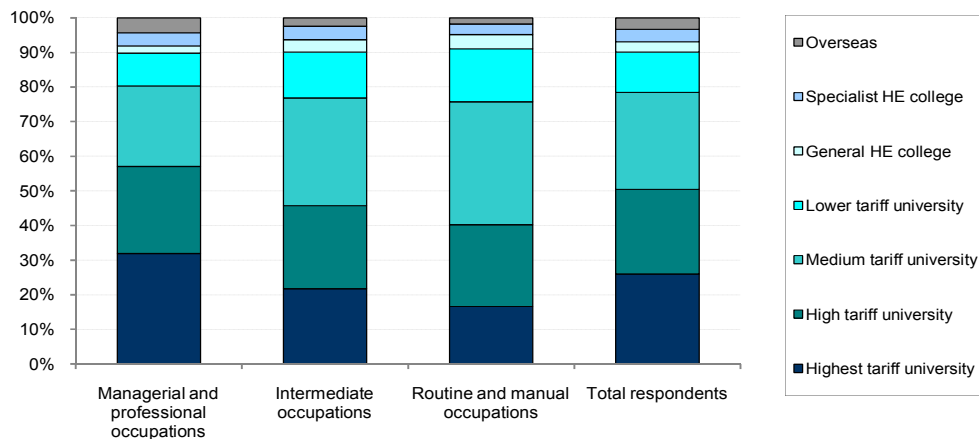
The following figures show the profile of respondents attending the different types of HEI. In most cases, the picture was broadly similar to Stage 1, when we used the old HEI type categories, with young respondents (Figure 1.5) who were from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Figure 1.6) with an educational advantage prior to entering HE (Figure 1.7) being the most likely to be attending the more elite, higher ranked HEIs. The Figure showing the proportions of students at different types of HEI who had an educational advantage also illustrates the value of the new variable. As can be seen, using the old categories of 'Russell Group', 'Other old (pre-92) university', 'New (post-92) university' and 'Other HEI' conceals the differences among the 'Other HEI' group in particular. Using the new access tariff variable, we can see that respondents at Specialist HE colleges were the second most likely group to have had educational advantage prior to entry, and those at General HE colleges were more likely to than those at lower tariff HEIs. Tariff points and socio-economic background are clearly correlated with type of prior education, as was discussed in the Stage 1 report, so that those attending independent and selective schools have a considerably higher probability of having accessed places at highest and high tariff HEIs than those at State schools generally and those who enter HE via non-standard routes. They were also particularly correlated with having one or two parents who had participated in HE.

Figure 1.5: HEI access by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

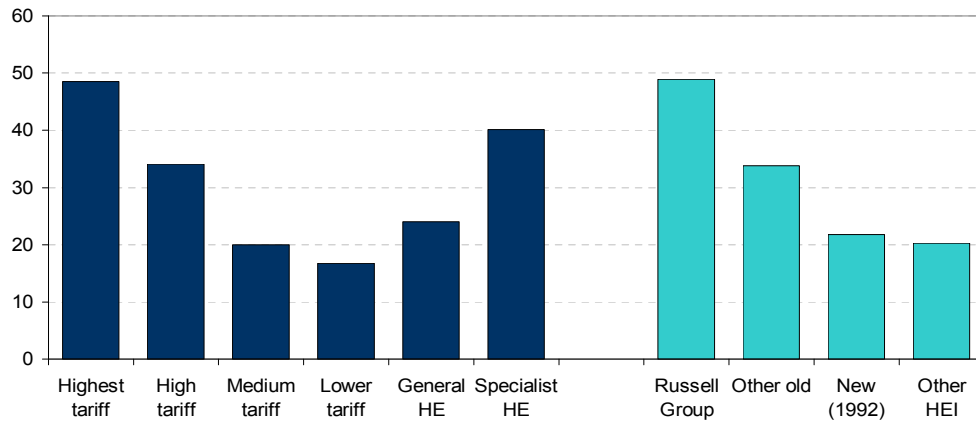
Figure 1.6: Socio-economic background and HEI access



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Figure 1.7 shows the comparative distributions over a category we summarise as ‘possessing educational advantage’; defined by having studied prior to HE entry at an independent fee-paying school or a State school that accepted pupils on the basis of academic or other abilities.

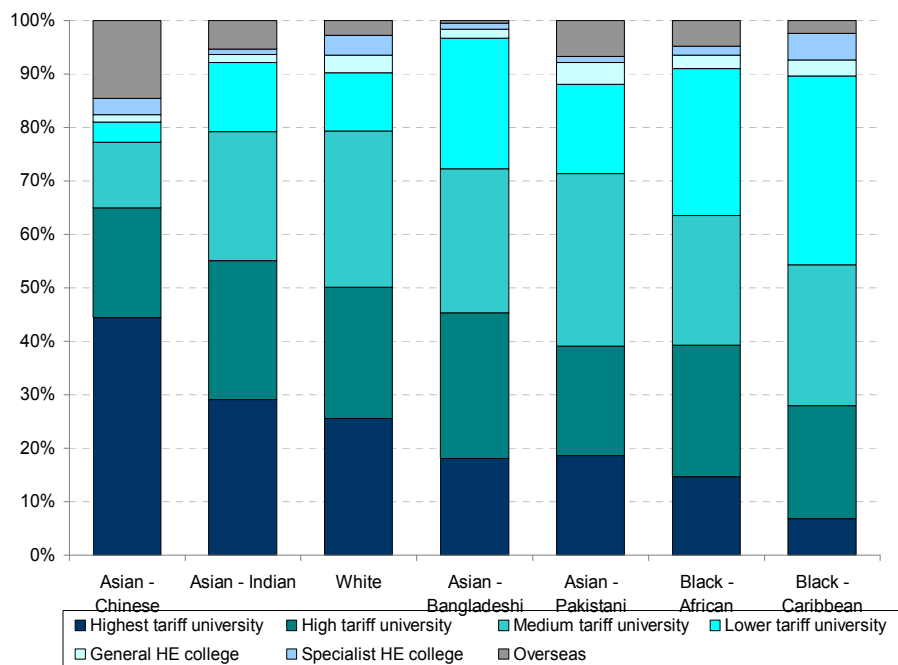
Figure 1.7: Percentage of respondents at different types of HEI who had an educational advantage prior to entering higher education, comparing the new and old HEI categories



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

The following two figures show HEI access type by ethnic group and by region. Both figures illustrate the very different HEI profiles different groups had, and the extent to which factors such as ethnicity and geography appeared to impact upon the HE choices respondents had made.

Figure 1.8: Ethnic group by HEI access



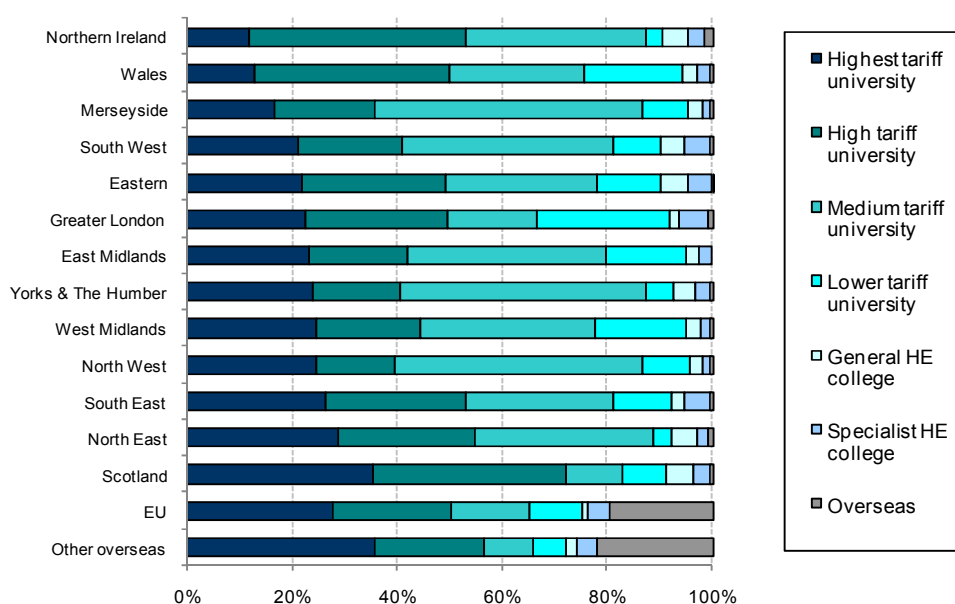
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

As Figure 1.8 shows, Chinese and Indian students were more likely than white students to be attending the two highest tariff groups. Chinese students were more than twice as likely as Bangladeshi, Pakistani and black African respondents to be attending an HEI in the highest tariff category, and five times as likely as black Caribbean students. The latter were particularly unlikely to do so; less than half as likely as the next least likely group, the black Africans. They were the group most likely to be attending a lower tariff university. The proportion of black Caribbean students attending a lower tariff university was more than nine times the proportion of Chinese students who were doing so and more than three times the proportion of white students.

Region and HEI type

Figure 1.9 shows the proportions of students from different home regions attending different types of HEI. Excluding the EU and Other overseas students, Scotland has the highest proportion of students attending highest tariff universities, while Wales and Northern Ireland have the lowest proportion. This can be related to the types of HEI found in a particular region and the likelihood that students will move away from home to study.

Figure 1.9: HEI access by home region



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

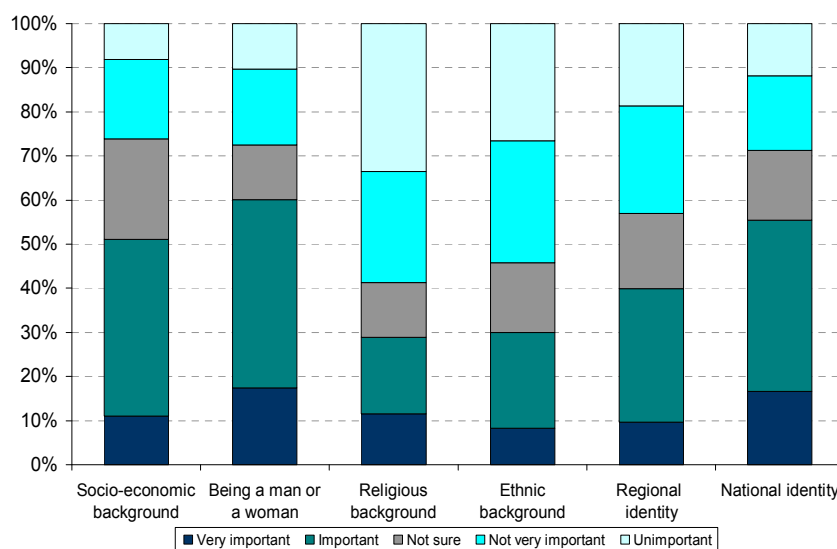
Many students will return to, or remain in, their home region at least temporarily after they graduate, and the retention of graduates was a key concern in many regional development plans. Consequently, the proportion of students who were attending different types of HEI, the skills they gained and developed there, and the types of employment these institutions equipped them for, was an important issue for many regions.

Who were the respondents and what was important to them in their self-definitions and orientations to what they experienced?

As made clear in the Stage 1 report, we were keen from the outset to get some indication of the less easily-identifiable variables that determine how confident respondents were about

their abilities and expectations, to see how this might inform their career perceptions, the choices that they make, and the opportunities they perceive and consider. Respondents were asked how important they considered various aspects of their identity. Figure 1.10 shows their responses. The importance placed by respondents on particular aspects of their identity may inform many of the decisions they make, not just in the current stage of their HE studies, but also as they think about entering the job market and consider the type of employment they want, the environment they wish to work in and the locations where they would be happy to live and work.

Figure 1.10: Importance of different aspects of identity



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

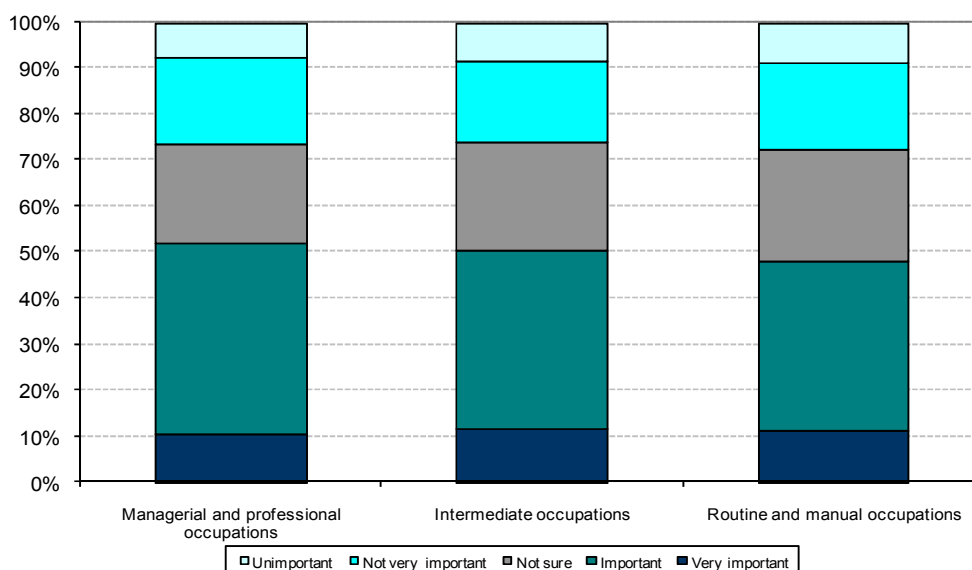
As Figure 1.10 shows, overall, gender identity was regarded as important by the largest proportion of respondents, followed by socio-economic background and national identity. Religious and ethnic identities were found to be less important on average, but were very important for some sub-groups of respondents, as will be discussed.

The figures that follow illustrate the importance of different aspects of identity for various key sub-groups.

Socio-economic background

Figure 1.11 shows the importance placed on socio-economic identity by respondents from various socio-economic backgrounds, showing no noticeable differences among the groups. More detailed comparison of HEI types by socio-economic background confirmed this.

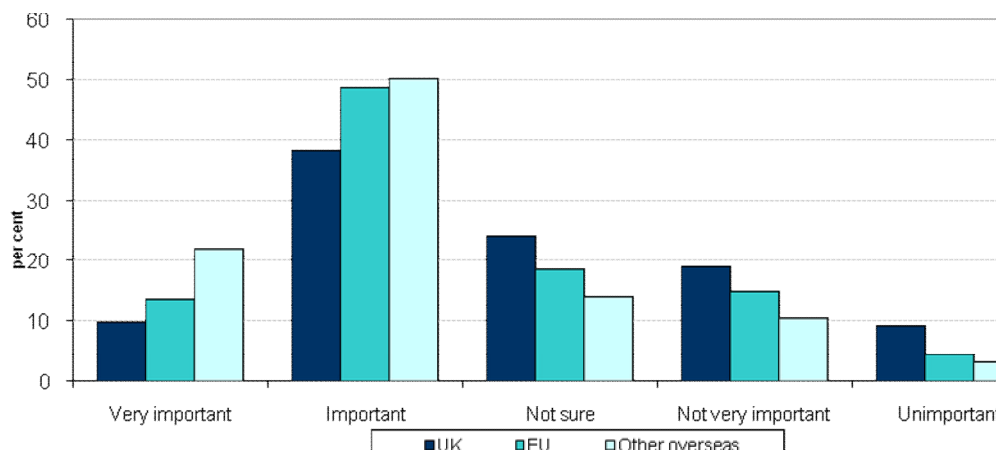
Figure 1.11: Importance of socio-economic identity by socio-economic background



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

One attribute that appeared to be related to whether a respondent thought that their socio-economic identity was important was domicile, in particular whether a respondent came from the UK, another EU country, or from a non-EU country.

Figure 1.12: Importance of socio-economic identity by domicile



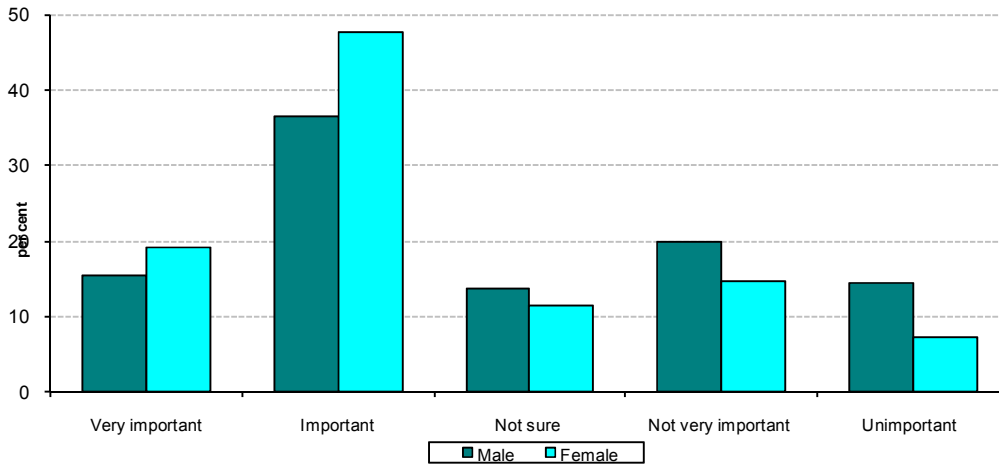
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

Class has traditionally been significantly associated with access to opportunities and as part of people’s perceptions of their ‘place’ and potential life chances in the UK, so it was surprising that respondents from outside the UK were more likely than those from the UK to say that their socio-economic identity was very important to them, with those from non-EU countries being the most likely to say that their socio-economic identity was very important or important to them. As will be seen in Chapter 8, respondents to the survey come from a very wide range of countries, including some where socio-economic background will inevitably already have played a determining role in their lives in relation to their access to HE study in the UK.

Gender

While both genders considered their gender identity important, it was noticeably more important to females than to males. Research has shown that gender is related to the types of jobs people get, how much they are paid and how much they earn over their lifetime (Purcell and Elias, 2008, Makepeace *et al.*, 1999, Joshi and Paci, 1998). Within HE, as the Stage 1 survey showed, males and females were likely to be studying different subjects, and, as will be seen later, women were more likely to live at home and have dependants, both of which are likely to have a distinct impact on their experience of HE.

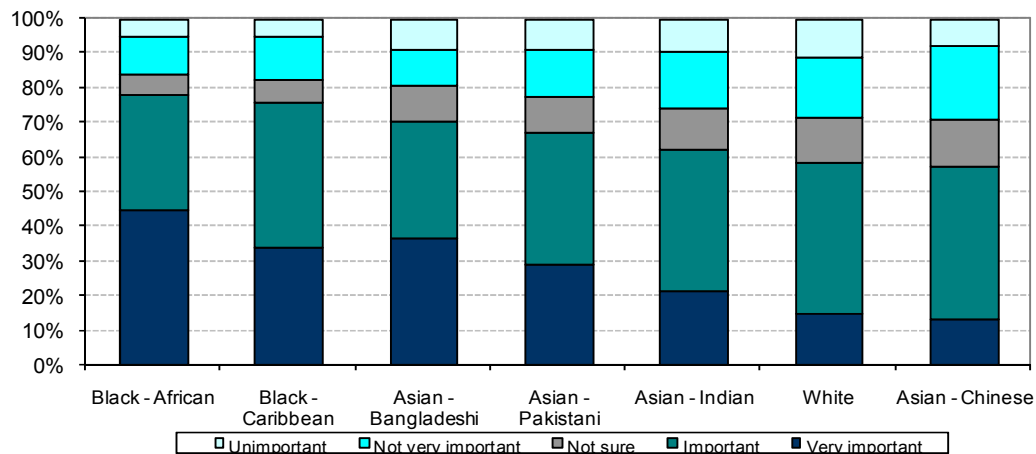
Figure 1.13: Importance of gender identity by gender



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

As Figure 1.14 shows, gender identity was reported as more important for respondents from some ethnic groups than others. This might be expected among ethnic groups where there were large differences between the status of men and women or where there are different expectations concerning the education and employment of different genders.

Figure 1.14: Importance of gender identity by ethnic origin



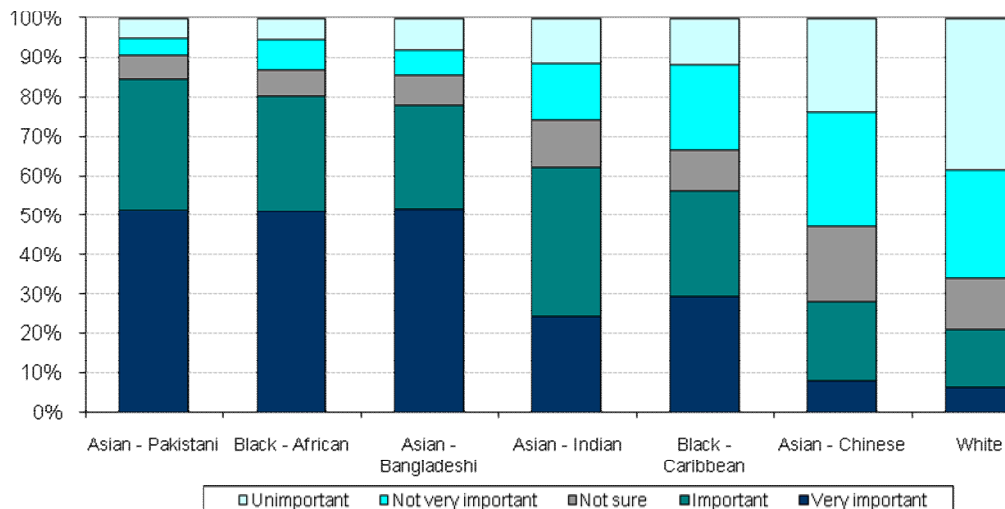
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

Nearly half (44 per cent) of the respondents of black African origin considered their gender very important, whereas at the other end of the spectrum, the white and Chinese ethnic group proportions were 15 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. Whether a respondent considers their gender identity important will be particularly important in Stage 3 of the survey, because it may play a role in the type of environment they will be happy to work in and consequently the career they choose.

Religious identity

As in the case of gender identity, there was a relatively large variation across the ethnic groups in terms of the proportions regarding religious identity as important, as Figure 1.15 illustrates.

Figure 1.15: Importance of religious identity by ethnic origin

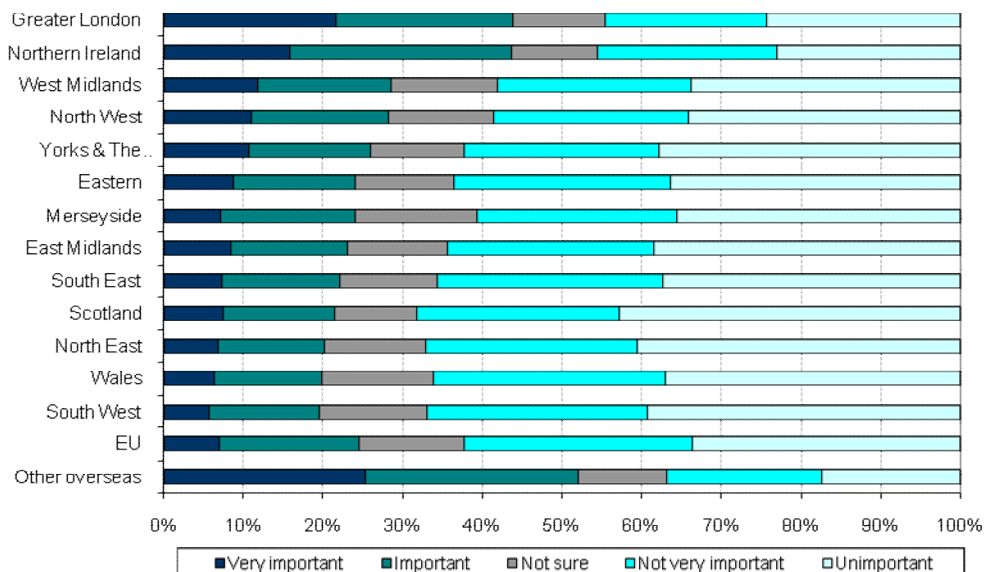


Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

Ethnic groups that tend to share a religion and to traditionally have a strong religious identity were, as would be expected, most likely to say that religious identity was very important or important. For example, over half (52 per cent) of respondents of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin regarded their religious identity as very important, and the proportions who saw it as 'unimportant' or 'not very important' were only 9 per cent and 14 per cent respectively for these two groups. Conversely, only 8 per cent and 6 per cent of the Chinese and white ethnic groups respectively, indicated that religious identity was very important to them, and 38 per cent of the white group saw their religious identity as unimportant.

As Figure 1.16 shows, this maps onto the regional picture, with regions that have large ethnic minority populations tending to have a higher proportion of respondents saying that their religious identity was very important or important to them. The exception was Northern Ireland, which has a relatively small ethnic minority population, but a high proportion of respondents saying that their religious identity was important to them, which might be expected given the Protestant/Catholic divide in Northern Ireland. Respondents from EU countries have a similar profile to the UK as a whole, while those from other overseas countries were more likely than the UK average to state that their religious identity was important or very important to them.

Figure 1.16: Importance of religious identity by region

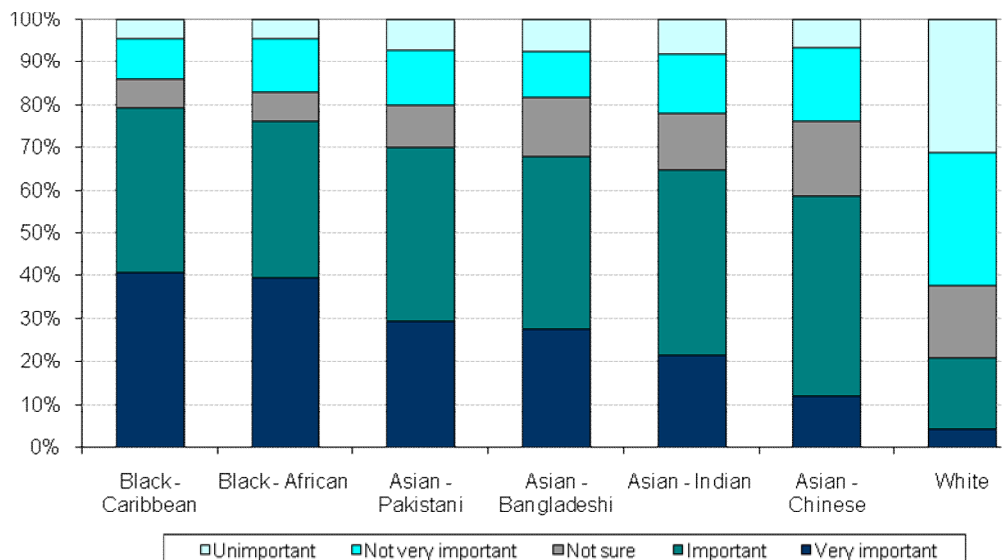


Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

Ethnicity

Ethnic identity was cited as more important by members of the non-white groups than by white students, with 62 per cent of white respondents considering it 'unimportant' or 'not very important', compared to 14 per cent of black Caribbean respondents.

Figure 1.17: Importance of ethnic identity by ethnic origin



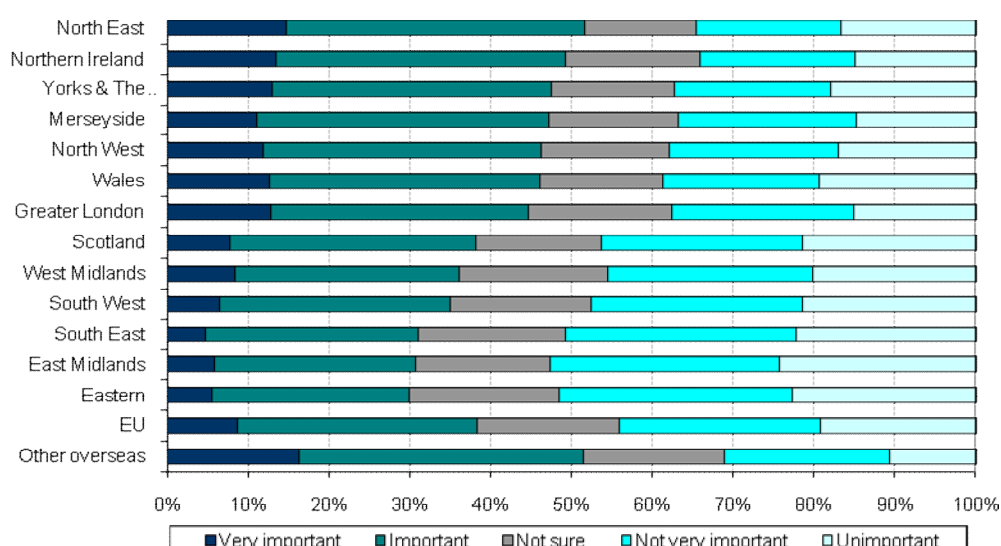
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

Again, these findings are not unexpected. Minority groups have invariably been found to be more aware of the personal characteristics that they do not share with the majority, particularly when these characteristics may be perceived as being disadvantageous to them in some way.

Regional identity

Respondents who considered their regional identity very important may have been more likely to choose to attend an HEI in a particular region, and may consequently be expected to choose to restrict their post-graduation job search to the region they feel that they have a particular affinity to. It will be interesting to test this hypothesis at Stage 3, where respondents were asked questions about their geographical preferences in seeking employment.

Figure 1.18: Importance of regional identity by region



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

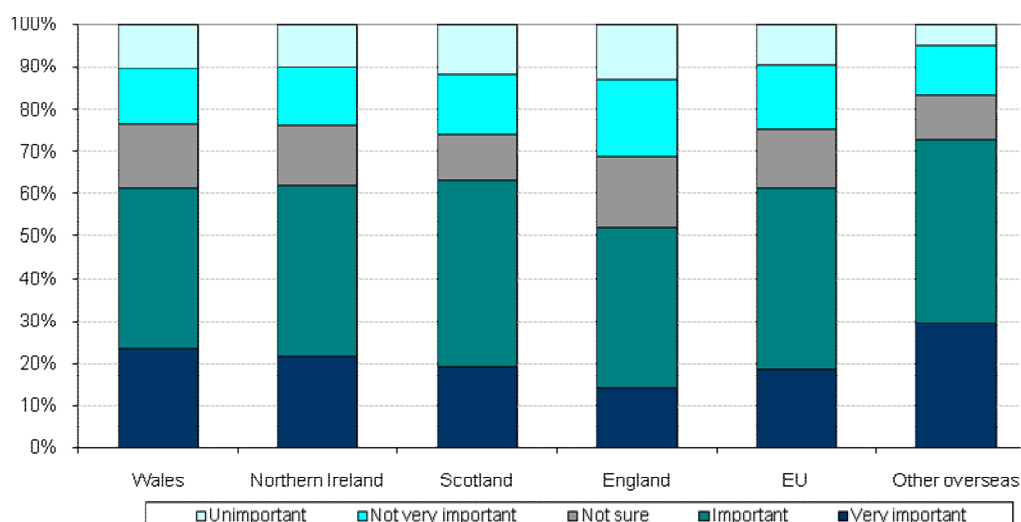
As Figure 1.18 shows, respondents from regions that have historically had a strong sense of regional identity and that have been at the forefront of English regionalism, particularly the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, Merseyside and the North West, were more likely to consider regional identity as very important or important to them. Respondents from Northern Ireland were also among the most likely to consider regional identity important to them. Respondents from Wales and Scotland had a relatively low propensity to cite regional identity as important to them, but, as will be seen below, respondents in these areas were more likely to consider national identity as important to them. Although regional identity is known to be stronger in some countries than others and there are parts of the EU that have a strong regional identity (for example, Bavaria, the Basque Country and Corsica), on the whole, respondents from the EU were not more likely than those from the UK to say that regional identity was important to them. This may be a context-dependent finding, with respondents feeling that their regional identity plays a more important role when they are in their home country. Respondents from other overseas countries were among the most likely to say that their regional identity was important to them, which is likely to reflect the historical and political importance of regional affinities in the countries they come from.

National identity

Respondents from Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland were all more likely than respondents from England to have said that national identity was very important or important to them. As Figure 1.19 shows, respondents from EU countries were slightly more likely than those from England to say that national identity was important or very important to them, but the figures were not particularly high, given they were studying in a foreign country. This may

be because they are treated the same as UK students for the purposes of fees, or it may mean that they may consider their European identity to be more important. This is a question that will be explored at a later stage of the survey. Respondents from other overseas countries were the group that were the most likely to say that national identity was very important or important to them, which would be expected given their migrant context.

Figure 1.19: Importance of national identity by national identity



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 respondents, weighted

Respondents' changing perceptions of their levels of key skills

Summary

In this chapter, the profile of the Stage 2 sample was outlined, and we find that as far as it is possible to assess against the known characteristic of the population from which it was drawn, it remains representative of them. The biases we had identified at Stage 1, gender and tariff point entry scores, remained and the latter bias had increased slightly, but otherwise the sample remains sufficiently representative of the current 2005/6 applicant cohort. It shows very clearly the continuing predominance of students from relatively-advantaged backgrounds and the diversity of both the population and the range of studies encapsulated within full-time UK HE courses.

For respondents as a whole, their self-ratings of their written communication, numeracy and computer literacy had improved, while spoken communication skill ratings showed little change.

Reported sources of funding during the first year were summarized and compared by age group and domicile prior to HE entry. The most common sources of funding were statutory financial support maintenance loans, statutory financial support tuition loans, personal savings and earnings from vacation work, followed by non-repayable contributions from family or partners, but these varied somewhat by both the identified variables, to some extent as might have been expected:

- for example, a higher percentage of students from the 26 and over age group receiving grants, bursaries and hardship funding, less benefitted from non-repayable

contributions from families or partners, but more had personal trust fund or income from other investments, etc.;

- those under 18 were most likely to have taken advantage of statutory financial support maintenance loans and statutory financial support tuition loans;
- those in the older age groups – 21-25 and 26 and over - were most likely to report paid work during term as a source of income. The latter, however, were least likely to report income from paid employment during vacations – possibly reflecting their greater likelihood of having responsibilities related to having dependent children.

We then explained the new classification of HEIs that we have developed on the basis of the average tariff points required to access courses at them, which we argue is a more powerful indicator of career opportunity than previous classifications. Our analyses using this classification show unequivocally that access to these most selective universities is associated, as well as with prior educational achievement, with socio-economic background, age at entry, ethnicity and region of domicile – and this raises interesting questions for policy-makers with reference to the design of proposed initiatives to increase social mobility, widen access to HE and ‘unleashing aspiration’ (Cabinet Office, 2009).

Finally we show how it is possible to go beyond the socio-economic, demographic and educational background characteristics of the population normally provided in surveys to cover some of the key attitudinal attributes and respondents’ subjective assessments of their abilities and orientations – which we know are likely to have been, and will continue to be, relevant in their career decision-making and the determination of outcomes: the importance to them of different aspects of their identities.

For the sample as a whole, gender was regarded as the most important core element of identity, followed by socio-economic background, national identity and regional identity. Ethnicity and religion were least often seen as important overall. However, the importance of aspects of identity varied according to attributes:

- women were more likely to see gender as very important;
- those from some minority backgrounds most likely to regard their ethnicity as very important (and in some cases, the combination of gender and ethnicity highly significant, with gender being considered more important than to white respondents by all minority ethnic groups except Chinese Asian respondents);
- nationality was less important to English-domiciled respondents than to those from other UK, EU and other overseas countries;
- within the UK, region was most important to those from the North East of England, Northern Ireland, and Yorkshire and Humberside; least important to those in the East of England, East Midlands and the South East;
- religion was most important to those from Asian Pakistani, black African and Asian Bangladeshi backgrounds and least important for white respondents. In terms of nationality, it was most important to students from non-EU overseas countries, those from Greater London and those from Northern Ireland.
- perhaps the most surprising finding is how important socio-economic background was perceived to be by all socio-economic groups, and the lack of difference among these. Our subsequent findings suggest that this reflects perceptions rather than lack of difference of the extent to which socio-economic background clearly has, and is likely to continue to, influence choices, opportunities encountered and career outcomes.

CHAPTER 2

First year in HE: evaluations of teaching and learning experience and managing finances

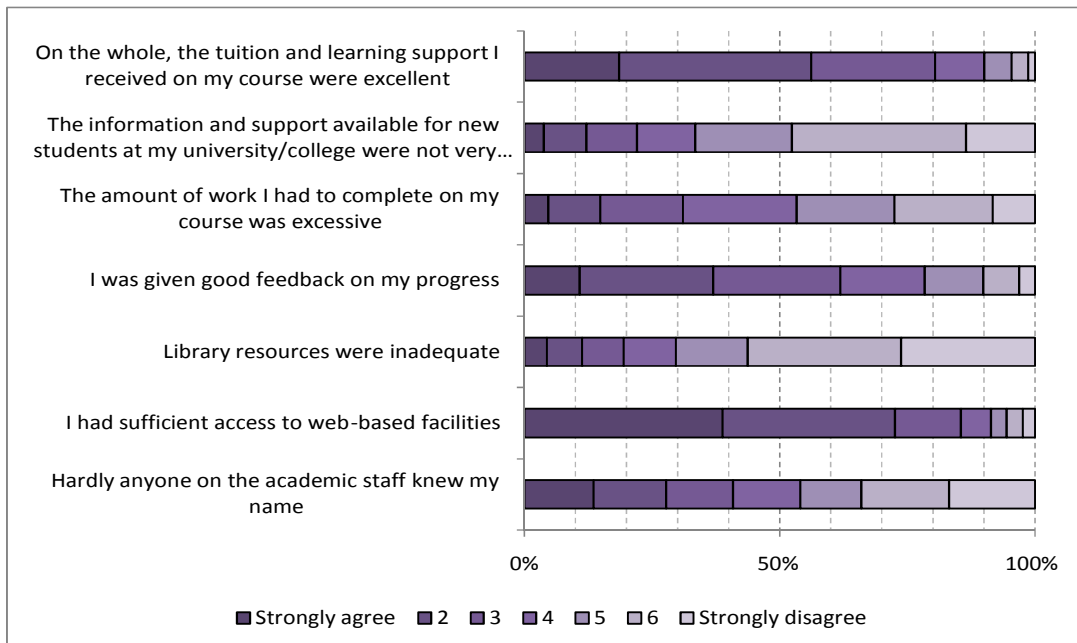
Introduction

This section looks at respondents' experiences during their first year in higher education. In the first part of this chapter, their experiences of tuition and learning support, their HEI environment and their individual experiences are analysed. The second part of the chapter compares students' expectations of the amount and standard of work required and the reality they faced at university or college. The day-to-day experiences of being a student, the amount of time students spent studying and the types of assignments and other assessment methods used on their courses will be discussed. Finally, students' views about financial management and debt are outlined.

General evaluation of first year experience as an HE student

Respondents were asked how far they agreed or disagreed with various statements concerning the academic support they had had in HE, the resources available to them and the amount of work they were expected to do. Stratifying factors, including personal characteristics and types of higher education institutions were examined to show differences across the student cohort. The distribution of responses to each statement is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Extent of agreement with statements about student experiences in the academic year 2006-07



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.*

It is important to bear in mind that, with some of the items, strong agreement is a reflection of a positive experience, whereas with others it is negative. The overall feedback is largely

positive; most students evaluated the tuition, learning support, information and resources available to them as having reached an acceptable or high standard. However, as Figure 2.1 showed, over a fifth of respondents agreed with the statement that the information and support available to new students had not been very good, 31 per cent considered the work they had been required to complete on their course had been excessive, around 20 per cent had found library resources inadequate and 41 per cent agreed that 'hardly anyone on the academic staff knew my name'.

The interesting questions are consequently:

...do these levels of satisfaction vary according to access to variations in quality of the educational opportunities offered to students at different HEIs and by different courses within them; and

...does this matter in terms of the ultimate value of HE to them and access to opportunities beyond HE?

In other words, while recognising clearly that the range of HE courses is widely diverse and the expectations and abilities of students are important determinants of individual career potential (c.f. Brown 2007 as discussed in Chapter 1), the questions that remain are: does the process of participation in HE narrow or widen access to career opportunities, and do some courses offer better value than others, taking account of students' own objectives? Personal factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic background together with the subject, HEI attended and level of degree studied towards play a role in students' attitudes as measured via their responses to these statements. The following section will explore the responses to these issues in three groups: tuition and learning support in general; evaluations of the HEI environment encountered (library resources, web-based facilities); and individual experiences of being students (amount of work required, feedback from and contact with academic staff).

Tuition and learning support

Most students were relatively content with the tuition and learning support they received on their courses, with over 80 per cent of respondents agreeing with the statement 'On the whole, the tuition and learning support I received on my course was excellent'. The analysis shows that variation in responses was related to personal characteristics such as age and ethnicity. The 19-25 year old age group was less likely to agree with the statement than younger students who had progressed directly from secondary schools and those who had embarked on their courses when they were 26 or older. Asian and black students were the least likely to agree with the statement. There were only small differences in the responses related to socio-economic background.

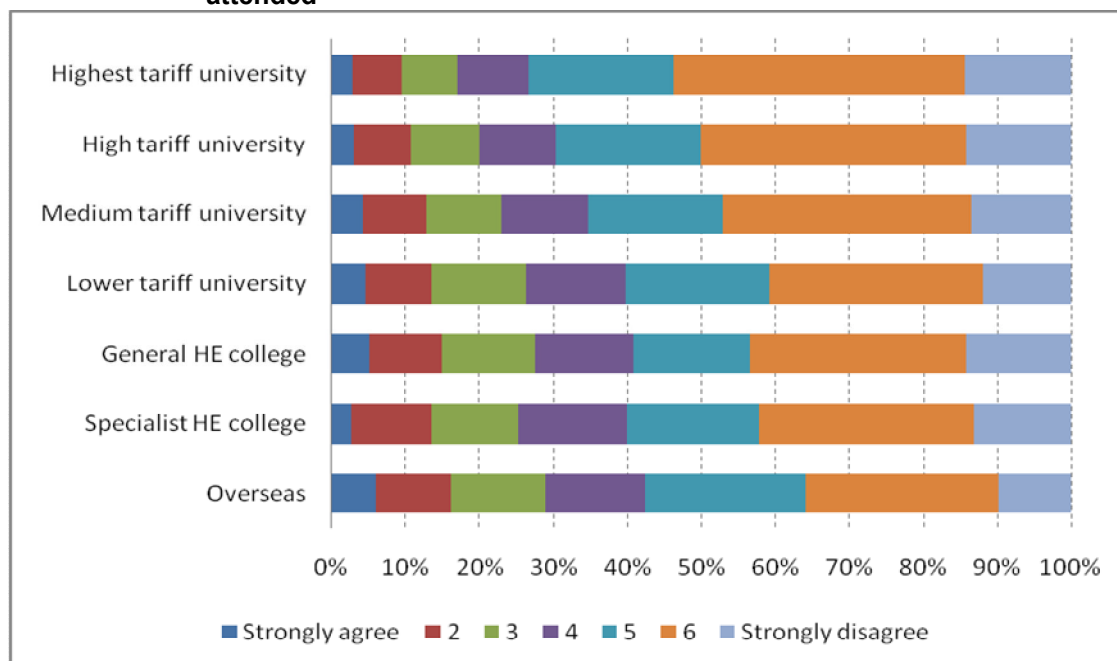
Students of Physical Sciences, History and Philosophical Studies, Medicine and Dentistry and Languages were the most likely to agree that the tuition and learning support they had received was excellent. In contrast, students of Business and Admin Studies, Architecture, Building and Planning and Mass Communication and Documentation were the least likely to agree with the statement. There was some variation in terms of the type of HEI; while 85 per cent of students at the highest tariff universities and 82 per cent of students at high tariff universities agreed to some extent with the statement, this was only the case for 75 per cent of students at specialist higher education colleges and lower tariff higher education institutions.

There was more variation in responses to the statement, 'The information and support available for new students at my university/college were not very good', with 22 per cent scoring 1-3 on the 7-point scale from 'agree strongly' to 'disagree strongly', although at the other extreme of the scale, over a third scored 6 and 14 per cent scored 7 meaning that the support available had been good. The propensity to agree varied according to type of HEI and subject, together with personal characteristics. Bangladeshi, Pakistani, white/black African and other black students were more likely to agree with the statement than other ethnic groups. Younger students were generally more content with the learning and tuition support from their university or college, which perhaps reflects less critical evaluation. Students from a routine and manual occupational background were more likely to agree with the statement than students from more affluent socio-economic backgrounds, perhaps reflecting less familiarity with the experiences of students at other HEIs, or what they might expect as undergraduate students.

A quarter of students of Business and Administration, Creative Arts and Design, and Architecture, Building and Planning agreed with the statement 'The information and support available for new students at my university/college were not very good'. Students of Physical Sciences, History and Philosophical Studies, and Languages were the least likely to agree with the statement. Students studying for an undergraduate degree were more satisfied with the information and support from their university or college than those studying for a foundation degree or an HND or Dip HE.

As Figure 2.2 shows, students studying at highest or high tariff universities were, similarly, more likely to be satisfied with the information and support available to them than students from lower tariff universities or from HE colleges, with 17 per cent at the highest tariff and 26 per cent at the lowest tariff giving scores of 1-3 in agreement.

Figure 2.2: Agreement with 'The information and support available for new students at my university/college were not very good' by type of HEI attended



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted

Some students complained about lack of support that took account of their special needs:

'I needed more effective support and attention because of my different difficulties (dyslexia and long-term depression problems), but there was nothing particular available.'

[Male, 26 and over, Biology, Lower Tariff University]

Others comments reflected the fact that those less likely to be familiar with expectations of HE were likely to require more guidance than was often provided:

'Not quite higher than I expected, but I expected there to be more support especially with the first assignment, to clarify the standard.'

[Female, 26 and over, Subjects allied to Medicine, High Tariff University]

The unequal levels of knowledge with which students entered HE were not only reflected in differences relating to lack of 'cultural capital' in relation to HE practice, (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) but educational differences – and, in some cases, this might highlight entry requirement questions as well as educational support issues. For example:

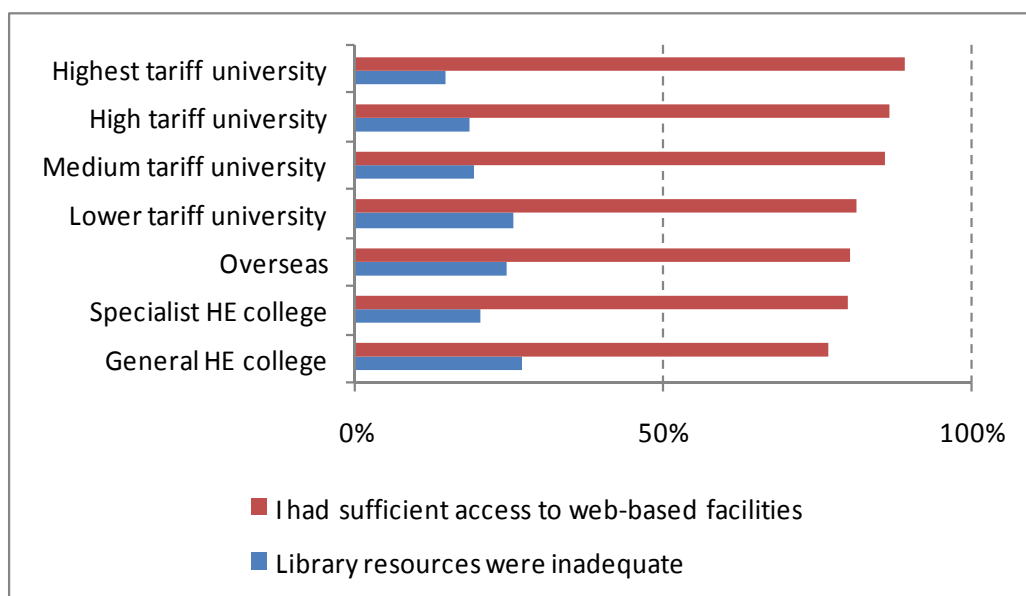
'Being on a pre medical course and not having done physics ever before I feel that they did not support people like myself.'

[Female, 18 and under, Medicine & Dentistry, High Tariff University]

HEI information resources

The next section deals with access to library resources and web-based facilities. Most respondents reported that they were content with their library resources. Only 19 per cent agreed with the statement that these had been inadequate and 86 per cent of respondents reported sufficient access to web-based facilities. Responses differed according to the type of course studied and the higher education institution attended. Those students most dependent on library resources for independent study were more likely to have been dissatisfied with these, with a quarter of Education, Social Studies, and History and Philosophy students stating that they were not satisfied with their library facilities. At the other extreme, those least reliant on independent textual study - students of the Physical Sciences and Engineering and Technologies - were the most satisfied, both with the library resources and the web-based facilities provided by their HEI. The most likely to be dissatisfied groups were those studying Creative Arts and Design and Education – perhaps those where web-based resources might be more central to their courses. Ten per cent of students in those subject groups reported that they did not have sufficient access to web-based facilities. Students studying on an undergraduate degree course were more satisfied with library and web resources and facilities than other HEI students. Students at highest tariff universities were most likely to be satisfied with their access to resources and facilities, as Figure 2.3 illustrates.

Figure 2.3: Students' agreement with the statements 'Library resources were inadequate' and 'I had sufficient access to web-based facilities' by type of HEI



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted. Agreement was defined as answers 1 to 3 on a 1 to 7 scale where 1 means 'strongly agree' and 7 means 'strongly disagree'

The day-to-day experiences of being a student

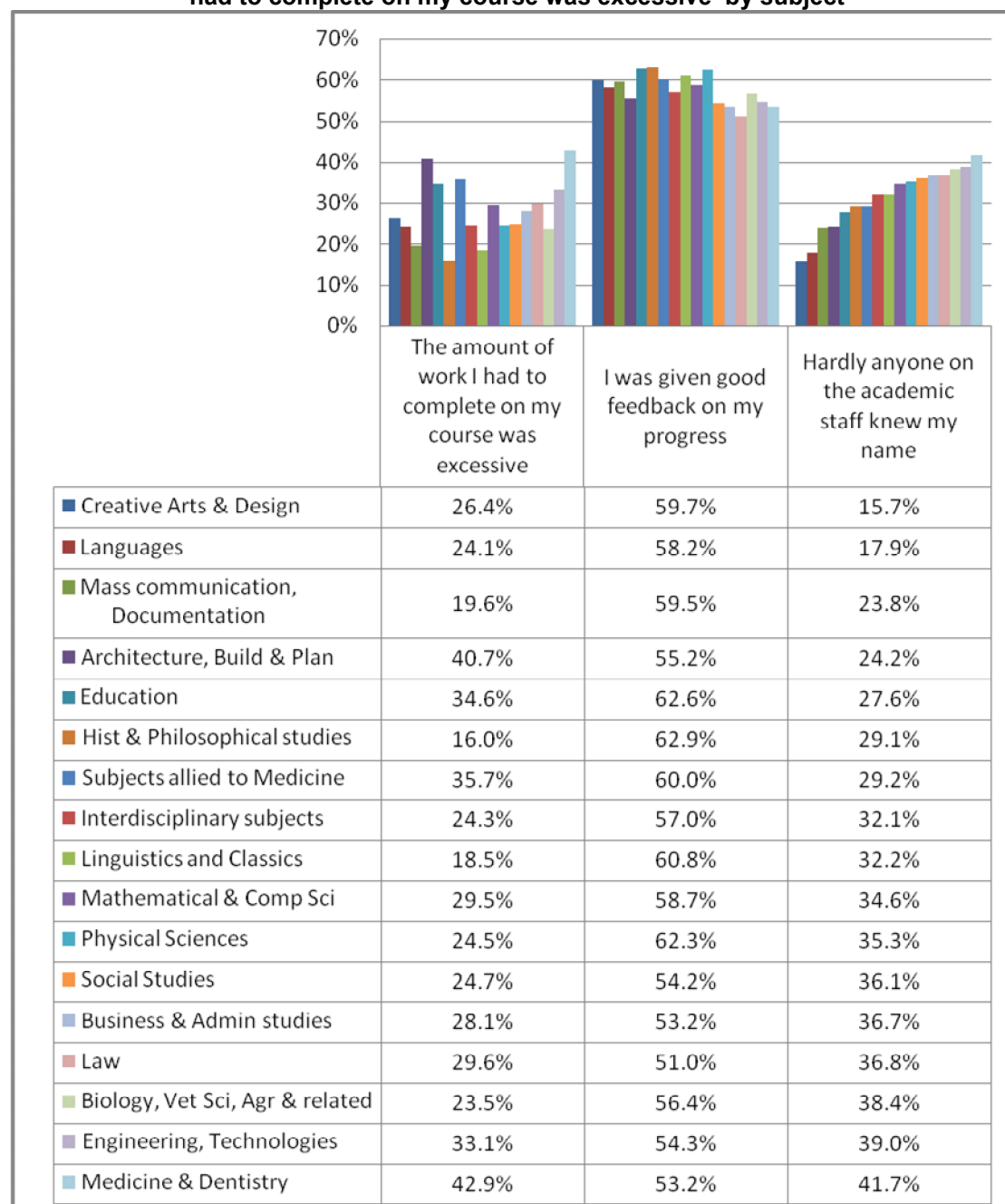
While there was a greater degree of consensus in respondents' answers about the overall tuition and learning support and the HEI environment, there was more diversity in their assessments of the amount of work, feedback given and contact with academic staff. Most students stated that they had been given good feedback on their progress. Forty seven per cent of the students disagreed that the amount of work they had to complete was excessive. The respondents were polarised in whether they thought academic staff knew their names: nearly half (46 per cent) did not agree with the statement, but 41 per cent did.

Forty per cent of students at highest tariff universities and 37 per cent at high tariff universities reported that hardly anyone on the academic staff knew their name, compared with 9 per cent of students at general higher education colleges and 16 per cent at specialist higher education colleges. Asian students, mainly Asian Chinese and Asian Indian, were more likely to report that none of the academic staff knew their name. The youngest age group (18 and younger) was most likely to agree that hardly anyone knew their name (37 per cent) and the level of agreement declines with age. The oldest age group (26 and over) were least likely to agree (20 per cent) with the statement.

Figure 2.4 shows some variation in students' reported satisfaction with the feedback they received according to subject. In total, 62 per cent reported that they were given good feedback on their progress and this varied from 63 per cent of students of History and Philosophical Studies to 51 per cent of Law students. The same figure shows wider variation of student opinion about the amount of work they had to complete. Only 16 per cent of History and Philosophy students stated that the amount of work they had to complete was excessive, compared to 43 per cent of Medicine and Dentistry students. Forty two per cent of Medicine and Dentistry students reported that hardly anyone on the academic staff knew their name, which is the highest proportion across the different subject groups, with students of Engineering and Technology and Biology, Veterinary Science, Agriculture and related

subjects also being amongst the subjects with the highest proportions of students saying that hardly anyone on the academic staff knew their name. By contrast, students of Creative Arts and Design and Languages were the least likely to have considered that that hardly anyone on the academic staff knew their name. These variations reflect differences in student class sizes as well as the diverse environments and teaching methods on the courses cited; medical students were more likely to be in large lectures and Languages and Creative Arts students in smaller groups that involved significant communication or supervision relationships.

Figure 2.4: Student agreement with the statements ‘Hardly anyone knew my name’, ‘I was given good feedback on my progress’ and ‘The amount of work I had to complete on my course was excessive’ by subject



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.*
 Agreement was defined as answers 1 to 3 on a 1 to 7 scale where 1 means ‘strongly agree’ and 7 means ‘strongly disagree’

Students at general higher education colleges were more likely than others to endorse the statement that the amount of work they had to complete on their course was excessive. Other than that, the type of HEI studied at did not appear to have had much impact on responses to the questions about workload. Almost all non-white ethnic groups were more likely to report excessive workload compared to white students. Students whose parents belonged to a higher socio-economic classification were less likely to complain of excessive workload. There appeared to be no gender difference in propensity to report excessive workload (28 per cent of women and 27 per cent of men). Those who had embarked on HE over the age of 21 were more likely to state that the amount of work they had to complete was excessive, perhaps reflecting the greater probability that they balanced study with other responsibilities and also invested more effort in following through what may have been a more complicated decision to enter HE in the first place.

The statement 'I was given good feedback on my progress' was agreed with by 63 per cent of students at general higher education colleges, compared to 56 per cent of students at highest tariff universities, which reinforced findings about an earlier cohort in a previous report about student work, tuition and assessment (Bekhradnia *et al.*, 2006), as well as the greater likelihood that courses at the former institutions are likely to involve more practical and workshop-based tuition methods and assessment, as will be discussed below. There was little variation, in terms of ethnicity and age in students' opinions about the feedback they were given and no significant gender differences. Students with characteristics that denoted educational advantage (i.e. they had attended a school that selected on academic ability, particular aptitudes or was an independent fee-paying school) were more likely to report that they were given good feedback (60 per cent compared with 53 per cent of those who did not do so).

Comments from students who were not content with the feedback they were given were sometimes highly critical and included:

'I wasn't really given any kind of constructive criticism or guidelines to improve my standards.'

[Female, 21-25, Linguistics & Classics, Medium Tariff University]

'It was a mess up course. The team leader doesn't know how to provide the course. We never received feedback (from) the lecturer.'

[Female, 26 and over, Subjects allied to Medicine, Medium Tariff University]

'Support for fulfilling requirements was negligible. Briefs were hazy at best and supervision non-existent most of the time. Assessment took place in the students' absence so feedback and discussion was lacking. The one time we were expected to come up with a real result (product) was at the very end of the year and we were not given sufficient time to plan and trouble-shoot. I was not given any feedback at the end of the year. Take together, all these factors left me unsure as to what the requirements were! Most of us finished this year with the feeling that we were mostly required to do our best to 1) produce and 2) keep out of it.'

[Female, 26 and over, Creative Arts & Design, Specialist HE College]

Expected standard of work and workload and reality

This next section deals with the students' opinions about the standard of work expected and the workload required on courses. Previous research (Bekhradnia, 2009, Sastry and Bekhradnia, 2007, Bekhradnia *et al.*, 2006) has indicated wide discrepancies in workload according to subject studied and HEI. In total, 14 per cent of the Futuretrack respondents

students thought that the standard of work required was lower than they had expected, the majority (59 per cent) reported that the standard of work was as they had expected and a quarter said that the standard had been higher than expected. When asked about how hard they had expected to work, 10 per cent had expected to work much harder and 34 per cent somewhat harder. About 40 per cent stated that the workload was much as they had expected. Only 15 per cent said that the workload was less (or much less) than they had expected.

There was wide variety of responses evaluating the standards of work and the workload. Some students reported having a low or very low workload with greater or lesser enthusiasm; others enjoyed the high standards and demands.

'Barely required to work at all!'

[Female, 26 and over, Subjects allied to Medicine, Lower Tariff University]

'I expected to be pushed hard, and I am. The course is as hard as I want it to be.'

[Male, 21-25, Creative Arts & Design, Medium Tariff University]

Figure 2.5, which follows, shows responses to questions about the standard of work required relative to expectations and the degree to which students felt they had to work hard and demonstrates systematic differences in student accounts of their workloads that appear to be related to objective differences in the pedagogic demands of different disciplines and areas of study. However, this cannot be taken to be a comprehensive indicator of the workload and standard of work expected for different subjects. In fact, it shows the relationship between students' expectations and perceptions of the standards of work and the workloads required on their courses and it is not possible to evaluate relative quality of work required or produced. The actual time spent on studies by different categories of student is discussed later in this chapter. Subjective orientations both to their subject and in terms of work ethic were also relevant, as the comments that follow reveal. For example, students confessed to planning their work efforts according to the way final degree marks were awarded on their courses and their adaptation to the standards they found were expected.

'As this is my first year and the marks do not count towards my final degree I have not put much effort into my studies.'

[Female, 26 and over, Social Studies, Medium Tariff University]

'I choose to work harder than expected because I enjoy the work.'

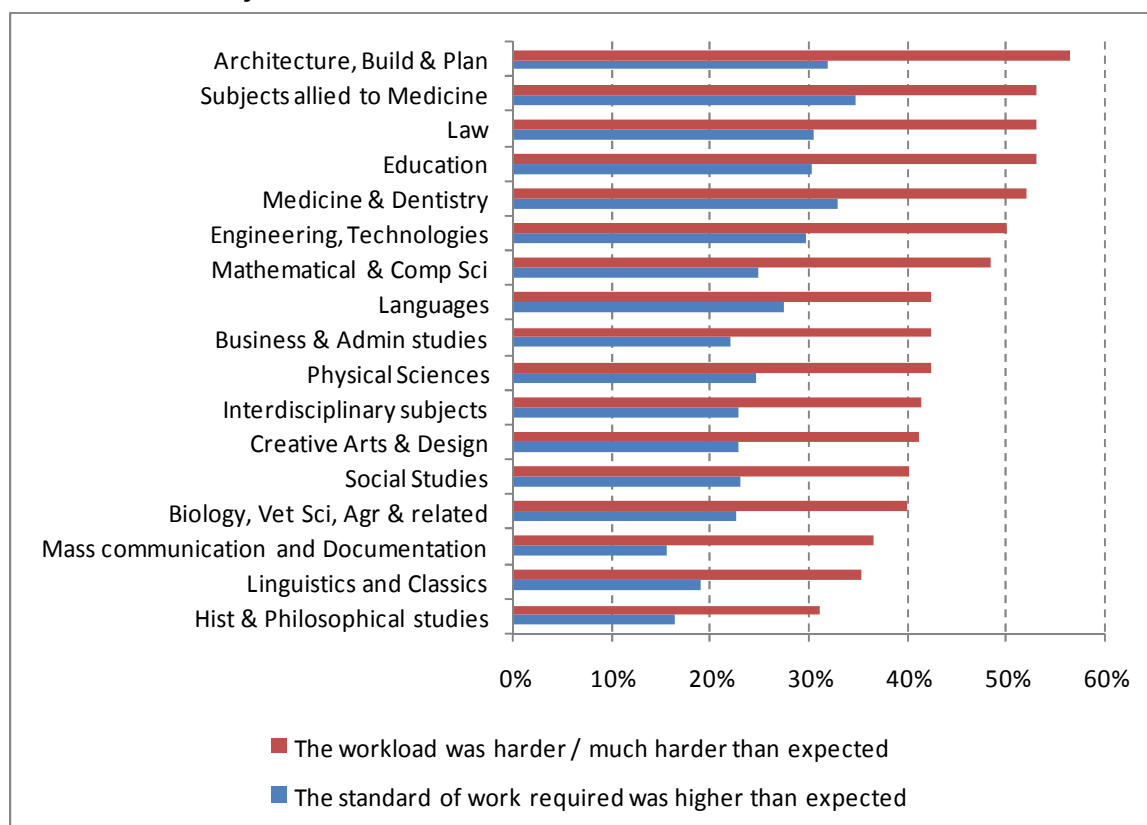
[Male, 21-25, Creative Arts & Design, specialist HE College]

Finally, some students contrasted the standard of work and the workload with the tuition fees.

'I worked very hard in the assignments and lectures were great- but not enough for my £3000 per year!!'

[Male, 18 or under, Creative Arts & Design, Medium Tariff University]

Figure 2.5: Students' expectation and reality: standard of work and workload by subject



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Figure 2.5 shows clearly in the following (mainly vocational) subjects that students stated more frequently that the *standard of work required* was higher than they had expected: Subjects allied to Medicine, Architecture, Building and Planning, Medicine & Dentistry, Law, and Education. Not surprisingly, students of Architecture, Building and Planning, Subjects allied to Medicine and Law also stated more frequently that ‘the workload was higher than they had expected’. Students of History and Philosophical Studies and Linguistics and Classics were more likely to say that the standard of work and the workload was much as they had expected or lower. There was some variation in the expected standard of work according to the type of higher education institution. Students at highest tariff universities and at general higher education colleges, together with the small number of UK students studying at overseas universities, were more likely to consider that the standard of work had been higher than they had expected.

In addition, there was some variation according to personal characteristics of students. While 17 per cent of male students stated that the standard was lower than expected, only 13 per cent of female students did. The youngest (18 and younger) and the oldest (26 and over) were more likely to report that the standard of work required on their course was higher than expected; over a quarter (28 per cent) of students aged 26 and over, and of students under 19 years old (26 per cent) reported that the standard was higher than they had expected, compared to 23 per cent of 19 to 25 year olds. It is likely that, in the case of the younger group, as they moved ‘as normal’ in their sub-cultures from secondary to tertiary education expecting little change from school-work, they found the requirement to take considerably more responsibility for less structured learning unexpected. Ironically, at the other end of the

age distribution where the decision to embark on HE was rarely taken lightly, the greater initial difficulties experienced on returning to education after a substantial gap is also likely to have introduced, in other ways, very different resources and teaching methods than experienced in secondary education.

Some students referred to their personal skills or circumstances.

'I am not an academic person, I am more practical, so have really struggled at times.'

[Female, 21-25, Social Studies, West Midlands]

'I had been out of education for twenty years and as such I did not know what to expect'

[Female, 26 and over, Interdisciplinary & other combined subjects, Lower Tariff University]

'Standard of work was as expected but the volume of work with a family to organise too is excessive.'

[Female, 26 and over, Education, Lower Tariff University]

'I was required to work harder than I expected in my first year, although I am dyslexic - and therefore assignments take me longer than average. However, I did score very good marks.'

[Male, 26 and over, Subjects allied to Medicine, High Tariff University]

Students from ethnic minorities were more likely to report that they had experienced a higher standard than they had expected. More than a third of Asian and black students said that the standard had been higher than they expected, compared to 23 per cent of white students.

Just under half of the students at highest tariff universities (46 per cent) and at general higher education colleges (47 per cent) reported that the workload was higher than expected, compared to an overall response of 44 per cent. Students from a lower socio-economic background were more likely to report a harder workload than they had expected. Forty seven per cent of students aged 26 and over and 47 per cent of female students reported that they were required to work harder than expected. Asian (59 per cent) and black (61 per cent) students were more likely to state that they were required to work harder than expected, particularly among those from an Asian Pakistani and Bangladeshi background.

Those on interdisciplinary or joint honours courses sometimes found these overall questions about their experience of study difficult and some stressed the different distribution of the workload over the year, and differences in courses or subjects.

'Computer Science work was about what I expected, but the Music was a little less than I expected.'

[Male, under 18 years old, Interdisciplinary subjects, Medium Tariff University]

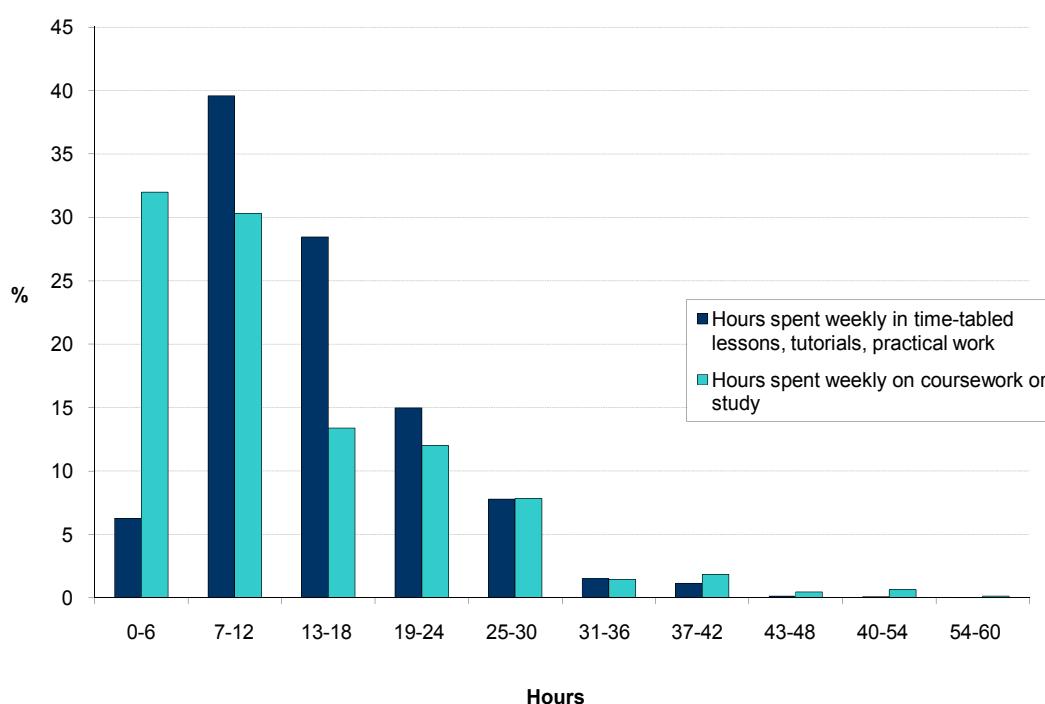
'In first terms almost no work, then too much work at once!!!!'

[Female, 21-25, Business & Admin Studies Medium Tariff University]

Time spent on studies, assignments and examinations

On average, students estimated that they normally spent approximately 15 hours each week in timetabled lessons, tutorials, practical work, or other activities supervised by a lecturer or other academic. In addition, they reported having been required to spend an average of 13 hours each week on other non-timetabled coursework or study related to their course. This result is very similar to that of previous research from the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) studies conducted in 2006 and 2007 where students reported averages of 14 hours of time-tabled lessons and 13 hours of private study (Sastry and Bekhradnia, 2007, Bekhradnia *et al.*, 2006). The HEPI study from 2009 (Bekhradnia, 2009) showed a statistically relevant increase in the amount of private study, where students averaged 14.4 hours. Students appeared to be working longer, despite receiving no more formal teaching.

Figure 2.6: Hours spent weekly in lessons and on coursework or study



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Figure 2.6 shows the distribution of hours spent in lessons and on coursework or study. Various different factors influence the amount of time students spent either in lessons or on coursework or other study. In order to separate different impact factors a multivariate model (linear regression) was calculated where the dependent variable is the time spent weekly in lessons or on coursework or other study. The impact variables tested were age, gender, ethnicity, parental experience and socio-economic background (Model 1) and additionally in Model 2 paid work, subject and type of higher education institution. The full result of this analysis can be seen in Appendix 2, Table A2.1. Table 2.1a and Table 2.1b that follow provide a summary of the key findings from this analysis. The models account for about 23 per cent of the variance of the hours spent in timetabled lessons, which is a relatively high value. On the other hand, they only account for 8 per cent of the variance of hours spent on coursework or studying. The analysis indicates that the influence of variables such as age, gender or ethnicity persists after taking account of factors such as the subjects or the type of

university attended. Interestingly, socio-economic background did not play any significant role in explaining variations in the time spent in either lessons or on coursework or other study.

Table 2.1a: Main factors associated with time spent in timetabled lessons, tutorials or practical work

Relatively long hours spent in timetabled lessons, tutorials or practical work	Relatively short hours spent in timetabled lessons, tutorials or practical work
Students older than 21 years	Students aged 19-20
Male (only if subject and type of university were not accounted for)	Female (only if subject and type of university were not accounted for)
Asian students, black students (to a lesser extent)	White students
EU and overseas students	UK students
No paid work during term-time (only if subject and type of university were not accounted for)	Paid work during term-time (only if subject and type of university were not accounted for)
Main subjects are: Medicine & Dentistry, Subject allied to Medicine, Engineering & Technology	Main subjects are: History & Philosophical studies, Linguistics & Classics
General and Specialist HE college, highest tariff university	High and medium tariff universities

See Appendix 2, Table A2.1

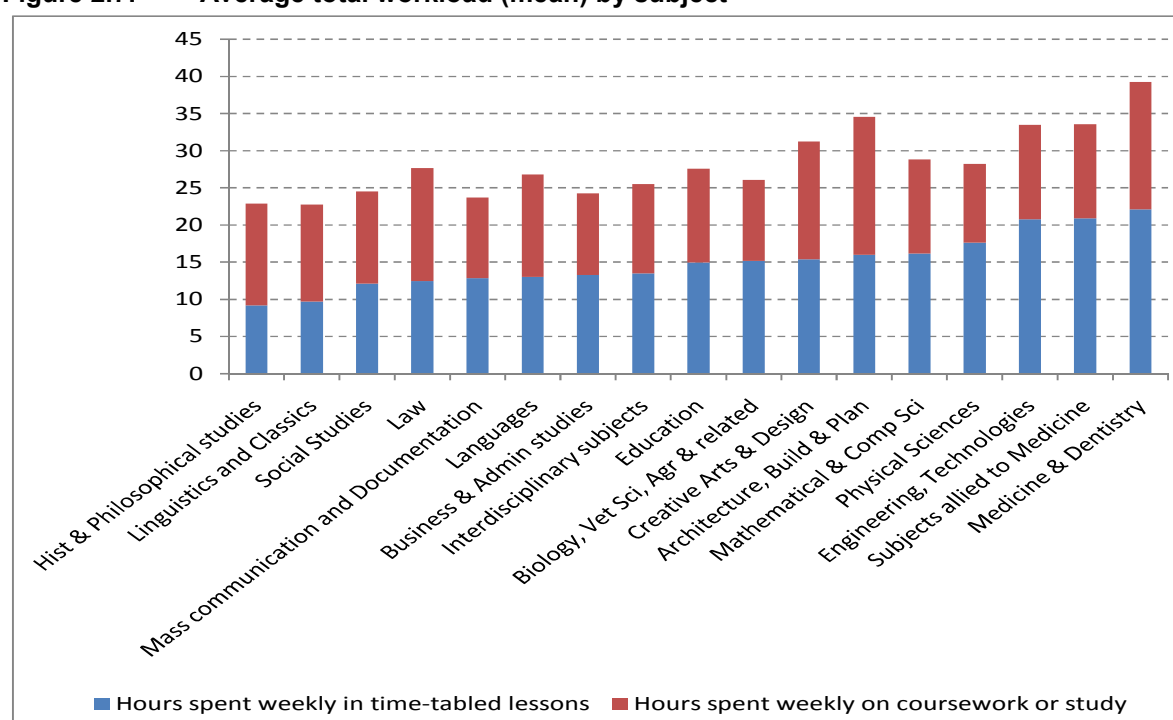
Table 2.1b: Main factors associated with time spent in non-programmed study and coursework

Relatively long hours spent in coursework or study	Relatively short hours spent in coursework or study
Students older than 21 years	Students younger than 20 years
Female	Male
EU and overseas students	UK students
Not studying from home	Studying from home
No paid work during term-time	Paid work during term-time
Main subjects are: Architecture, Building & Planning, Law, Creative Arts & Design	
Specialist HE college, highest tariff university	High tariff universities, General HE college

See Appendix 2, Table A2.1

Total study workload was calculated as the sum of the hours spent in timetabled lessons and in coursework or study. Figure 2.7 shows similar patterns to those found by earlier researchers (Bekhradnia, 2009, Sastry and Bekhradnia 2007, Bekhradnia *et al.*, 2006): students of History and Philosophical studies, Linguistics and Classics, Law, and Architecture, Building and Planning reported more hours spent in private study than in timetabled lessons, but it did not appear that humanities students spend substantially more time in the library and in private studies than those with heavily timetabled class work, and there were substantial differences in the total workload by subject.

Figure 2.7: Average total workload (mean) by subject



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Again, a regression model was estimated to identify the main factors associated with different workloads (Appendix 2, Table A2.2).

Table 2.2: Main factors associated with the total amount of time spent in classes and study

Relatively longer hours spent in timetabled lessons <i>and</i> coursework or private study	Relatively shorter hours spent in timetabled lessons <i>and</i> coursework or private study
Students older than 21 years	Students 18 years and younger
Female (only if subject and type of university were accounted for)	Men (only if subject and type of university were accounted for)
Asian students (only if subject and type of university were not accounted for)	White students (only if subject and type of university were not accounted for)
EU and overseas students	UK students
Not studying from home	Studying from home
No paid work during term-time	Paid work during term-time
Main subjects are: Medicine and Dentistry, Architecture, Building & Planning	Main subjects are: Linguistics & Classics, History and Philosophical studies, Mass communication and Documentation
Specialist HE college, highest tariff university	High and medium tariff university

The HEPI studies showed that the differences between HEIs were relatively small whereas the differences between subjects were much larger. These results were replicated by the Futuretrack analysis (Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Total workload (hours) by subject and type of institution

	Highest tariff university	High tariff university	Medium tariff university	Lower tariff university	General HE college	Specialist HE college	Overseas ⁷ HEI
Subjects allied to Medicine	31.7	33.0	34.7	33.0	29.8	33.8	35.0
Biology, Vet Sci, Agr & related	28.7	24.9	23.7	24.5	28.7	31.5	35.2
Physical Sciences	29.3	27.8	25.7	28.4	39.8	*	37.2
Mathematical & Comp Sci	30.8	28.0	27.5	28.0	27.4	*	34.9
Engineering, Technologies	34.1	34.1	29.6	29.8	32.8	36.3	41.8
Architecture, Build & Plan	35.2	34.3	31.5	35.3	33.9	38.9	51.8
Social Studies	23.3	22.7	25.6	25.1	28.7	*	31.6
Law	31.6	27.1	25.1	25.5	21.4	*	33.0
Business & Admin studies	24.3	23.5	22.8	25.5	28.1	25.6	32.1
Mass comm and Doc	22.1	21.3	23.8	22.2	27.7	29.3	26.2
Linguistics and Classics	24.5	20.9	21.8	21.7	*	*	29.2
Languages	27.6	24.6	25.9	*	*	*	36.1
Hist & Philosophical studies	24.3	20.6	22.6	23.4	27.3	24.4	32.0
Creative Arts & Design	25.7	29.4	30.2	29.5	32.6	34.9	39.8
Education	27.9	29.2	27.0	27.5	26.4	*	26.9*
Interdis subjects	28.2	23.2	24.2	23.7	30.0	29.7	33.6
Average	29.2	26.5	26.8	26.7	30.2	33.4	36.0

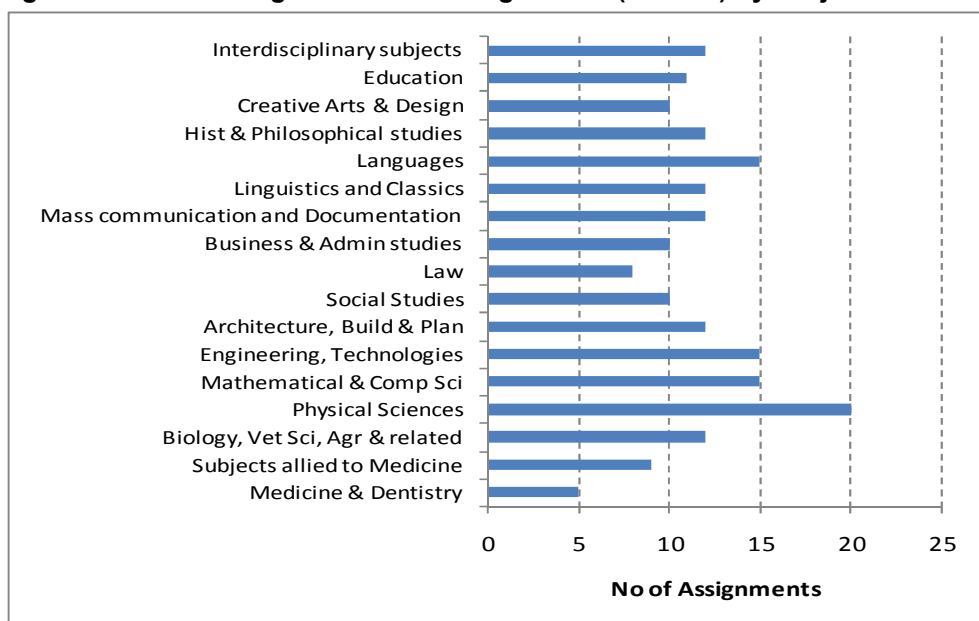
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted. * no students in these categories or un-weighted cell size under 100

Assignments

On average, students reported that they were required to hand in twelve assignments during their first year in HE. This includes all essays, practical write-ups, projects, dissertations or other extended pieces of written work, solved problem sets, technical sketches, videotapes, posters and so on. There is some variation in terms of numbers of assignments by subject (Figure 2.8). Students of Medicine, for whom classroom-based hours are long and a higher proportion of whose courses are more lecture and practical hospital-based classes, had the lowest number of assignments (5). Conversely, students of Physical Sciences reported a median average of 20 assignments. However, the amount of assignments students had cannot be interpreted as indicators for their workload as the amount of work required for each assignment varied considerably according to subject.

⁷ 2006 applicants/respondents who were registered as full-time students at overseas HEIs.

Figure 2.8: Average number of assignments (median) by subject



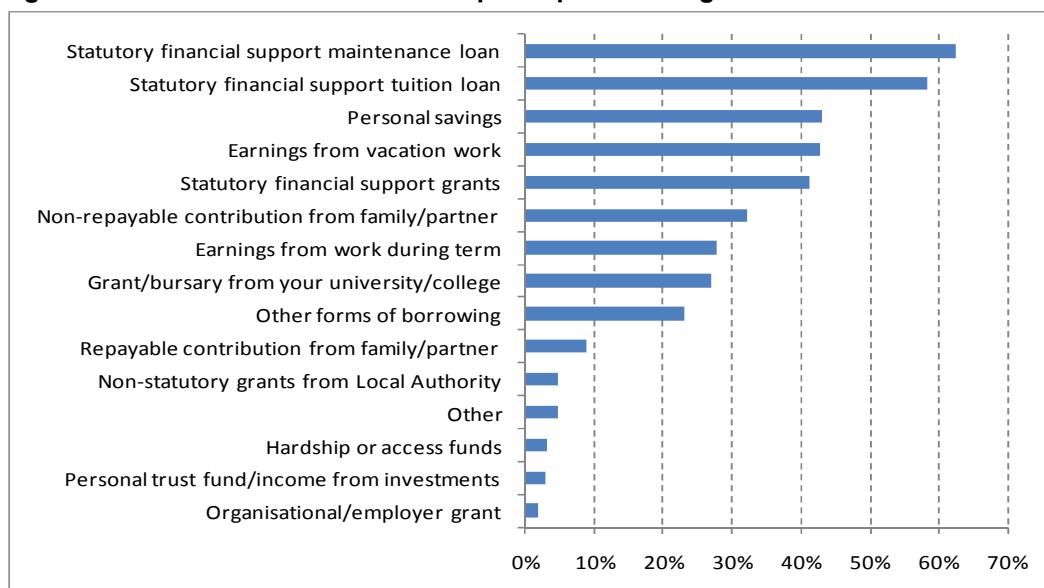
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Overall, 13 per cent of respondents did not have any formal written or online invigilated examination during their first year. This was most common in practical and vocational subjects such as Creative Arts and Design, where 56 per cent did not have any formal examination, followed by Education (41 per cent) and Mass Communication and Documentation (34 per cent). Seven per cent of specialist HE college students reported taking more than eight formal examinations, compared to 32 per cent of students studying at a high tariff university.

The experience of managing finances during the first year and concerns about debt

Finally, we looked at students' experiences of managing their finances and their reported accrued and anticipated debts. As the findings were very similar to those from the first Futuretrack report (Purcell *et al.*, 2008), we are not looking at funding and debt in as much detail in this report. The most important forms of funding were loans, followed by personal savings and earnings from vacation work (Figure 2.9).

Figure 2.9: How students funded participation in higher education



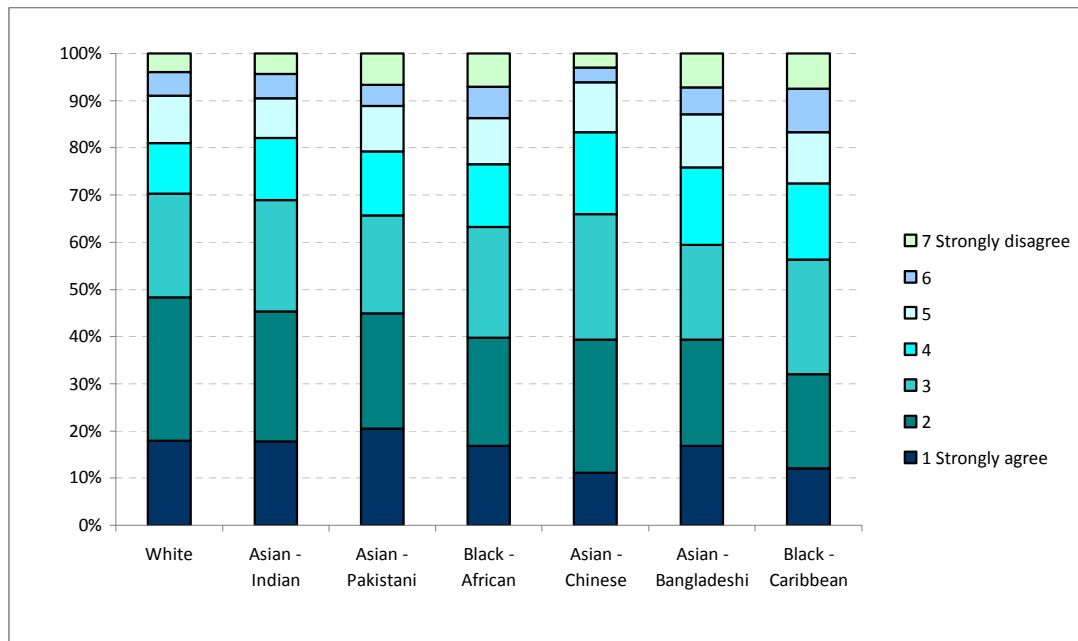
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Most Futuretrack respondents agreed that they managed their finances well. Marriott (2007) attempted to measure the financial awareness, attitude to debt and capacity to manage their finances of first year business school undergraduates. She found students ill-equipped to cope with the financial constraints they were faced with. In contrast, in the Futuretrack survey, a quarter of students aged 26 or older strongly agreed that they managed their finances well ('1' on a scale of '1' to '7'). However, even amongst the younger students, the proportion agreeing that they had managed their finances well was high, with 70 per cent of younger students expressing some level of agreement.

There were some differences according to the ethnicity of students (Figure 2.10). Around a quarter of black Caribbean, black African and Asian Bangladeshi students disagreed with the statement that they managed their finances well ('5' to '7' on a scale of '1' to '7'). White students were most likely to agree that they had managed their finances well. As will be seen in Chapter 4, there was some variation between the ethnic groups related to their propensity to take on paid employment, which may have had an impact on whether they felt in a reasonable position financially.

There was very little difference in agreement with the statement between respondents studying different subjects. Interestingly, there were no significant differences according to the socio-economic backgrounds of students' parents.

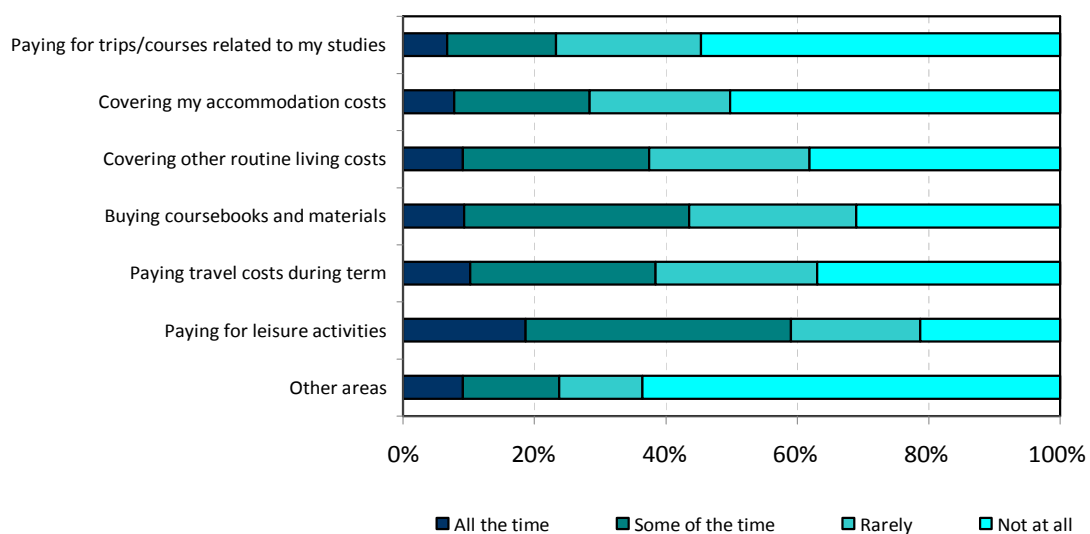
Figure 2.10: 'Managed finances well' by ethnicity



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

The financial problem most frequently reported by respondents was difficulty in paying for leisure activities caused by shortage of money (Figure 2.11). One in five respondents reported difficulties in covering leisure costs 'all the time' and nearly three times as many reported having difficulties 'some of the time' (just under 60 per cent). A smaller but still substantial proportion (44 per cent) stated that they had difficulties buying course books and materials either all the time or some of the time. The real concern must be that over a third reported having problems meeting essential costs of living such as covering their accommodation costs or other routine living expenses.

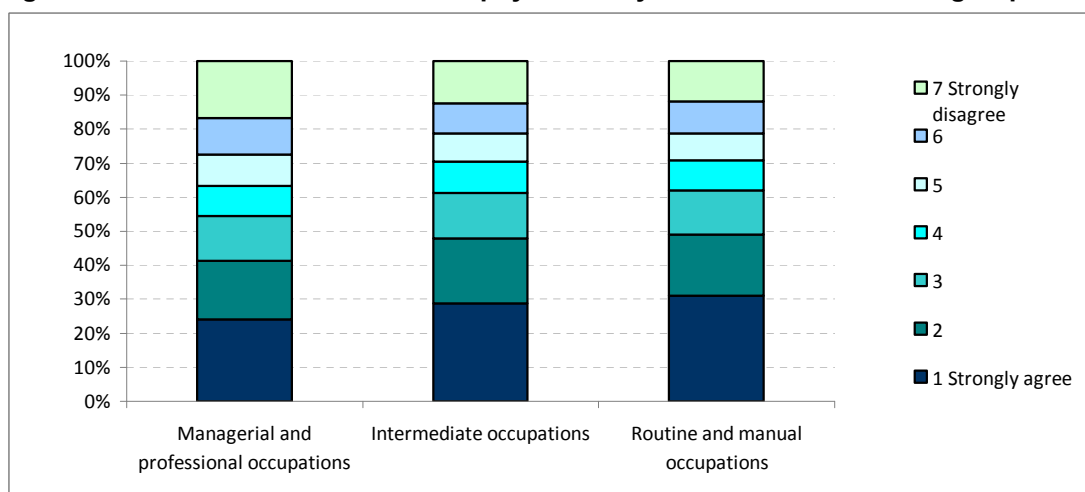
Figure 2.11: Reported difficulties experienced by respondents in year 1 due to shortage of money



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Not surprisingly, students with parents in routine and manual occupations, as well as students with parents in intermediate occupations, were more worried about the prospect of having to repay loans and debts after the completion of their course than students with parents from managerial and professional occupations (Figure 2.12). Female students (32 per cent) were more likely to strongly agree ('1' on a '1' to '7' scale) that they were worried about the prospect of having to repay loans and debts compared to male students, of whom only 21 per cent strongly agreed with the statement. This could be due to gender differences in response behaviour or due to women anticipating lower income in the future than men. The gender differences were related to the different subjects: students in subjects with a high proportion of female students, such as Education, were more likely to agree with the statement compared to students in subjects which are more technically orientated, such as Engineering and Technologies, which more males study.

Figure 2.12: 'Worried about debt repayments' by broad socio-economic group



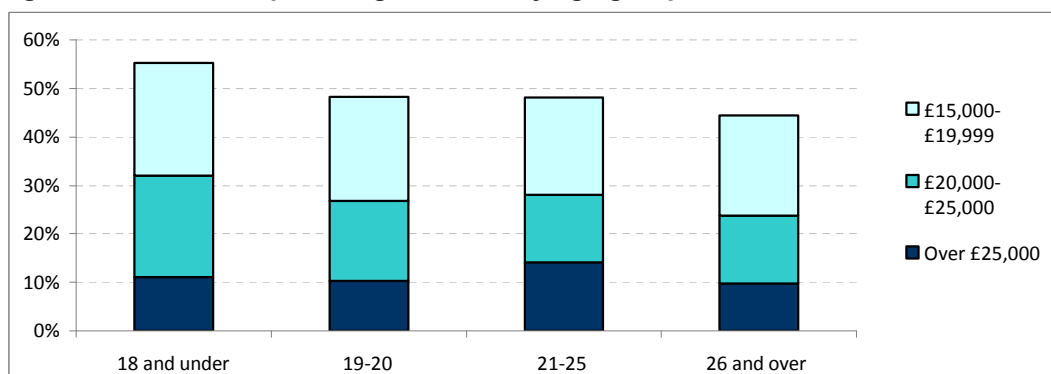
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Fifteen per cent of all respondents reported that they did not anticipate having debts after having completed their higher education course. However, there is an obvious regional effect as Scottish students in Scotland pay no tuition fees. Twenty per cent of students in Scotland stated that they did not expect to have debts after their studies, compared to only 8 per cent of students in England, 9 per cent of students in Northern Ireland and 10 per cent of students in Wales. It might be thought that the difference is less than might have been expected, but it is clearly significant. Forty six per cent of overseas or EU students stated that they did not expect to have any debts after completing their course.

Students who anticipate having low or no debts may have been able to support themselves and pay for their courses from earnings, bursaries and scholarships or support from parents or other family members, or it may be the case that the course they were following was relatively inexpensive, as for example in the case of shorter courses.

Figures 2.13 and 2.14 focus on the respondents who anticipated relatively high levels of debt (over £15,000). As Figure 2.13 shows, younger students, who are less likely to have earned money by working for a significant period prior to starting their course, and who are also less likely to be studying on a course that lasts less than 3 years, are more likely to report that they expected debts of £15,000 or over.

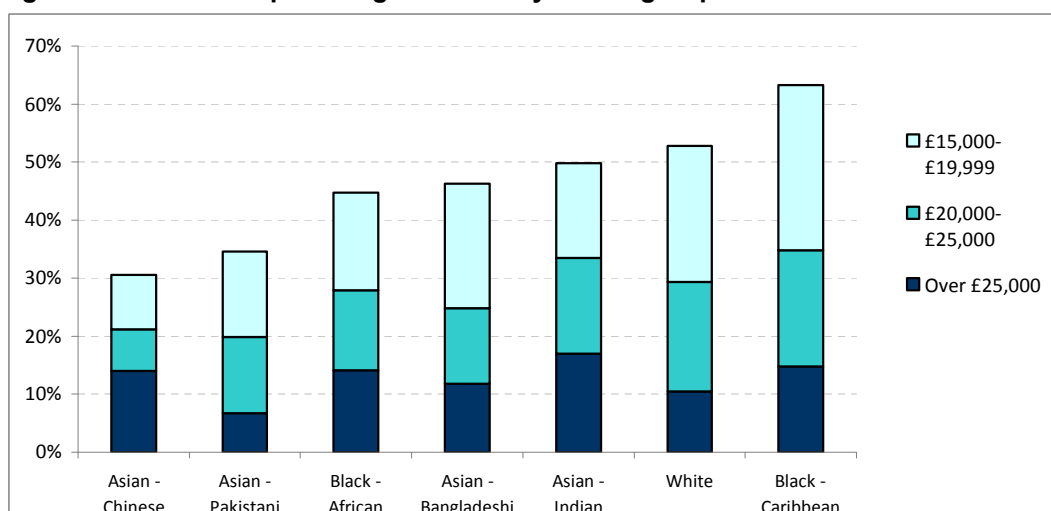
Figure 2.13: Anticipated higher debts by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

There were strong differences in the proportions of different ethnic groups anticipating higher levels of debt (Figure 2.14). Asian Chinese and Asian Pakistani students were less likely than black Caribbean or white students to anticipate higher debts.

Figure 2.14: Anticipated higher debts by ethnic group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 2 students, weighted

Summary

- Most students were content with the tuition and learning support they received on their course and with the HEI environment in terms of access to library resources and web-based facilities. However, a significant proportion of students reported negative experiences.
- There was more diversity within the individual experiences as far as satisfaction with the amount of work, feedback given and contact with academic staff. Much of this diversity related to the course studied, particularly in the case of workload.
- Higher tariff HEIs did not uniformly receive higher ratings, as they did in relation to other aspects of HE that will be discussed in subsequent chapters. For example, students at highest tariff universities and general HE colleges were more likely than those at other types of HEI to say that the standard of work and their workload was higher than they had expected.

- There was some evidence of a lack of support for those who required special help, not only those with disabilities, but also students who came from non-traditional backgrounds. There is also evidence of a lack of preparation amongst students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic minorities, who were more likely to be surprised by the standard of work required of them. However, this was also true of the younger students as a whole, suggesting that there may be a lack of information and understanding about the progression from school to HE academically.
- Not surprisingly, most of the formal coursework took place on campus, as reported by 77 per cent of students, although 16 per cent of students stated that some of the formal coursework took place in a work context, and 8 per cent that it took place somewhere else. Students also mentioned field studies, excursions to courts, galleries and museums, observatories, churches, cinemas, zoos or youth clubs. Some students reported that their assessment took place abroad at a university, and assessment ranged from traditional essays and assignments to performances, as might be expected given the diversity of subjects incorporated. The implications of this will be discussed further in the final chapter.
- It is clear that levels of satisfaction across a range of issues do vary according to HEI and course, but this does not happen in an entirely uniform manner. It was not the case that students at lower rated HEIs necessarily received, or believed themselves to receive, an inferior standard of education. The question of whether this matters in terms of the ultimate value of HE, and access to opportunities beyond HE is something that will be of relevance in the next stage of the Futuretrack study.

The most important forms of funding were loans, followed by personal savings and earnings from vacation work. A significant proportion of respondents were worried about paying 'essential' costs (e.g. for accommodation). As expected, a high proportion of respondents were anticipating high levels of debt.

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CHAPTER 3

The context of first year undergraduate experience: location, accommodation and participation in extra-curricular activities

Introduction

This chapter looks at the Futuretrack students' experiences of the non-academic aspects of higher education, focussing particularly on their living accommodation and extra-curricular activities.

Tinto (1993) has argued that the first year in HE is played out in two arenas: the academic and the social, and consequently, it is both their academic and social integration that informs a student's goals and intentions, and whether they remain in HE or withdraw. Authors such as Ozga and Sukhnanan, 1998, Thomas, 2002, Lowe and Cook, 2003, and Rhodes and Nevill, 2004 have all found that unhappiness with the wider university experience, including, in the case of Thomas's research, a feeling of cultural dissonance, of 'not fitting in', were among the motivators for students becoming disengaged from their HEI and often leaving HE altogether.

The first part of the chapter examines students' assessment of their accommodation during their first year in higher education. They were asked to evaluate their accommodation in terms of its convenience, location, and the extent to which it was conducive to their studies.

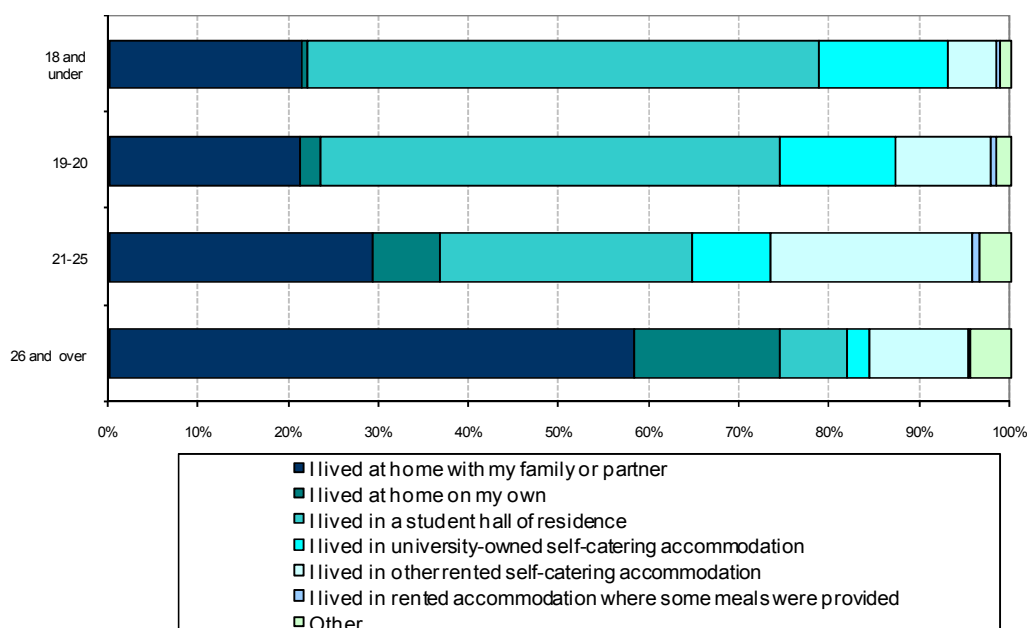
The second section of the chapter outlines the kind of extra-curricular activities the Futuretrack students have been involved in, and the differences among students in the extent to which they choose or are able to engage in this aspect of the higher education experience.

Futuretrack students' accommodation

Harrison (2006:380) found that 23 per cent of students who withdrew from higher education in their first year reported that their accommodation was unsuitable, although this was not the primary reason for withdrawing for any of the respondents. As will be seen in Chapter 9, living away from home was given as one of the reasons for withdrawing from university by several of the students in the Futuretrack cohort who had changed HEI or who were no longer in full-time HE.

The majority of students in the Futuretrack cohort lived in traditional student accommodation, i.e. university-owned halls of residence, during their first year of study. Forty five per cent of students lived in a university hall of residence, and a further 12 per cent lived in university-owned self-catering accommodation. Over a quarter (27 per cent) lived at home with their partner or other family members, 10 per cent lived in another form of rented self-catering accommodation, 4 per cent lived at home on their own, 0.5 per cent lived in rented accommodation where meals were provided, and 2 per cent lived in some other kind of accommodation.

Figure 3.1: Type of first year accommodation by age



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

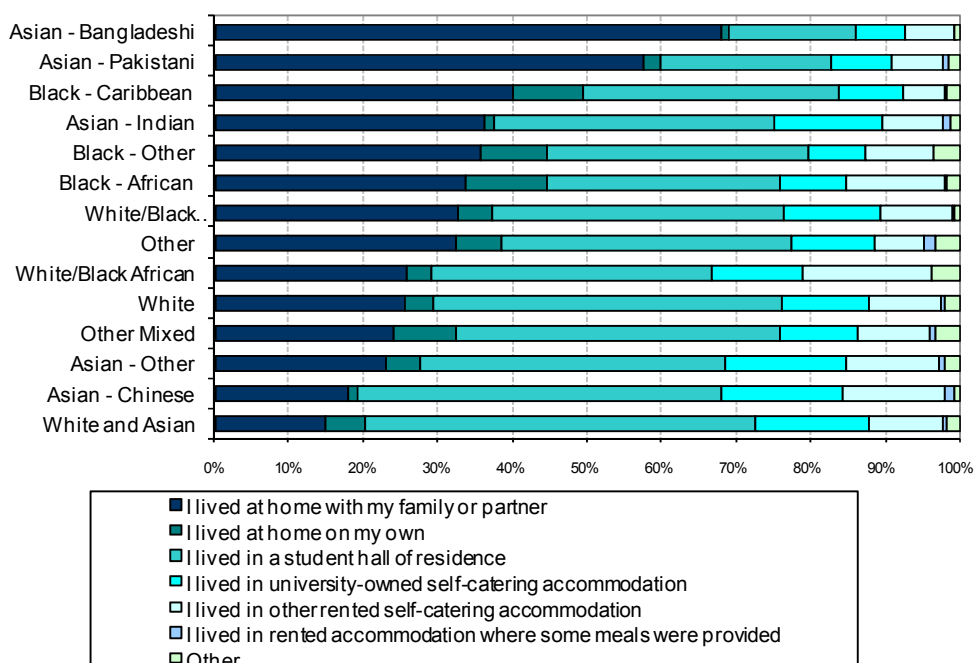
Age was one of the key variables related to the type of accommodation in which students were living. As would be expected, older students were more likely to be living in their own homes, either alone or with family. As Figure 3.1 shows, more than half (58 per cent) of the students aged 26 and over were living at home with their partner or other family members, and 16 per cent were living at home on their own. Just 7 per cent were living in a university hall of residence. Conversely, 57 per cent of students aged 18 or younger were living in a university hall of residence and 14 per cent were living in university-owned self-catered accommodation. Students who were 19 or 20 also lived in similar types of accommodation to the youngest age group, although they were slightly more likely to be living in self-catered accommodation rented from someone other than their university, with 11 per cent of 19 and 20 year olds living in this type of accommodation, compared to just 5 per cent of students aged 18 and under. A relatively large proportion of students even in the two youngest age groups were living at home with family members. Twenty one per cent of those aged 18 and under and aged 19 or 20 were living at home with family members. Students aged 21 to 25 were only slightly more likely to be living at home with family members than those in the youngest two age groups, but they were significantly more likely to be living in rented self-catered accommodation, with 22 per cent living in this type of accommodation. They were the group most likely to be living in self-catered rented accommodation, as only 11 per cent of those aged 26 and over were doing so.

This distribution reflects the living situation of students before they embarked on higher education. Students aged 26 and over were more likely to have other family members to take account of when deciding on the HEI to attend and accommodation options while they are studying. They were more likely than students in other age groups to already own some form of housing and to have other commitments that mean they continue to live there after entering higher education (Elliot and Brna, 2009). The situation of the younger students is more complicated. For many, the decision to live in university halls of residence is straightforward, as it is what the majority of students of their age group will expect to do and it provides them with a convenient setting for integrating into university life. It is somewhere where students

can make friends, and, as will be seen in subsequent sections, is often the most convenient type of accommodation. However, as Figure 3.1 shows, a significant proportion of the youngest students decided not to live in university halls, or were unable to do so for various reasons, and it is interesting to investigate further the variables associated with accommodation and the impact that this had on their higher education experience.

There was a small gender difference in the type of accommodation students lived in. Women were more likely than men to be living at home with family, with 30 per cent of women compared to 23 per cent of men in this situation. Men were somewhat more likely to be living in university halls of residence, with 48 per cent doing so, compared to 43 per cent of women. This is likely to be for two reasons. First, mature students are more likely to be female than male, and many enter HE, or return to it, while raising their family, and they continue to live in the family home while they study. Second, certain ethnic groups are more likely to remain at home with their families while they are studying, and it is women in these groups who, because of cultural values, are more likely to do so.

Figure 3.2: Type of first year accommodation by ethnicity



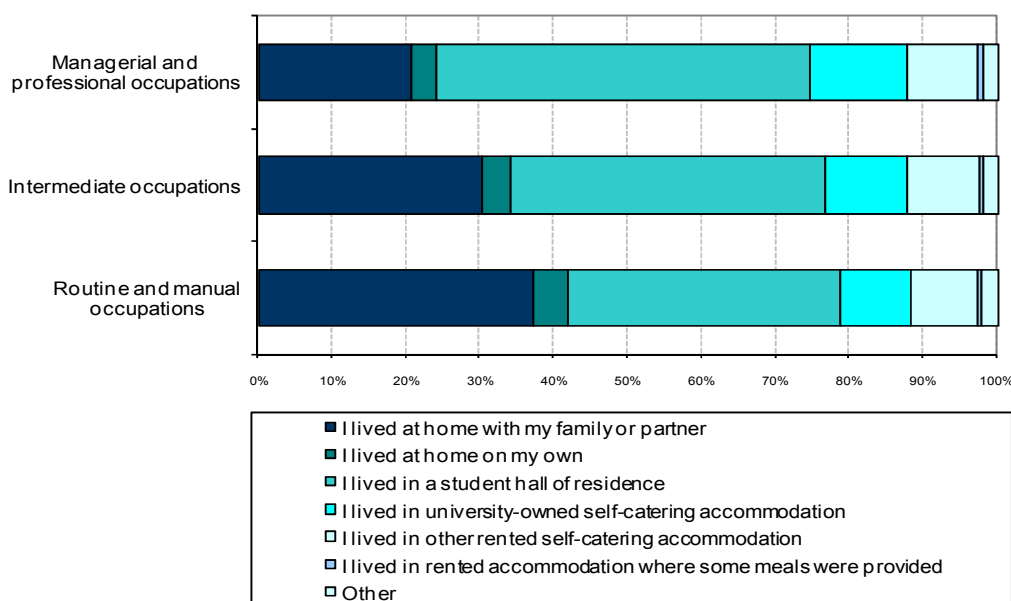
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of first year accommodation according to ethnic group. As can be seen, Bangladeshi and Pakistani students were significantly more likely than other groups to be living at home with their families. More than two-thirds of Bangladeshis lived at home with their family or partner, and more than half of Pakistani students also do so. Chinese students were the least likely of the large ethnic groups to be living at home with their families, but this is also a group where a significant proportion of students are from overseas. White students were also somewhat less likely than average to be living at home with their families, and they, along with the Chinese students and the small group of white and Asian students, were the most likely to be living in a university hall of residence, with almost half of the students from these ethnic groups living in a university hall of residence, compared to 17 per cent of Bangladeshi and 23 per cent of Pakistani students.

Living at home with family can reflect certain cultural norms, but it can also be influenced by location. Black and other ethnic students are more likely to already be living in cities within relatively easy reach of a university, and remaining at home with family can represent a safe economic decision, given the cost of accommodation in certain areas, particularly in London.

Social class background was also associated with students' accommodation. Students from higher socio-economic groups were more likely to live in student halls of residence and less likely to live at home with their family; and the likelihood of a student living in a hall of residence appears to decrease as socio-economic level decreases, while the likelihood that a student will live at home increases, as Figure 3.3 shows.

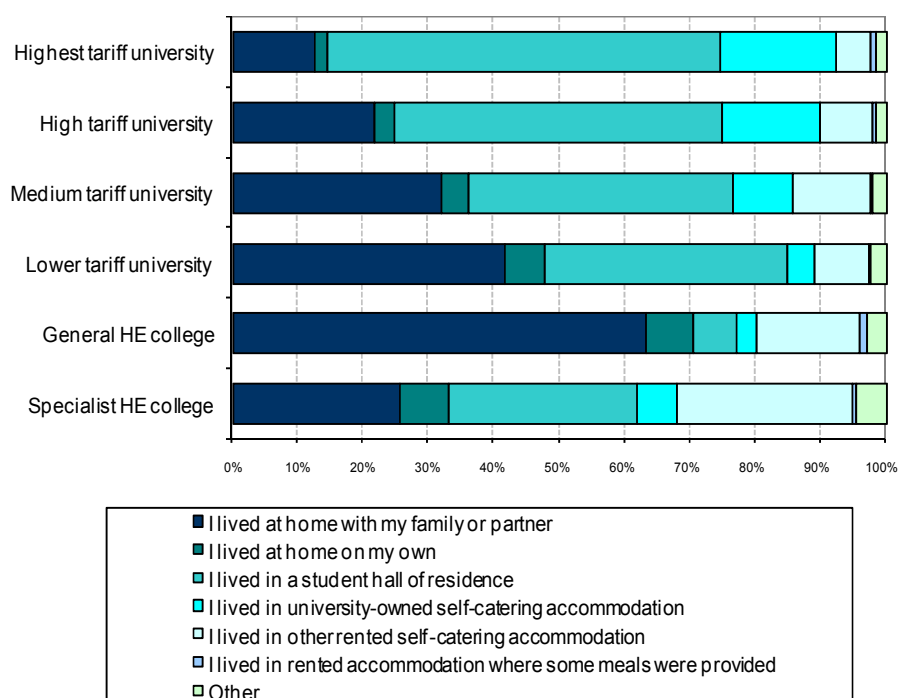
Figure 3.3: Type of accommodation of students by socio-economic background



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

As the entry tariff increased, the likelihood that a student lived at home decreased. As Figure 3.4 shows, over half the students at highest (60 per cent) and high tariff (50 per cent) universities were living in university halls of residence. Conversely, 71 per cent of students at general HE colleges and 48 per cent of students lower tariff universities were living at home, either with family or alone, compared to 14 per cent of students at highest tariff universities and 25 per cent of students at high tariff universities. This reflects the provision of accommodation at the different HEI types, as well as the profile of students who attend the institutions. Lower tariff universities and particularly general HE colleges tend to have a higher proportion of non-traditional students, particularly mature students, than higher tariff universities, and they are also more likely to have students who were already living in the area before they applied to enter HE.

Figure 3.4: Type of accommodation by HEI type



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

The difference between the different types of HEIs can also be attributed to the types of courses available at different institutions. Students studying for Foundation degrees, HNDs and DipHEs were much more likely to be living at home with the partner or other family than students studying for degree courses lasting for 3 or more years. Forty five per cent of students studying for a Foundation degree lived at home with their partner or other family, as did 54 per cent of students studying for an HND and 55 per cent of DipHE students.

Students' evaluation of their accommodation

The Futuretrack students were asked a series of questions evaluating their accommodation in terms of convenience, safety, noise, privacy and cost. Students living in different types of accommodation were found to have significantly different experiences, which had an impact on their overall experience of higher education.

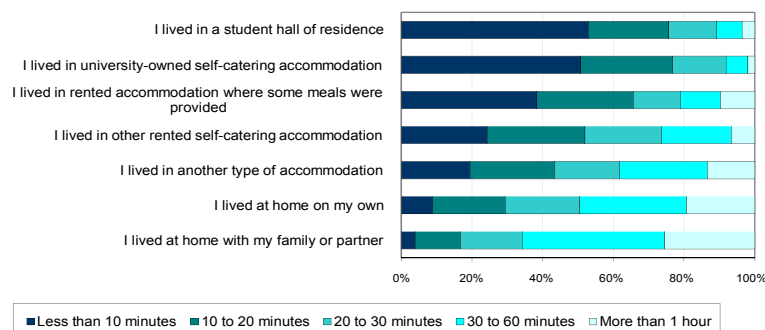
Convenience of accommodation

Type of accommodation had a clear impact on convenience, particularly on the amount of time students spent travelling to get to their classes. Overall, 34 per cent of students spent less than 10 minutes travelling to classes, and 71 per cent spent half an hour or less. Nineteen per cent spent between half an hour and an hour travelling to class, and 11 per cent travelled for over an hour.

As Figure 3.5 shows, more than half of the students who lived in university-owned accommodation travelled for less than 10 minutes to get to their classes, and around 90 per cent spent less than 30 minutes travelling. Students living at home with their partner or other family members spent the longest time, on average, travelling to their classes. Only 34 per cent travelled for half an hour or less, and a quarter spent more than an hour travelling. This is as expected, since the students living at home with their families were unlikely to have

moved house in order to attend an HEI and their accommodation was unlikely to have been chosen with convenience to the HEI in mind, which is also the case with the students who lived at home on their own.

Figure 3.5: Journey length by type of accommodation



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Other variables were found to be related to the amount of time students spent travelling to classes, but these were variables which also had an impact on the type of accommodation students had chosen to live in, as has been previously discussed.

There was a gender difference in the length of time students spent travelling to classes. Men, who were previously seen to be more likely to live in university halls of residence and less likely to live at home were also more likely to say that they spent less than 20 minutes travelling to classes, while women were more likely than men to report journey times of more than 20 minutes.

Similarly, older students reported spending longer, on average, travelling to classes than younger ones, which again reflected the greater proportion of mature students living at home. Students in Northern Ireland and Greater London, who were more likely to live at home, were also the most likely to report longer journey times. Twenty one per cent of students studying in Greater London reported spending more than an hour travelling to classes, and less than a quarter of students in both Northern Ireland and Greater London spent 10 minutes or less travelling to classes, compared to almost half in the Eastern region. Students in Northern Ireland and Greater London were the least likely to describe their accommodation's convenience as at least adequate, together with students in Yorkshire and the Humber and Scotland, with more than 19 per cent saying that their accommodation was not at least adequate in terms of convenience

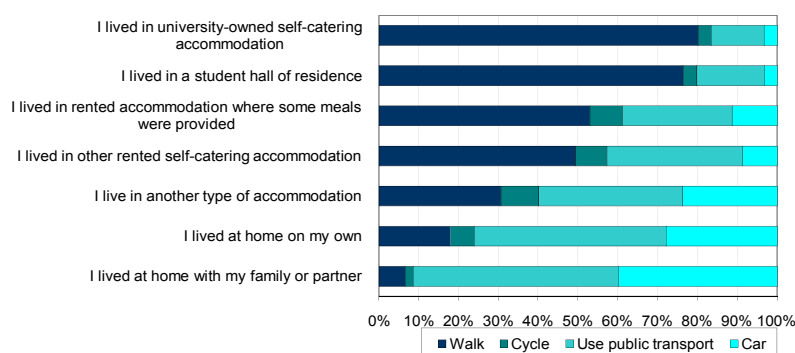
The students who were most likely to live at home, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani students, were least likely to report short journey times, and together with black African students were the most likely to report travelling for over an hour to get to classes. Bangladeshi students, in particular, reported spending relatively large amounts of time travelling to classes. Less than half, 49 per cent, spent half an hour or less travelling to classes, and they were the group that was least likely to describe their accommodation's convenience for classes as excellent.

Despite this, there was little difference between the different ethnic groups when looking at whether they considered the convenience of their accommodation to be at least adequate.

Despite having a larger proportion of students living in university-owned accommodation, students at the highest tariff universities were less likely than those at high tariff universities to travel for less than 10 minutes to get to their classes. In fact, students at highest tariff universities were as likely as those at medium tariff universities to spend 10 minutes or less travelling to their classes, with 35 per cent of students at medium tariff universities travelling for this amount of time. Highest tariff universities had the smallest proportion of students travelling for more than half an hour to get to their classes. Eighty per cent of students at highest tariff universities travelled for less than half an hour, as did 76 per cent of students at high tariff universities and 70 per cent at medium tariff universities, compared, at the other end of the scale, to 56 per cent of those at lower tariff universities and 52 per cent at general HE colleges. The higher the average tariff required by HEIs, the more positively accommodation was rated by students.

The mode of transport used for the journey has an obvious impact on journey length, and the Futuretrack students were also asked how they travelled to classes. Students who lived in university accommodation were most likely to report that they walked to their classes, which together with their reported short journey times, suggests that they lived very near to where their classes were held. Conversely, students who lived at home, who were most likely to report longer journey times, were also most likely to say that they travelled to classes by car or public transport. Figure 3.6 shows the different methods of transport used by students to get to classes by their type of accommodation.

Figure 3.6: Mode of transport by type of accommodation



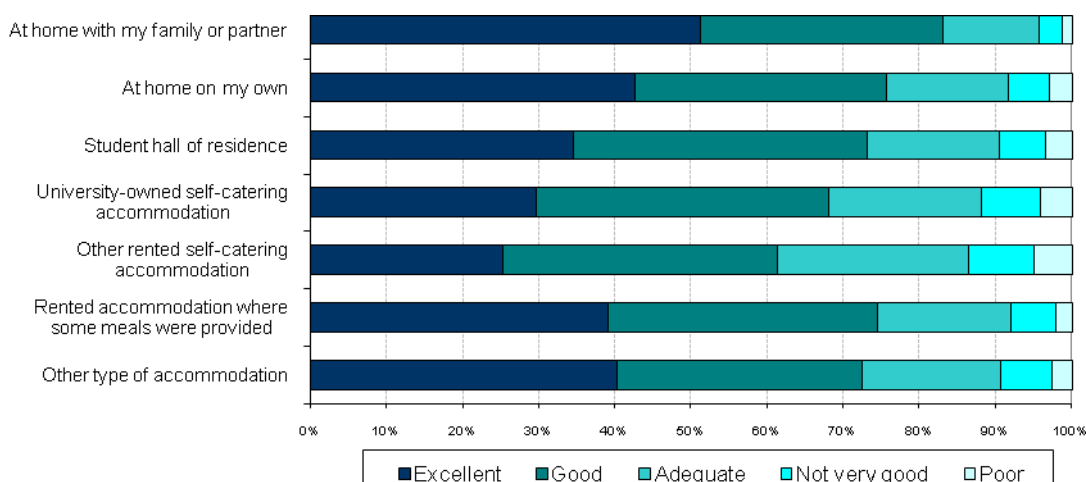
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

As in the case of journey length, the mode of transport used most clearly reflects the type of accommodation students lived in, and consequently, variables such as age and gender, which were found to influence type of accommodation, show a similar pattern. Younger students, who were more likely to have been living in university accommodation, were the most likely to report walking to classes, with 61 per cent doing so, compared to only 17 per cent of students aged 26 and over.

Quality of accommodation

Students also generally found the location of their accommodation pleasant. Thirty seven per cent, when asked about the quality of their accommodation, described it as excellent, 36 per cent described it as good, 17 per cent as adequate, 6 per cent as not very good, and 3 per cent as poor.

Figure 3.7: Quality of accommodation by accommodation type

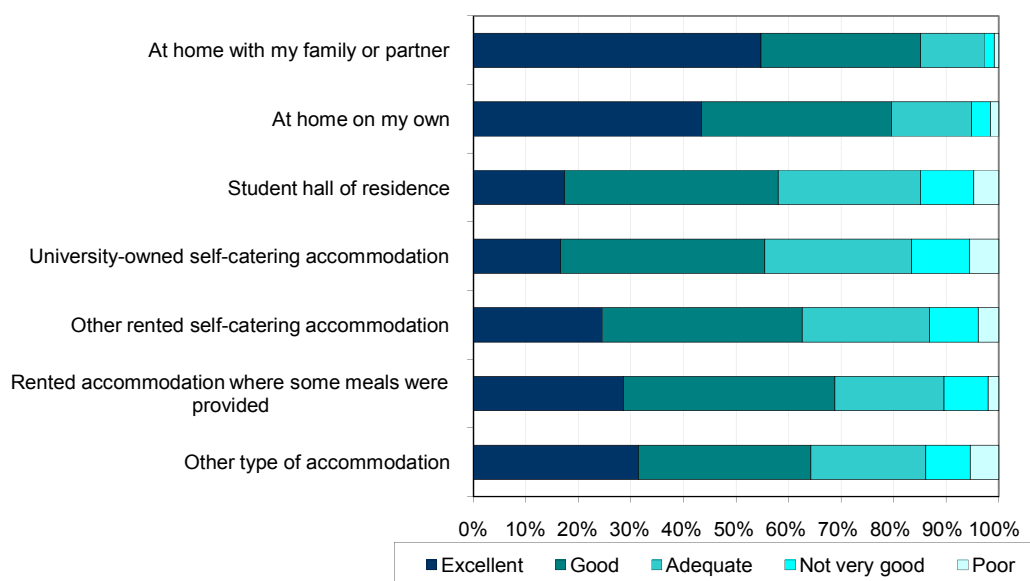


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Again, there were few significant differences when looking at different stratifying variables. Students living in their own homes were most likely to describe the quality of their accommodation's location as excellent, with 51 per cent who lived at home with family and 43 per cent who lived at home alone doing so, compared to only a quarter of those who lived in rented self-catered accommodation.

The facilities provided by their accommodation are also important for students in evaluating their experience, and students were asked how they rated the facilities provided. Obviously expectations about facilities and what is necessary vary depending on the type of accommodation students live in and the control they have over the provision of facilities there. The group that was most happy with the comfort and quality of the facilities their accommodation provided was students who were living at home with their partner or other family members. This is to be expected, since they have a greater degree of control over what is in and around their accommodation, and they are likely to have had several years to provide the facilities they require, rather than relying on institutional facilities provided for them.

Figure 3.8: Comfort and quality of facilities by type of accommodation



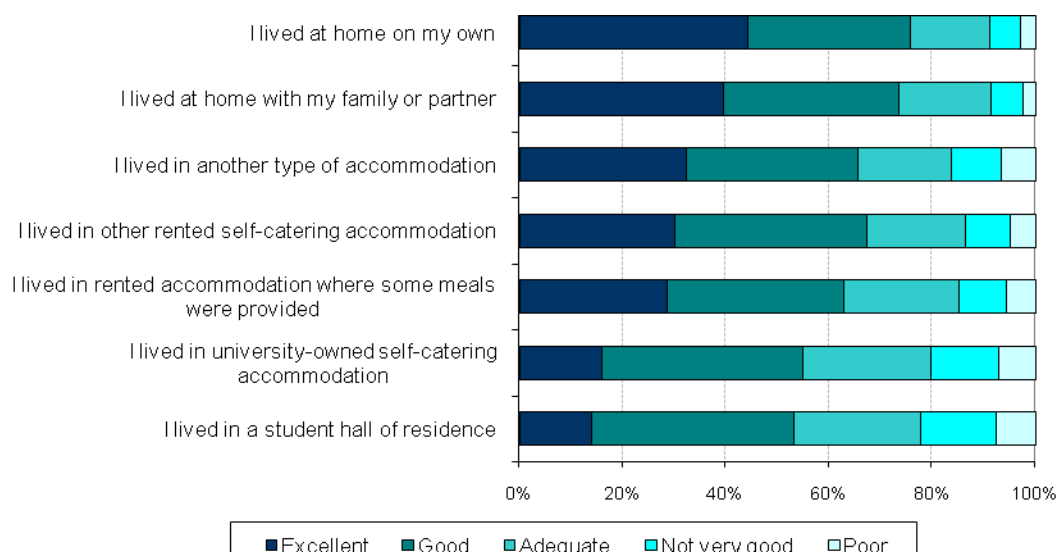
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

As Figure 3.8 shows, students in university-owned accommodation were least likely to describe the facilities provided as excellent in terms of their comfort and quality, although the proportion in each accommodation type describing their facilities as at least adequate was similar across all accommodation types except for those students who lived at home.

The greater satisfaction of students who lived at home had an effect when looking at other stratifying variables, so that older students, women and students in Northern Ireland, all of whom have the greatest propensity to live at home, were also the most likely to describe the comfort and quality of the facilities provided by their accommodation as excellent.

Futuretrack students were also asked to evaluate their accommodation in relation to the noise level and their ability to study there, whether they had adequate privacy, and whether they felt secure and personally safe there. As before, students living at home were more likely to consider their accommodation excellent in these respects. They were also more likely than other groups to rate their accommodation as at least adequate in these areas. As Figure 3.9 shows, not unexpectedly, students in university-owned accommodation were least likely to say that their accommodation was excellent, or that it was at least adequate, in terms of noise and their ability to study there.

Figure 3.9: Rating of first year accommodation in terms of noise level and ability to study by type of accommodation



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Reflecting this, younger students, who were more likely to live in university accommodation were the least likely to describe the noise level in their accommodation as excellent, with 21 per cent of students who were 18 and under, and 20 per cent of students aged 19-20 doing so, compared with 28 per cent of students aged 21-25 and 36 per cent of students aged 26 and over. Surprisingly, students in the 21-25 age group were the most likely to describe the noise level in their accommodation as not being adequate, with 19 per cent describing it as either not very good or poor. Seventeen per cent of students aged 18 and under rated the noise level in their accommodation in one of the two less than adequate categories, as did 18 per cent of students aged 19 or 20. In comparison, just 14 per cent of students aged 26 and over thought the noise level and their ability to study in their accommodation was less than adequate. Students in Northern Ireland were the regional group most likely to describe the noise level in their accommodation as excellent. When looking at the proportion of students who described the noise level and their ability to study in their accommodation as at least adequate, the numbers are very similar.

The East (86 per cent) and South West (85 per cent) regions had the highest proportion of students describing their accommodation as at least adequate, with students in Merseyside (81 per cent) and Greater London (80 per cent) being the least likely to rate it positively. Looking specifically at students in university-owned accommodation, the East and South West again had the highest proportion of students finding the noise level at least adequate, with 82 per cent and 83 per cent respectively doing so. Students in Greater London were least likely to describe the noise-level in their university accommodation as adequate, with 28.5 per cent describing it as not very good or poor. The proportion of students describing the noise-level in their university accommodation as poor was 5 per cent higher in Greater London than the best scoring region, the East, with figures of 11 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

The proportion of students from different ethnic groups describing the noise-level in their accommodation as excellent is slightly contrary to the prevailing trend of groups where a large proportion of students lived at home were more likely to describe the noise-level in their accommodation as excellent. While the Chinese students were the least likely to describe the

quality of their accommodation as excellent so far as noise level was concerned (17 per cent), and they were also one of the groups that was most likely to live in the types of accommodation that were rated poorly for noise level, the group that had the second lowest proportion rating noise level as excellent was Bangladeshi students, who were among the most likely to live at home. Eighteen per cent of Bangladeshi students described their accommodation as excellent so far as noise level was concerned and, as Table 3.1 shows, excluding the small 'other ethnicities' group, they were the group least likely to negatively evaluate noise levels in their accommodation and their ability to study there. This appears to be a phenomenon particular to the Bangladeshi group. Other groups, such as black Caribbean students and Pakistani students, which also had a high proportion living at home during their first year of higher education, did not rate the noise level in their accommodation particularly poorly, with both groups being above average in terms of the proportion describing the noise level in their accommodation as at least adequate; the Pakistani group also being above average in the proportion describing the noise level in their accommodation as excellent (25 per cent compared to an average of 23 per cent).

Table 3.1: Rating of first year accommodation in terms of noise level and ability to study by ethnic group

	Excellent, Good or Adequate	Not very good or Poor
Black - African	86.0	14.0
Asian - Indian	85.5	14.5
Black - Caribbean	83.8	16.2
Asian - Pakistani	83.7	16.3
White	82.6	17.4
Asian - Chinese	81.4	18.6
Asian - Other	80.4	19.6
Asian - Bangladeshi	78.7	21.3
<i>Average</i>	<i>82.7</i>	<i>17.3</i>

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

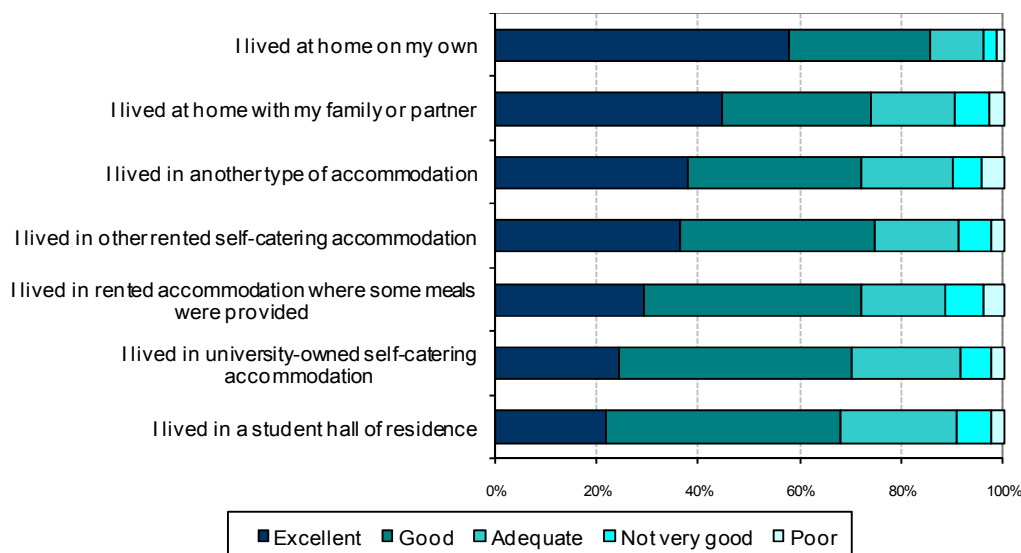
The Bangladeshi students tended to rate the privacy of their first year accommodation as relatively low. Just a quarter of Bangladeshi students felt that the privacy of their accommodation was excellent, making them the group with the second lowest proportion of students, behind the Chinese with 24 per cent, describing their privacy as excellent. They were also the third least likely group to rate their accommodation as at least adequate in terms of privacy, with 87 per cent doing so. The two groups that had a smaller proportion rating their privacy as at least adequate were the small other ethnicities group (86 per cent) and another group where students had a high propensity to live at home: the Pakistanis (87 per cent). This may have been because the people in these groups who lived at home tended not to be mature students living in their own homes, as was the case in some other groups, but students of traditional university age who were living at home with their parents.

Generally, students gave their accommodation higher ratings for privacy than they did for noise level. Thirty one per cent rated the degree of privacy of their accommodation as excellent, and 91 per cent found it at least adequate.

Students living at home were again the most likely to describe their living situation as excellent, with the group most likely to rate their accommodation as excellent for privacy being people who lived in their own home alone (58 per cent). However, when looking at the proportion of students who rated the privacy of their accommodation as at least adequate, while students living at home alone are again the most likely group to have rated the privacy of their first year accommodation as at least adequate (96 per cent), students living at home with their partner or other family were not as likely to rate the privacy of their accommodation

as highly. As Figure 3.10 shows, 91 per cent of students living at home with their partner or other family rated the privacy of their accommodation as at least adequate, a figure that is similar to students in all other types of accommodation.

Figure 3.10: Rating of first year accommodation in terms of privacy by type of accommodation



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Older students were more likely to describe the privacy of their accommodation as excellent, with 45 per cent doing so, compared with 29 per cent in the youngest age group, but there was little difference across the age groups in terms of the proportion of students who felt the privacy of their accommodation was at least adequate. There was little difference between the genders or between students at different types of HEI.

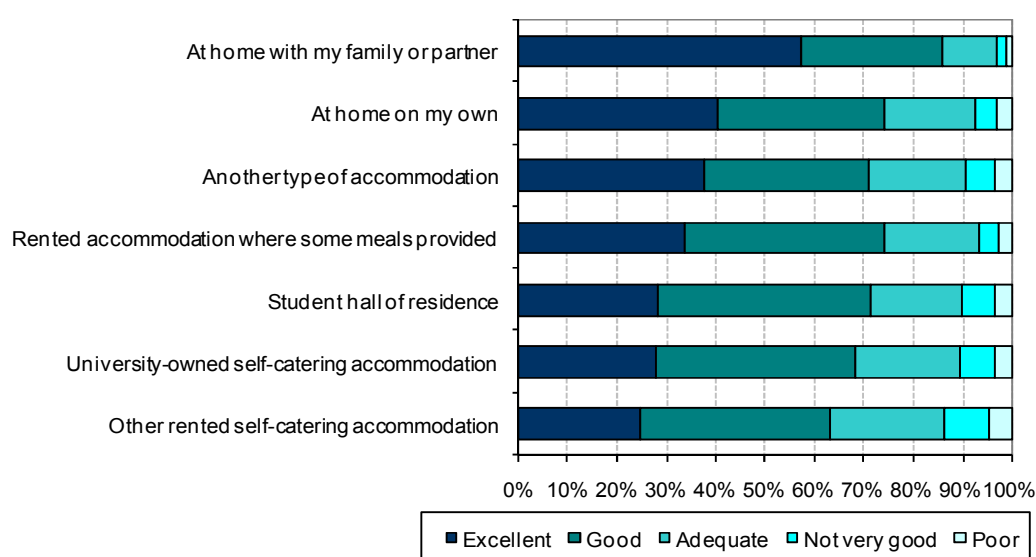
Across the regions, students in the Eastern region were the most likely to describe the privacy of their accommodation as excellent (37 per cent) or at least adequate (94 per cent). The Eastern region had 9 per cent more students rating privacy of their accommodation as excellent than the East Midlands which was the region with the smallest proportion of students rating the privacy of their accommodation as excellent with 27 per cent. The gap between the highest and lowest regions narrowed when looking at the proportion of students who rated their privacy as at least adequate. The region with the largest proportion, the East, had only 5 per cent more students rating their accommodation as at least adequate than the lowest scoring region, Greater London with 89 per cent.

Looking only at university-owned accommodation, the Eastern region again scored highly, with 31 per cent of students rating their university accommodation as excellent in terms of privacy. Not only was this 14 per cent higher than the lowest scoring region, Scotland (17.5 per cent) it was 6 per cent higher than the second highest scoring region, the South East with 25 per cent. There were similar results for the regions when comparing the proportion of students rating the privacy of their university accommodation as at least adequate, with the highest scoring East having 95 per cent, and Scotland, the lowest scoring, having 87 per cent.

The Eastern region, together with Merseyside, also had the highest proportion of students who felt that their safety and personal security in their accommodation was at least adequate. Ninety four per cent of students in these regions described their security and personal safety

this way, and there was a high satisfaction level across all regions, with even the lowest scoring region, Greater London having 89 per cent of its students describing their safety and personal security as at least adequate compared to an average of 91 per cent. Forty four per cent of students at HEIs in Northern Ireland considered the safety and personal security of their accommodation as excellent, which was 9.1 per cent more than the average figure (35 per cent) and 13 per cent higher than the figure given by students in the East Midlands; the lowest scoring region, with 32 per cent. Northern Ireland had a large proportion of students living at home, and they were the most likely to describe their security and personal safety as excellent. As Figure 3.11 shows, almost twice as many students who lived at home with their family or partner described their first year accommodation as excellent in terms of personal security than the group that was least likely to do so: students living in rented self-catering accommodation (58 per cent compared with 25 per cent).

Figure 3.11: Rating of first year accommodation in terms of security and personal safety by type of accommodation



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Women were slightly more likely than men to rate their security and personal safety as excellent, with 37 per cent doing so compared to 33 per cent of men. When rating their accommodation on security and personal safety, 91 per cent of male students and 92 per cent of female students gave one of the three adequate or better responses.

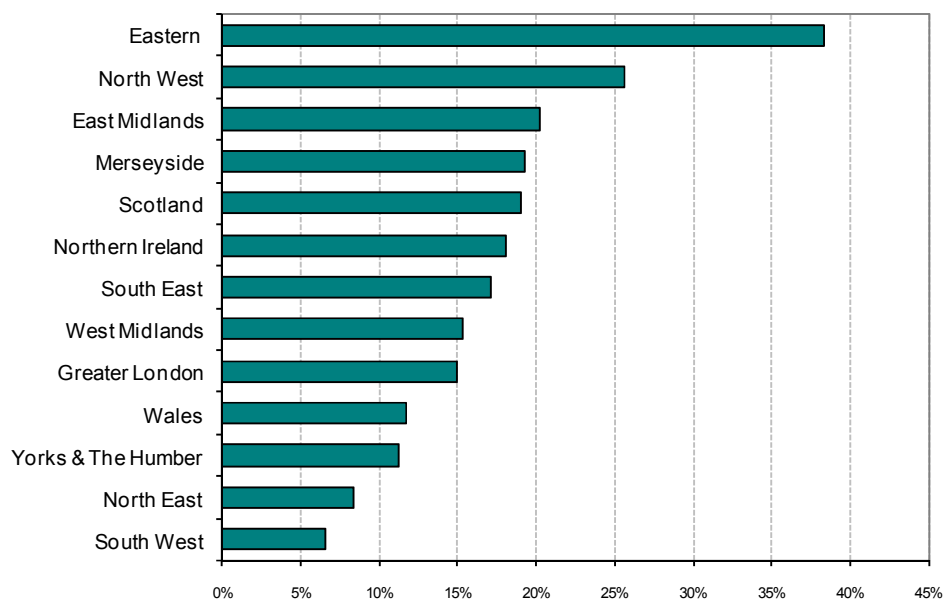
There was also little difference across the age groups, although students in the 26 and over group were much more likely to rate personal safety and security as excellent than the students in other age groups. Forty five per cent of students aged 26 and over evaluated this as excellent, compared to 36 per cent aged 18 and under, 32 per cent aged 19 or 20, and 33 per cent aged 21 to 25. Students aged 19 and 20 and 21 to 25 were the most likely to be living in some form of rented accommodation, which, as Figure 3.19 showed, tended to have a lower proportion of students rating it excellent in terms of personal safety and security. There was little difference across the ethnic groups. Chinese students were least likely to rate their security and personal safety as excellent, with just 21 per cent doing so, but this may reflect the general trend of Chinese students being less likely to choose the excellent category in their assessment of their accommodation, as they were only slightly below average when looking at the percentage of students who considered their security and personal safety at least adequate.

Students at the highest tariff universities were second least likely, behind those at specialist HE colleges, to rate security and personal safety as excellent, with only 34 per cent doing so, compared to 36 per cent of students at high and medium tariff universities. Forty six per cent of students at general HE colleges rated security and personal safety of accommodation as excellent. With the exception of the specialist HE colleges, with 88 per cent, all the HEI types had at least 90 per cent of respondents describing the security and safety of their accommodation as at least adequate. A greater difference was seen when considering only university-owned accommodation. More than twice as many students living in university-owned accommodation at general HE colleges said that their security and personal safety was less than adequate than at the highest tariff universities (17 per cent compared to 8 per cent).

Plans for the following academic year

Students were also asked about their plans for the 2007-8 academic year. They were asked whether they expected to live in university or college accommodation, and how hard it had been to find adequate accommodation. Overall, 12 per cent of students expected to do so, with this figure being 17 per cent for students who had lived in university-owned accommodation in their first year in higher education. Location of HEI had the most impact on the likelihood of a student wanting to living in university accommodation. Twenty eight per cent of students in the Eastern region expected to live in university accommodation, with 38 per cent of those who lived in university accommodation in their first year expecting to stay. This reflects both the types of HEI in the region and the general happiness with their accommodation that has been previously mentioned. Students in the North East and South West were the least likely to plan to live in university owned accommodation, with only 7 and 5 per cent respectively planning to. Eight per cent of students in the North East and 7 per cent in the South West who had lived in university accommodation in their first year in HE expected to do so again in their second year. Students in the South West were among the most satisfied with various aspects of their accommodation, so this movement away from university accommodation may reflect pull-factors from the surrounding area, or a lack of availability of university accommodation for students in particular years.

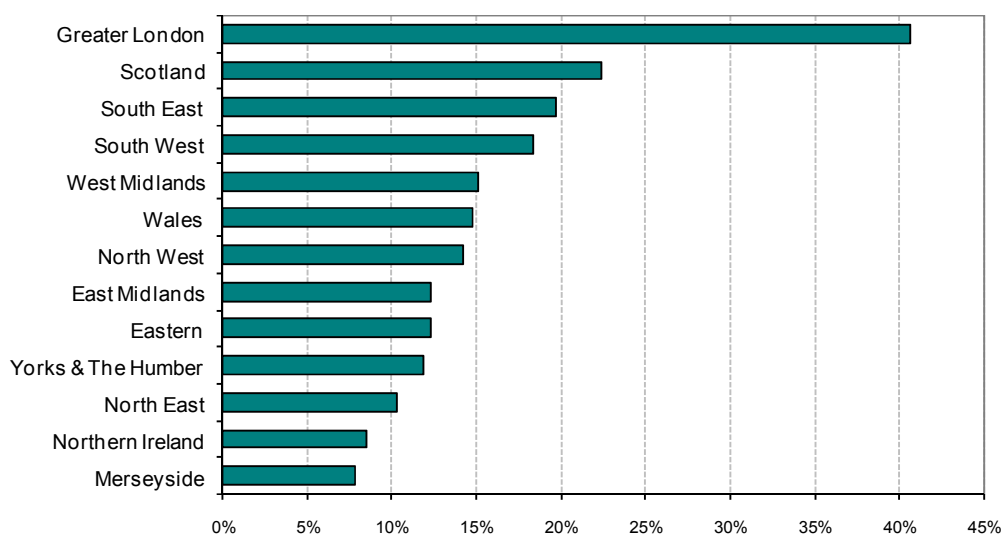
Figure 3.12: Percentage of students who lived in university accommodation in their first year who expected to live in university accommodation in the 2007-8 academic year by HEI region



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all students who lived in university-owned accommodation, weighted

Students were asked whether arranging accommodation for the 2007-8 academic year had been a problem. Sixty four per cent indicated that it had not been. They were also asked if they agreed with the statement 'Fixing adequate second year term time accommodation has been difficult', and 13 per cent did so. These figures include students who did not have to find accommodation in for the 2007-8 academic year because they were already living in their own homes and had no plans to move. Looking specifically at students living in university accommodation, since they are the group who are most likely to have had to contemplate where they might live next year, even if they ultimately decided to stay in university accommodation, 63 per cent agreed that 'Organising accommodation was not a problem', and 18 per cent agreed that 'Fixing adequate second year term time accommodation has been difficult'. Again, regional differences were the most obvious. Two thirds of students who had lived in university accommodation in Yorkshire and the Humber agreed that organising accommodation was not a problem, but in London this figure was just 40 per cent, which was 17 per cent lower than the Eastern region which had the second lowest proportion of students agreeing with the statement at 57 per cent. As Figure 3.13 shows, the disparity between the regions is even greater when looking at the proportion who agreed that fixing adequate second year term time accommodation had been difficult. Just 8 per cent of students on Merseyside and 9 per cent of students in Northern Ireland agreed, compared to 41 per cent in London, which was 18 per cent higher than Scotland which had the second highest proportion (22 per cent) of students agreeing with the statement.

Figure 3.13: Students who lived in university accommodation in their first year who said that finding adequate second year term time accommodation had been difficult by HEI region



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all students who lived in university-owned accommodation, weighted

Finally, students were asked whether it had been necessary to pay a deposit for second year accommodation. Overall, 35 per cent had been asked to do so, although this group again included people who were not planning to move between their first and second year. Fifty five per cent of students in university-owned self-catering accommodation and 51 per cent who lived in university halls of residence in their first year had been asked to do so. The pattern generally reflects the propensity of students to be moving out of university accommodation. Looking only at students who lived in university-owned accommodation in their first year, students in the South West (63 per cent) were the most likely to have been asked to pay a deposit for their second year accommodation and were also the least likely to be planning to live in university-owned accommodation, and students in the Eastern region, who were the most likely to be planning to remain in university accommodation were the least likely to have been asked to pay a deposit (38 per cent).

Futuretrack students' extra-curricular activities

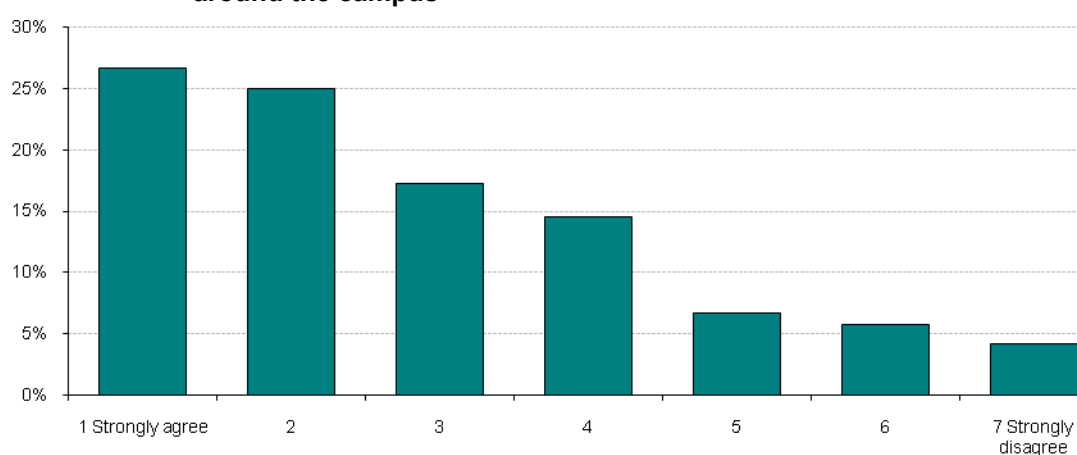
The Futuretrack students were also asked about extra-curricular activities in which they had participated during the previous academic year. Engagement in the social life of the HEI they attend has been seen to be important in establishing a feeling of belonging among students, with their peers being able to offer academic support and moral guidance (Forbes and Wickens, 2005). Additionally, employers are increasingly looking at graduates' extra-curricular experience for evidence of transferable skills such as leadership and team work, in addition to the class of degree they have obtained. Exclusion from these extra-curricular experiences, whether by circumstances or by choice, can have therefore have a far-reaching impact on a student's career, limiting their accumulation of social and cultural capital that can be of use both while they are in HE and when they enter the labour market. Archer and Hutchings (2000) found that this aspect of attending university was a concern for prospective students from non-traditional backgrounds, and that attending some elite HEIs was 'unthinkable' for the non-traditional students they interviewed, because they thought they would not fit in and find friends and support at these types of institution. The section that follows outlines the types of

extra-curricular opportunities the Futuretrack students engaged in, and identifies the barriers faced by particular groups in engaging in the extra-curricular opportunities available to them, both within their university or college and externally.

Opportunities for extra-curricular activities

First, the Futuretrack students were asked whether they thought there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on and around their campus. Students rated their agreement that there were on a scale of 1 to 7, with '1' meaning that they strongly agreed that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities and '7' meaning that they strongly disagreed. As Figure 3.14 shows, there was a high level of agreement overall. Twenty seven per cent selected '1', indicating that they strongly agreed, and a further 25 per cent selected '2'.

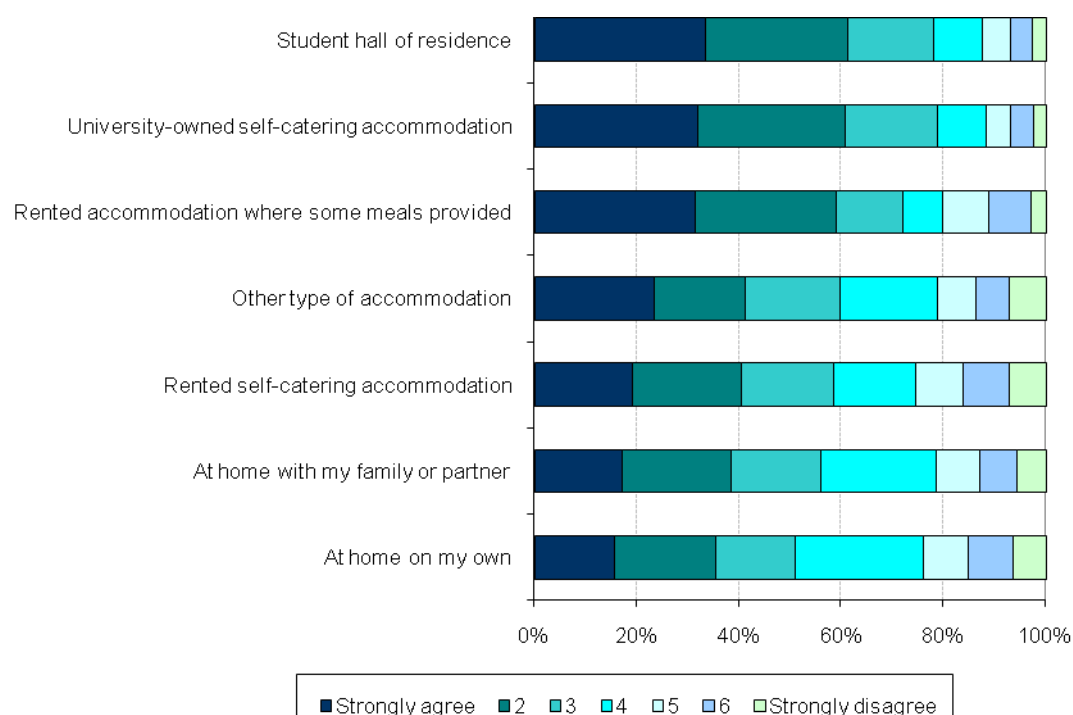
Figure 3.14: 'There were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus'



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

The type of accommodation students lived in during their first year in higher education had an impact on how likely they were to agree that there were excellent opportunities on or around campus. As Figure 3.15 shows, students who were living in university accommodation were more likely to strongly agree with the statement than were those living at home. Some of this, as will be seen, can be attributed to differences in the average age of respondents in each type of accommodation, but distance from campus, as well as other responsibilities, meant that some students who were living in their own homes felt that they, personally, lacked opportunities for extra-curricular activities because the timetable of these activities did not fit in well with their own timetable, for example, activities finished too late in the evening for them to be able to attend and return home.

Figure 3.15: 'There were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus' by first year accommodation type



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Younger students were more likely to think that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities. The proportion of respondents aged 18 and under (31 per cent) who chose the category expressing strongest agreement with the statement was almost twice that of the students aged 26 and over (16 per cent). This may be because the extra-curricular opportunities often tend to be geared towards younger students, either because they make up the largest proportion of the student body, or because it is perceived that they will have more time to become actively involved in extra-curricular activities because they are less likely to have competing family and other commitments. Younger students are also more likely to be living in university accommodation, which is a site where many extra-curricular activities will take place. Other findings suggested that the provision of extra-curricular activities is aimed towards the typical young student studying for a degree course lasting for more than three years. Eighty per cent of students studying for a degree lasting more than four years, 76.4 per cent of those studying for a degree lasting four years, and 68 per cent of those studying for a three year degree chose one of the statements that indicated agreement, i.e. they selected '1', '2' or '3' on the 7 point scale. However, under 50 per cent of students studying for a Foundation degree, a DipHE or an HND chose one of the three options indicating agreement.

Type of accommodation also appeared to play a role when looking at the proportions of the different ethnic groups who agreed with the statement. As Table 3.2 shows, the groups who were most likely to be living at home - Bangladeshi, Pakistani and black Caribbean students, were also the ones most likely to disagree with the statement. Chinese students were less likely to agree than their accommodation situation would suggest, since a high proportion of Chinese students lived in university accommodation, and conversely, Indian students, a high proportion of whom lived at home, were more likely to agree than would be expected,

although a relatively high proportion of Indian students also disagreed that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

Table 3.2: 'There were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus' by ethnicity

	Agree (%) ⁸	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
White	69.6	14.3	16.1
Asian - Other	68.1	14.6	17.3
Asian - Indian	66.3	13.5	20.1
Black - African	66.3	15.9	17.8
Asian - Chinese	64.7	17.0	18.3
Asian - Pakistani	62.6	17.0	20.4
Asian - Bangladeshi	60.1	13.9	25.9
Black - Caribbean	59.8	17.5	22.7

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

This trend of ethnic minority students and those who live at home being somewhat more likely to think that there were not excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities may, to some extent, account for the high level of disagreement with the statement expressed by students at HEIs in Greater London. Twenty eight per cent of students in Greater London chose one of the categories that broadly indicated disagreement, including 8 per cent who indicated strong disagreement by selecting '7' on the 7 point scale. This level of disagreement was 10 per cent higher than the region with the second highest proportion of students who disagreed, which was Merseyside with 18 per cent. Only 54 per cent of students in Greater London selected one of the categories indicating agreement with the statement, compared to Merseyside as the second least likely with 64 per cent. Students in the North East were most likely to select one of the categories indicating agreements, with three quarters doing so, and the Eastern region had the highest proportion (a third) of students strongly agreeing. Students in the North East were the least likely to strongly disagree with the statement and the least likely to disagree overall.

The type of HEI students attended had a large impact on whether they thought that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities. As Figure 3.16 shows, students at highest tariff universities were the most likely to agree, with 85 per cent indicating some degree of agreement, compared to 80 per cent of students at high tariff universities, 64 per cent at medium tariff universities, 52 per cent at low tariff universities, 36 per cent at specialist HE colleges and 30 per cent at general HE colleges. Only 7 per cent of students at general HE colleges strongly agreed with the statement, compared to 40 per cent highest tariff universities, 32 per cent at high tariff universities, 21 per cent at medium tariff universities, 14 per cent at low tariff universities and 9 per cent at specialist HE colleges. Students at specialist HE colleges were the most likely to disagree with the statement, with 46 per cent indicating some disagreement, and students at general HE colleges were the most likely to strongly disagree, with 18 per cent doing so.

'There is nothing to do here, no activities exist to take part in, which is really annoying'

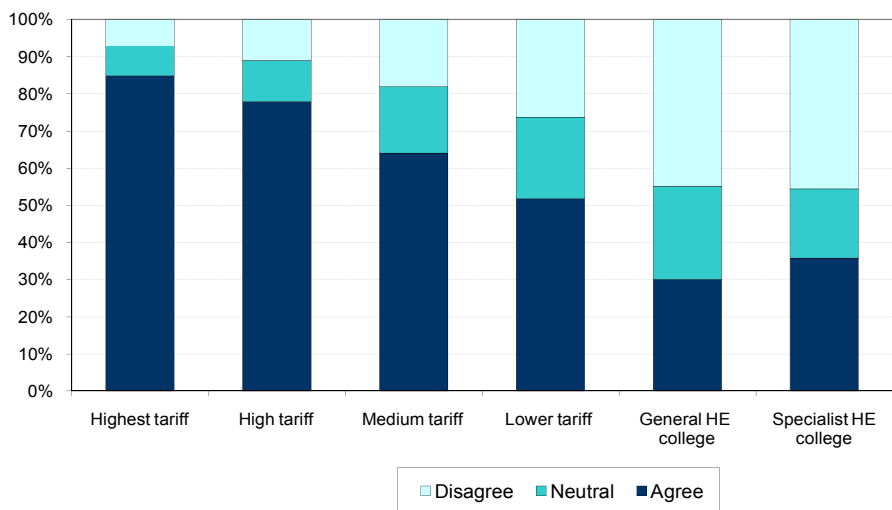
[Female, 19-20, white, Creative Arts and Design, Specialist HE college]

To some extent, this reflects the profile of the students who are most likely to attend different types of institution, with the types of institution which are likely to have the highest proportion

⁸ The 'Agree' is formed of students who selected '1', '2' or '3' on the 7 point scale, 'Neutral' is students who selected '4', and 'Disagree' is students who selected '5', '6' or '7'.

of non-traditional students, a group who have already been identified as being less likely to agree with the statement, having the lowest proportion of students who agreed about the excellence of the opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

Figure 3.16: 'There were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus' by type of HEI

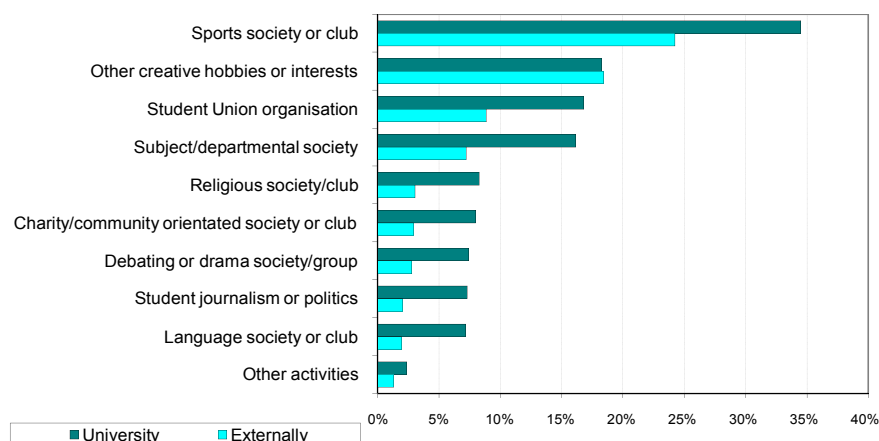


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Types of extra-curricular activities and where they were undertaken

Students were also asked about the types of extra-curricular activities they had done at least three times in the previous academic year, either within their university or college or externally. Figure 3.17 shows that sports societies and clubs were the most common university and external extra-curricular activity students had joined. In all cases, students were more likely to have taken part in an activity within the university rather than externally. Two per cent of students had done some kind of other extra-curricular activity within their university or college, and 1 per cent outside it. The most commonly mentioned activities in the other category were clubs focussing on particular interest groups, such as the Afro-Caribbean Society and GLBT, and attending meetings as a result of holding a particular position within the university, for example Course Representative, Junior Common Room Committee which are not explicitly political or linked to the Student Union or a departmental society.

Figure 3.17: Activities students participated in at least three times during the 2006-7 academic year



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Men were much more likely than women to have taken part in a sports society or club than women, with 42 per cent of male students taking part in a sports society or club within their HEI and 23 per cent externally, compared to figures of 28 per cent and 15 per cent for women. Although the figures are not as disparate for the other extra-curricular activities, men were overall more likely to engage in any particular activity than women. The only exceptions to this were in the cases of charity or community orientated groups either within the HEI or externally, and university or college language societies within their HEI, where a slightly larger proportion of women participated than men. Several female respondents noted that their childcare and homemaking responsibilities precluded them from taking part in extra-curricular activities because they simply did not have time.

'Between university coursework, part-time jobs and trying to keep house (i.e., cooking, cleaning, etc.) - you think I have the time, the energy or money for activities?'

[Female, 19-20, white, Creative Arts, Specialist college]

Students from highest tariff universities were most likely to have taken part in extra-curricular activities within their university, with students at general HE colleges being least likely. This trend is reversed when looking at extra-curricular activities undertaken externally, with students at general HE colleges being most likely to have undertaken these activities, and students at highest tariff universities the least. This may reflect the provision of activities at the different universities. As has already been noted, students at general HE colleges were the least likely to agree that the provision in their HEI was excellent, and it may be that students had to seek external sources if they wanted to pursue particular activities. However, the pattern also reflects the proportion of non-traditional students and local students the different types of HEI are likely to have. Students with other commitments that keep them close to home, and those who have extra-curricular activities they were pursuing away from their HEI before they enrolled, are more likely to engage in extra-curricular activities externally. HEIs that had several campuses were also noted by respondents as creating particular difficulties for students who wished to engage in extra-curricular activities, as the following quotes illustrate:

'Haven't really got an opportunity to, the campus where all these activities take place on the main campus, which is a 40 min bus journey. I would have carried on with a sports team... rugby or netball'

[Female, 19-20, white, Subjects allied to medicine, Medium tariff university]

'Due to being on a different campus, sports and social clubs were not available due to campus size.'

[Female, 26 and over, white, Subjects allied to medicine, lower tariff university]

With the exception of debating or drama and student union activities, students at general HE colleges were more likely to pursue an activity outside the university than within it. Conversely, there was no extra-curricular activity that students at the highest tariff universities were more likely to pursue outside their university than within it. The only activity that students at high tariff universities were more likely to pursue outside their university than within it was 'other creative hobbies and interest'. Students at medium tariff universities were more likely to pursue three (creative hobbies and interests, religious activities and charity or community orientated societies or clubs) of the nine (excluding 'other') activities outside university, students at lower tariff universities four of the activities (the same three as at the medium tariff universities, plus sports), and students at specialist colleges six of the activities (sports, debating or drama, creative hobbies or interests, religious activities, charity or community related activities, and subject or departmental societies).

There were some other notable differences between HEI types, particularly the relatively small proportion of students at all but the highest and high tariff universities who belonged to departmental societies, which is important because departmental societies can serve a valuable role in the provision of information about career development and networking. Less than 9 per cent of students at the medium and low tariff universities and general and specialist HE colleges belonged to a subject or departmental society at all, while more than a third of students at highest tariff and 21 per cent at high tariff universities did so. Although a smaller proportion of students belonged to clubs and societies in general at these universities, the difference between them and the highest and high tariff universities was more pronounced in this case. Overall, there was no university based activity that students at highest tariff universities were not the most likely to attend, and it was only in the case of other creative hobbies and interests, where a higher proportion of students from specialist HE colleges took part, that the high tariff universities did not have the second highest proportion of respondents taking part within their university.

A similar picture emerged when looking at the proportions of each socio-economic group who took part in the different activities. Cooke *et al* (2004) found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were less likely to engage in a range of extra-curricular activities than students from higher socio-economic groups, and Walpole (2003), in her study of students at American universities, had similar findings. This was also true among the Futuretrack cohort. There was no university-based activity where participation did not increase as broad socio-economic backgrounds got higher, although there were small variations between the subgroups making up the routine and manual occupation backgrounds. In the case of external activities, the picture is less clear, with the students from routine and manual backgrounds being the group most commonly taking part in of the external activities, but the group that was least likely to be taking part in activities externally was most commonly the group of students from intermediate occupational backgrounds.

Type of accommodation also had an impact of the proportion of students in different locations who engaged in extra-curricular activities within their HEI and externally. Students who were

not living in university accommodation and who were travelling from far away often had fewer opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities.

'I haven't participated in any of these due to my situation at home - I live 20 miles away from my uni so I travel in every day. I have to be a stay at home student due to both my parents' ill health. Therefore I have had no time to join such clubs.'

[Female, 19-20, white, Biology, Veterinary Science, Agriculture and related, Medium tariff university]

'Great, now I look like a shit student because I don't get involved... WELL I CAN'T, it's not like I'm near my campus... costs a lot of dosh to travel up there... and lot of time.'

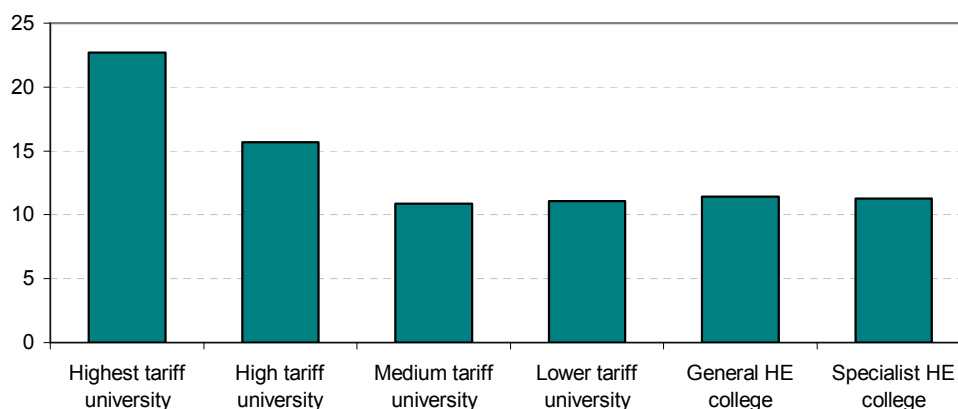
[Male, 18 and under, white, Creative Arts and Design Foundation degree, Medium tariff university]

Overall, students in Northern Ireland and Greater London, areas with the highest proportions of students living at home, were the least likely to engage in extra-curricular activities within their university. However, the region that was most likely to have students engage in any activity was the Eastern region, which was not the region with the lowest proportion of students living at home.

In most cases, if a region had a low proportion of students saying that they participated in a particular activity within their HEI, this was offset by a higher proportion saying that they engaged in the activity externally. This was also the case with the overall activity. Students in Northern Ireland and Greater London were most likely to have reported extra-curricular activities.

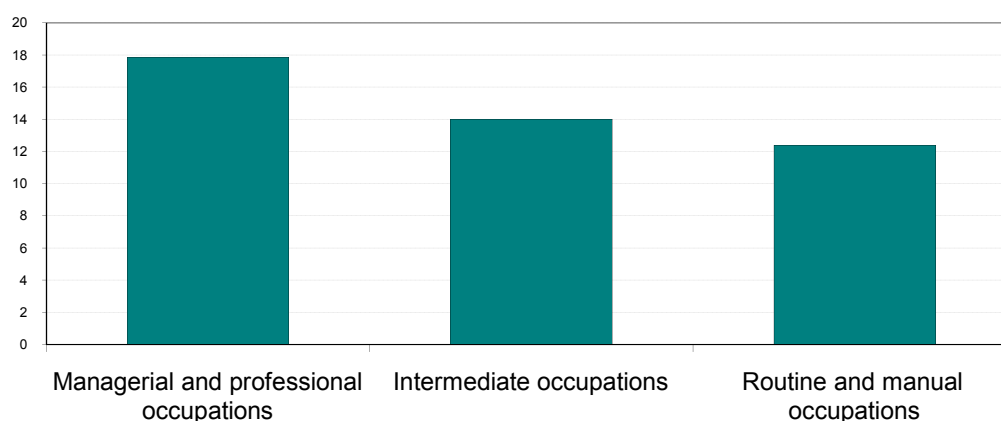
Students were asked if they had been an office holder or student representative in any university society or club. Overall, 16 per cent had, but 23 per cent of students at highest tariff universities had, as had 16 per cent of students at other old universities, while only 11 per cent of students at medium tariff universities, lower tariff universities, general HE colleges and specialist HE colleges had been an office holder or representative.

Figure 3.18: Proportion of students at each type of HEI who had been office holders or student representatives



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Figure 3.19: Proportion of students from each broad socio-economic group who had been office holders or student representatives



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Eighteen per cent of male students and 14 per cent of female students had been office holders. Students aged 26 and over were the least likely to have been an office holder, with only 12 per cent having done so, but the group that was most likely was not the youngest age group – the group that was most likely to take part in extra-curricular activities, but those aged 19-20, of whom 17 per cent had. Almost a quarter of Chinese students had been an office holder or representative, as had 22 per cent of black African students. Black Caribbean students and white/black Caribbean students were the least likely, with under 10 per cent of each group having held such a position.

Surprisingly, students who worked only during term time were the most likely to have been office holders or student representatives, with 20 per cent of students who worked only in term time having held one of these positions, compared to 18 per cent of students who worked only in vacations, 15 per cent of students who did not work at all, and 14 per cent of students who did paid work both during term time and in vacations. This was also the case looking at the proportions of students who engaged in different activities. For many activities, students who did paid work only during term time were the group who were most likely to engage in a particular activity either within their HEI or externally, and students who worked

both in term time and in vacations were the least likely. When looking at the number of hours a week students spent working, the picture is clearer, with those who spent between one and eight hours per week in paid employment being more likely to take part in extra-curricular activities within their HEI than those who spent longer doing paid work. The relationship between the number of hours students spent studying and their engagement in extra-curricular activities was also not very clear, although several students did comment that they did not have time to take part in extra-curricular activities because of the amount of work they had to do on their course.

'No time to do anything but study, study and more study'

[Female, 26 and over, black Caribbean, Social Studies, Lower tariff university]

Summary

- Although the majority of Futuretrack Stage 2 respondents lived in traditional student halls of residence during their first year in higher education, a significant number lived in other types of accommodation. In particular a large proportion lived in their own home with other family members. While it was older students who were most likely to be living in their own home, significant numbers in even the youngest age group did so. Students from particular ethnic groups were particularly likely to be living at home, regardless of their age, with Bangladeshi and Pakistani students being the most likely to have lived at home in their first year.
- Overall, a large majority of students rated their accommodation as adequate or good on most of the aspects investigated, although cost of accommodation and value for money were the measures least likely to be regarded as adequate. Students living in their own homes were less likely to rate their accommodation as adequate or better than that in terms of convenience generally and in particular, convenience for their classes.
- The type of accommodation in which students were living was related to access to, and making use of, extra-curricular activities. Students who lived in their own homes often travelled long distances to attend their HEI and this meant that they were less able to take part in extra-curricular activities within their peers. Students living in their own homes, either with other family members or on their own, were least likely to agree that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around their HEI campus.
- Sports clubs and societies on campus were the extra-curricular activities most frequently attended, and activities taking place on campus were more popular in general than external activities, although this did vary by age and type of accommodation in particular.
- Students at the highest tariff universities and those from higher socio-economic groups were the most likely to take part in extra-curricular activities at their HEI, and to have been student representatives or office holders during their time in higher education. These are important arenas for developing key skills and social and cultural capital, and the responses indicated that there was a tendency for the students' existing advantages and disadvantages to be reinforced during their HE experience.

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CHAPTER 4

Students as part of the flexible workforce: economic restructuring, occupational change and student employment

Introduction

In common with that of other advanced economies, the structure of the UK labour force changed significantly throughout the second half of the 20th century. Women's participation in paid work over their life-times increased and economic restructuring led to changed ratios of jobs in primary, manufacturing and service industries. Most germane to the focus of this chapter, the increase in global competition and the impact of technological sophistication on communication have radically changed the way that hours of work are organised throughout the economy and the world. Additionally, the skills required by employers changed – particularly in the balance of skilled and unskilled manual work requiring traditionally-male craft skills and physical strength, and occupations requiring knowledge, technical skills and interpersonal, often client-focused skills in personal, consumer and public services – as was discussed in Chapter 1. Throughout almost the full range of economic activity, particularly in urban areas, '24-7' operation⁹ and long operational hours have become commonplace, facilitated by a changing jigsaw of workers with a variety of contractual arrangements and hours of work in order to make products and provide services to meet shifting daily, weekly and seasonal demands; 'just-in-time' production and delivery.

There is considerable debate about the extent to which this reflects sustainable and widespread growth of a 'knowledge economy' and/or increased polarisation between 'good jobs' that require increasing levels of skill and offer career development opportunities and, at the other end of the spectrum, low status, routine, low paid and insecure employment. The conflicting analyses are well illustrated by the recent government report (DIUS, 2008) on the skills development policy underpinning current and projected UK government and EU higher education strategies. Brown *et al.* (2008) call for a more sceptical analysis of future global trends, but economic restructuring and higher education certainly have a reflexive relationship, and the expansion of HE has not only impacted upon employers' construction of and recruitment to full-time jobs that graduates obtain after completing their courses, but also on their recruitment of part-time staff where, in some industry sectors, students working part-time form a significant proportion of workforces¹⁰.

Earlier research findings

The changes in funding arrangements outlined in Chapter 1, aimed to enable students from lower, previously under-represented, socio-economic backgrounds to enter HE, based on the assumption that previously excluded members of the population would be enabled to gain the long-term benefits of HE without being hampered by the burden of debt after graduation, while those who could afford to contribute to the cost of their HE would be required to do so. Access to funding, however, remains likely to play a role in determining whether students take paid employment and whether they have time for other activities. Numerous studies have been undertaken to explore the implications of these reforms and their impact. Now an all-

⁹See http://www.open2.net/moneyandmanagement/management_organisation/24hourworking.html for useful summary of this concept.

¹⁰ See <http://www.e4s.co.uk/docs/recruitment-agencies.htm> for examples of the kinds of organisations that seek student employees and the industry that this demand has spawned.

party group has produced a report that advocates waiving of undergraduate HE fees for students who live at home while studying (Wintour, 2009). Most analysts have concluded that the increased financial pressure and higher levels of debt, particularly since the changes in HE funding arrangements introduced at the beginning of the 1990s, have fostered an increase in students taking on paid work in parallel with their course-work during term (Humphrey, 2006; Callender & Wilkinson, 2003; Metcalf, 2003). The implications for student learning of increasing student employment during term have been a major concern for those who deliver full time HE courses (Little, 2002).

As the pressure to participate in paid work during term has grown, it has increasingly been seen by students and employers alike as a useful opportunity. The market in student part-time and temporary work, long established in some industries and in vacation months, has expanded considerably, involving commercial and public sector intermediary services work¹¹. Between 1998-1999 and 2002-2004 the proportion of students in paid work increased from 47 per cent to 58 per cent as debt associated with higher education participation rose after the introduction of student loans (Callender and Kemp, 2000; Callender and Wilkinson, 2003). The Student Income and Expenditure survey in 2004 found that 56 per cent of all full-time students had undertaken paid work at some point during the academic year while the more recent 2007/08 survey somewhat surprisingly showed that this figure had decreased to 53 per cent of Futuretrack students in 2007/08 (Johnson *et al.*, 2009). Smaller scale surveys of students at a 1992 university (Hunt *et al.*, 2004) and old Scottish one (Carney *et al.*, 2005) reached 48.7 per cent and 50 per cent respectively a few years earlier.

Which students work during term?

Those who work during term time and engage in long hours are more often from lower social classes, minority ethnic groups or are from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds (Paulsen and St John, 2002; Callender and Wilkinson, 2003; Metcalf, 2003). Callender (2003) found that those most likely to be concerned about debt or wary of accruing debts as students 'are the ones, paradoxically, which are the focus of widening participation policies' (*ibid.*:3), echoed by the latest findings from recent cohorts (*c.f.* Johnson *et al.*, *op cit.*). Students coming from lower socio-economic categories were found to be more debt averse by Pennell and West (2005), to an extent that influenced their decision to enrol into HE, as was discussed in Chapter 2, and as will be shown in Chapter 8, these findings are reinforced by the responses provided by those Stage 1 applicants who did not, in fact, go on to full-time HE study. Among UK-domiciled applicants, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds were most likely to cite cost and debt as reasons for not proceeding (see Purcell *et al. op cit.*:157).

Previous research evidence has repeatedly indicated that students engaged in paid term time employment suffered educational disadvantage (Callender, 2006; Hunt *et al.*, 2004; Ford *et al.*, 1995; Barke *et al.*, 2000). See Chapter 1 Table 1.1 for an overview of the extent to which different sources of funding were used by the students in the sample and discussion about current funding. Broadbridge and Swanson (2005) undertook an interesting study on term time employment highlighting some limitations of previous studies which have often lacked a theoretical framework. They concluded that further exploration of the issue is required, very much along the lines being undertaken in the Futuretrack study. In their study, the issue of the impact of paid employment during term time on the psychological well-being of students is also raised. This fits with the finding that term time employment was found to cause stress

¹¹ See <http://www.justjobs4students.co.uk> and http://www.gradsouthwest.com/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/Student_Zone/pleLibX1

related to the need to juggle paid work and academic study at the same time (Pickering and Watts, 2000), that it led to less time to study, missed lectures and a limited focus on studies (Curtis and Shani, 2002), and the achievement of lower marks and less participation in social university life, which all affect the student's ability to compete in the graduate labour market (Humphrey 2006, Purcell *et al.*, 2005). Both of these studies related reported working patterns to end of year academic performance. The main findings showed that students who engaged in term time employment were less likely to have been involved in university social life but also that employment appears to be related to a direct effect on their end of year average marks. In addition, Humphrey's research showed that students who worked during term were overwhelmingly from state schools rather than from independent privately funded schools which also indicates that 'structured inequality, an inherent feature of a divided secondary education system, is being pulled firmly into HE' (Humphrey, 2006: 286).

An earlier study (Metcalf, 2003) of a randomly-selected sample of 3rd year students at four universities showed that students who work during term time were likely to achieve less academically, but also might be disadvantaged in institutions where term time employment is less common or frowned upon, particularly in those HEIs with high tariff entry requirements. This may be related to the importance to universities of maintaining their reputations and perceived status in the league tables, which subsequently entailed limited flexibility of these institutions to accommodate and adjust to the new situation of students-employees characterised by increasing responsibilities and tasks under the present financial regime. There is a danger that new universities, a higher proportion of whose students come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, will become more flexible in meeting the needs of this student population, while upper and middle class students are absorbed into the highly prestigious universities, leading to a subsequent reinforcement of a class divide within HE (Metcalf, *ibid*).

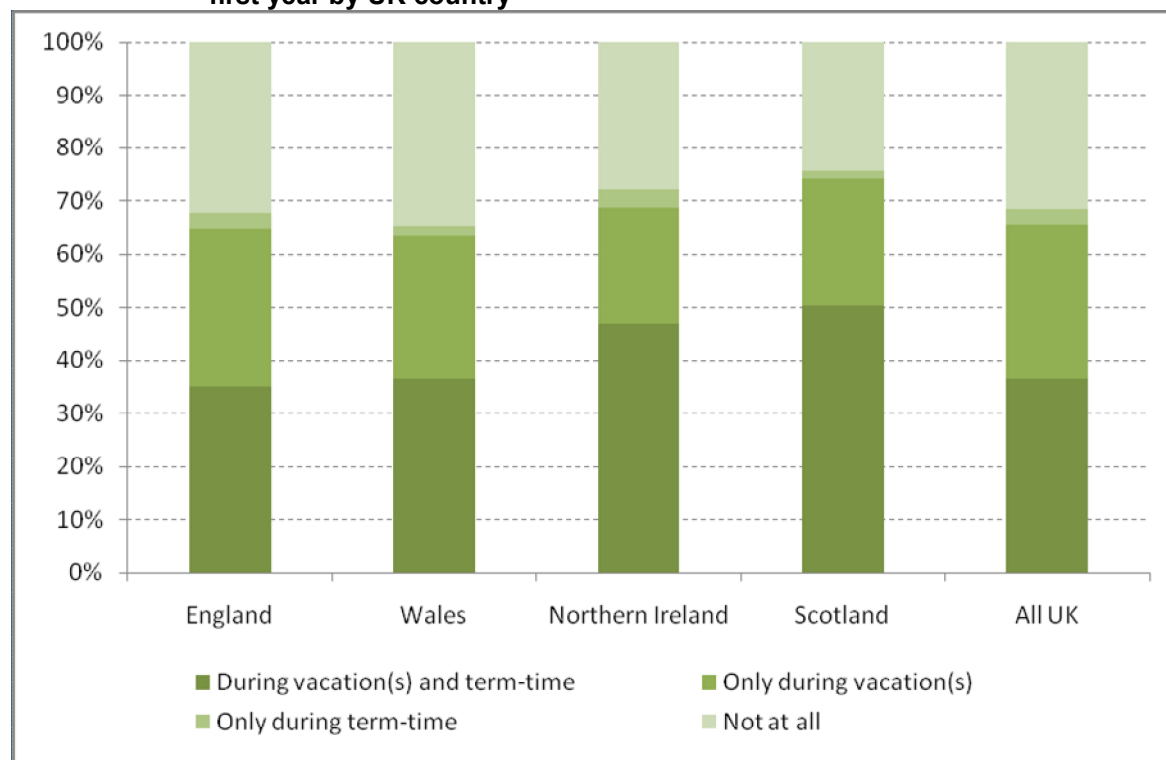
The majority of students discussed in the smaller studies were employed mainly in the hospitality and retail sectors, areas that were rarely relevant to their academic studies, although transferable skills were developed by the students and were perceived as a positive aspect of the employment in addition to meeting their financial needs (Curtis, 2007; Pickering and Watts, 2000; Ford *et al.*, 1995). In particular, students reported developing interpersonal skills in such employment (Lucas and Lammont, 1998). This relationship between paid work during term and vacations, course studied and impact on learning and achievements are questions that we will explore at Stage 4, when we have measures of student academic and careers development and achievement that can be related to their economic activity patterns as students as well as their perceptions of the skills they have acquired directly from their courses and during their HE study – including those developed in extra-curricular activities and paid work.

Stage 2 research findings

In the Stage 2 survey, we asked a series of detailed questions, exploring the extent of and motivations for respondents' paid and unpaid work, particularly how far it had been undertaken to support their studies and living costs and how far it had been done for intrinsic reasons or in order to provide specific or general employment experience to contribute to their career development. The final column of Figure 4.1 shows that overall, respondents divided almost equally into three, with two-thirds (66 per cent) doing some paid work over the session, with – by a small majority – the largest group being those working in paid work during both term and vacations (36 per cent of all) and a very small number employed only during term. However, the Figure also shows that patterns of paid working varied among the different UK countries, ranging from over half of Scottish-domiciled students (52 per cent)

doing paid work during term, followed by NI domiciled students, of whom half did, and English and Welsh domiciled students who were more likely to work only during vacations or to have no paid employment at all in their first year.

Figure 4.1: Extent to which Futuretrack students had paid employment during their first year by UK country



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

Patterns of paid work during the first year of study

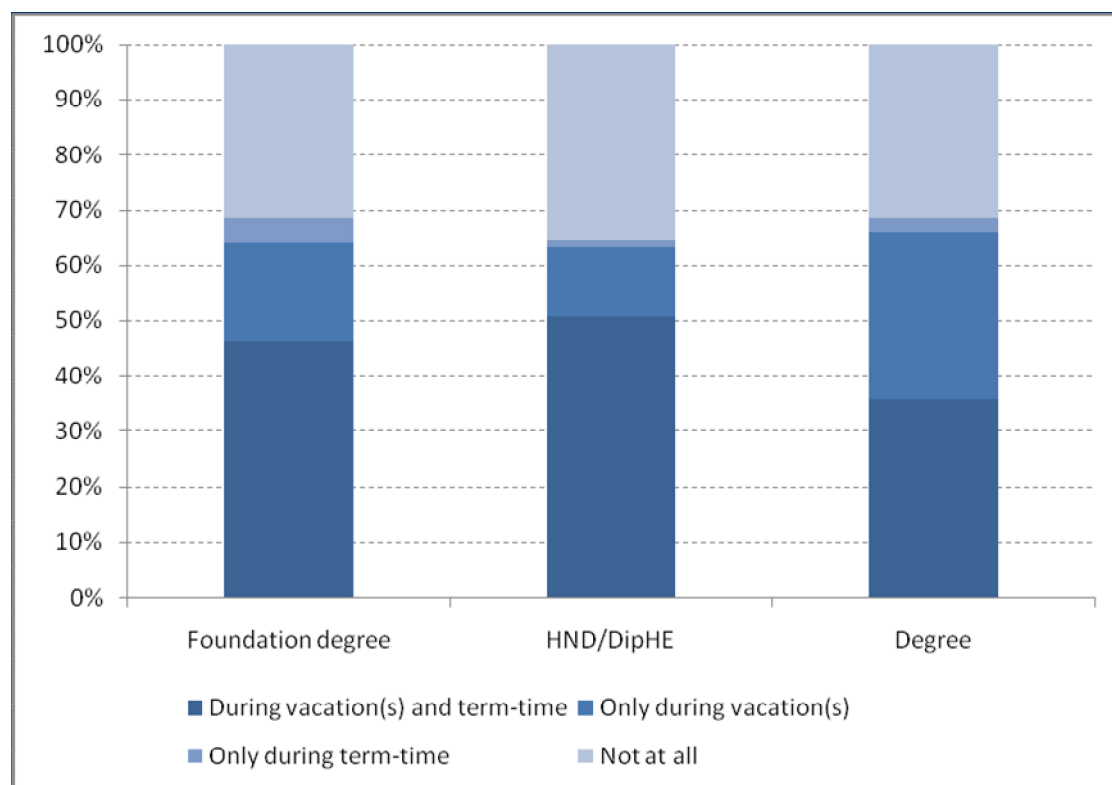
A comparison by gender of the patterns of paid work undertaken by Futuretrack Stage 2 respondents in their first year of study showed that women had been more likely than men to work during both term and vacation (39 per cent compared to 34 per cent) and males were somewhat more likely to have reported doing no paid work in their first year (34 per cent compared to 30 per cent of females). As in the studies cited above, those coming from higher socio-economic backgrounds were least likely to report paid work during term (33 per cent, compared to, at the other end of the social spectrum, over 45 per cent of those from routine occupational backgrounds), and the converse relationship was apparent in propensity not to have been employed and to have been employed during vacations only. The relationship between variables and attributes and likelihood of term-time working is further discussed below.

Figure 4.2 shows the same distribution of participation in paid work by the type of course students were enrolled on. The core of this study is undergraduate degree students and it needs to be remembered that the proportions of the three types of course in the sample are very different: 4 per cent registered on full-time Foundation degree courses, 2 per cent doing Dip HE/HNDs and 92 per cent doing undergraduate degrees¹² so that the cell sizes are considerably smaller for the first two groups and they are provided simply to illustrate the

¹² In 2 per cent of cases, the course title was not provided or unclassifiable.

differences in profile. However, as Figure 4.2 shows, the distribution of each of these groups by the extent to which they had had done paid work varied considerably. The sub-degree level students – although all in this sample were full-time students - were considerably more likely to have been employed during term (ranging from 52 per cent of HND/DipHE students to 38 per cent of undergraduate degree students), which reflects the different socio-economic profiles of the two sub-samples as well as, to an extent, the greater incidence of vocationally-related term-time working by the former.

Figure 4.2: Extent to which Futuretrack students had paid employment during their first year by type of course enrolled on



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

Student diversity and participation in paid work

These differences reflect the interaction of variations in the supply of courses and access to them by students with different socio-economic, demographic and educational attributes. Two pieces of multivariate analysis were conducted, aiming to assess how various factors affect the working habits of Stage 2 students during term (See Table A4.1 in Appendix 2). In particular, a logistic regression framework was adopted in order to model: a) whether the students did any paid work during term time, and b) whether those who worked did so for more than 16 hours per week. The independent variables included in these analyses are: social group, age-group, type of HEI (according to our HEI Access classification discussed in Chapter 1), and the type of university attended, subject of study, and a set of variables assessing students' opinions about their course. The results of these analyses reinforce the bivariate approach illustrated in the Figures below. Most of the coefficients included in the analyses were found to be statistically significant.

Various interesting findings emerge. Starting with gender, it was found that females have a higher probability of working during term time than males, although they tend to work for slightly shorter hours, on average, than male students. Age effects are also evident; the results suggest that there is an interesting relationship between age and term-time working. In particular, it was found that students aged between 21 and 25 years were the most likely to work during term-time, and to work for more than 16 hours per week.

The subject of study also appears to be an important determinant of whether students undertook paid work during term. In general, it was found that students of Medicine & Dentistry have the least chances of being in paid employment during their studies, and even if they do work, they are the least likely of students from all disciplines to have taken on weekly paid work of more than 16 hours per week during term. This is linked to the reported workload of students according to subject, discussed in Chapter 2, as is the finding that the disciplines whose graduates were most likely to work for more than 16 hours included various Social Sciences: Social Science combined with Arts, Mass Communication and Documentation, and Education.

Turning to the factors related to socio-economic background of students, students from lower social backgrounds (i.e. lower supervisory and technical support, semi-routine, and routine occupations) were most likely both to work during term time and to work longer hours than students from higher social backgrounds. As far as the type of Higher Education Institution (HEI) attended was concerned, it was found that students in General HE Colleges had the highest propensity to do paid work and to have long working hours. On the other hand, students who had attended the most selective universities had the lowest probability of term-time working.

Finally, with reference to factors relating to students' opinions of their courses, students reporting positive experiences of their studies were less likely to do paid work or to work for more than 16 hours per week than those who did not consider that their HE experience had been positive. Moreover, students who considered that they had had an excessive amount of work during their first year of study were least likely to have worked for more than 16 hours. Similarly, those who reported considering that their course had been 'good value for money' were also less likely to have engaged in term-time working. The significance of the fact that those who had a 'clear idea' about what they wanted to do on completion of their courses were more likely to have done paid work than others, as well as having a greater probability of having been employed for an average of over 16 weekly term-time hours during their first year of study requires further exploration of the extent to which their work was likely to be strongly career-related.

The figures that follow illustrate the relationship between key variables identified as significantly related to propensity to do paid work during term.

Figure 4.3 shows the average number of hours of paid work reported by respondents who undertook such work during term, according to their socio-economic background. It shows that those coming from professional and managerial backgrounds were least likely to have worked long hours and that those from routine manual backgrounds were most likely to have done so. As was found in several of the studies cited above, socio-economic background was correlated with average hours worked.

Figure 4.3: Paid work during term: average weekly hours* worked by socio-economic background



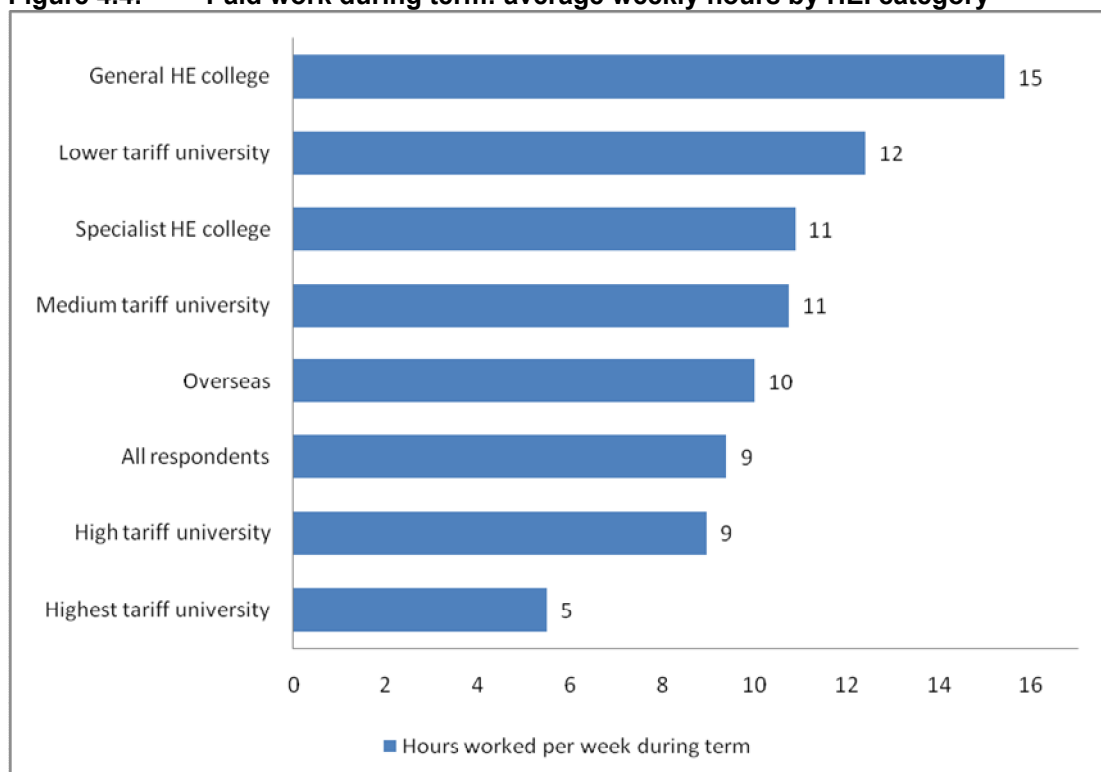
Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted*

* N.B. As with all the figures on paid work that follow, percentages refer to those who reported undertaking paid work in first year of study.

If we select only those in the top category and only those in the bottom one, we find that a third of those from higher managerial and professional backgrounds undertook paid employment during term and of those, just over a quarter worked for more than 16 hours per week. In comparison, 46 per cent of those from routine manual backgrounds did paid work during term, and of those, a third (33 per cent) worked for more 16 hours per week.

Figure 4.4 shows the relationship between the average number of hours worked per week and the category of HEI attended, shown to be a statistically significant variable in the multivariate analyses and reflecting the complex inter-relationship of socio-economic background, access to HE and subject studied. The analyses discussed in Chapter 2 (particularly Tables 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 and Figure 2.8) illustrated the relationships between study demands, subject and type of university, which help to make sense of the patterns of participation discussed in this chapter. Those reporting greatest study demands, in terms of both time-tables classes and practical work and hours spent on coursework or study, were most often found in the Highest Tariff universities and the Specialist HEIs.

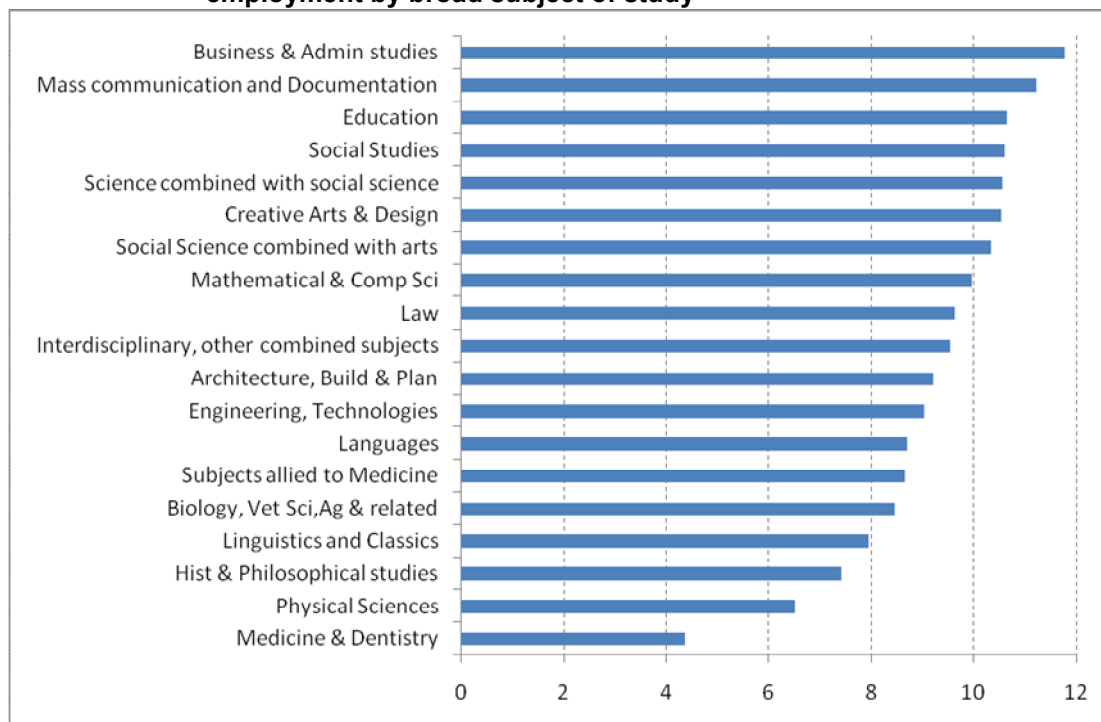
Figure 4.4: Paid work during term: average weekly hours by HEI category



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted

The disciplines/areas of study involving the highest academic demands in terms of classroom-based study and individual study were most often located in these types of HEI, and the findings in this chapter show clearly that students in these areas of study were less likely to report term-time paid work or, if they did, tended to work less hours, as shown in Figure 4.5. The average weekly hours worked during term by those who reported working at all in their first year was just over nine, but this ranged from 4.25 hours by Medicine & Dentistry students employed during term to just under 12 hours by those studying Mass Communications, and while only 13 per cent of the former employed during term worked for more than 16 hours, 27 per cent of the latter did.

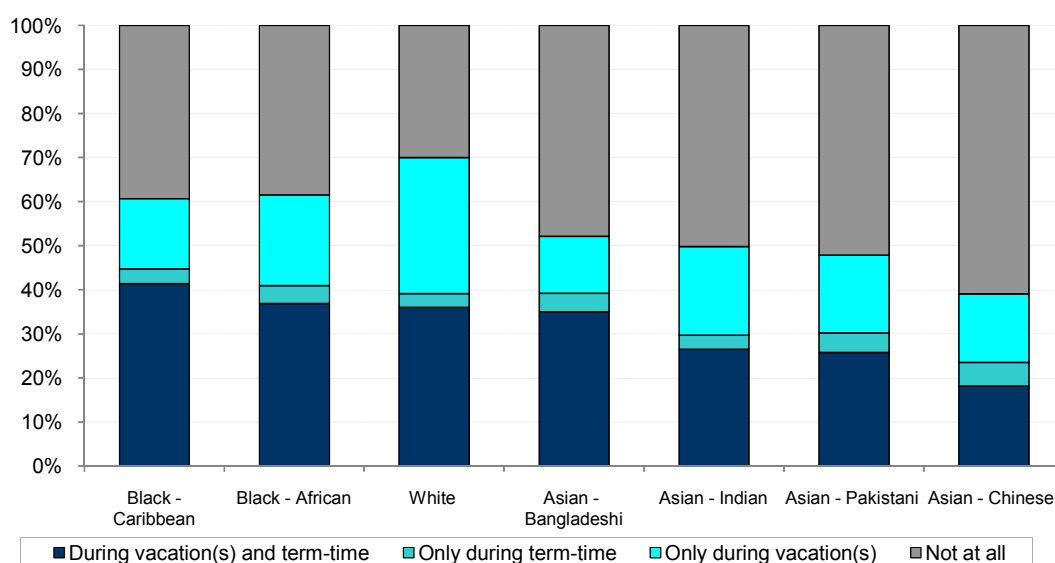
Figure 4.5: Average hours during term worked by students who worked in paid employment by broad subject of study



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted*

There was considerable variation in the extent to which participation in paid work was reported by different ethnic groups, which reinforces the need to disaggregate the category of 'minority ethnic students' to understand the social and cultural dynamics underlying career-related decisions and patterns of HE participation and experience. Figure 4.6 shows selected ethnic groups where there are sufficiently substantial numbers to conduct robust comparison. Students from Chinese Asian backgrounds were least likely to engage in paid work during term (although most likely to work during both term and vacation if they did), white students were most likely to work in vacations only and least likely to have had no paid employment at all, and those of black Caribbean ethnicity the group that was the most likely to be employed during term and vacations. There are significant and interesting differences among the Asian groups that are being explored in detail in relation to cultural context, discussed elsewhere in this report, and related to the differences in perceptions of identity reported in Chapter 1 (See especially Figure 1.5), allied to the gendered choices of course and HE location discussed in the Futuretrack Stage 1 report (Purcell *et al.*, 2008). The interaction of gender, ethnicity and social class are core themes of the report that we continue to explore their relative explanatory force in relation to different career choices.

Figure 4.6: Paid work by ethnic group

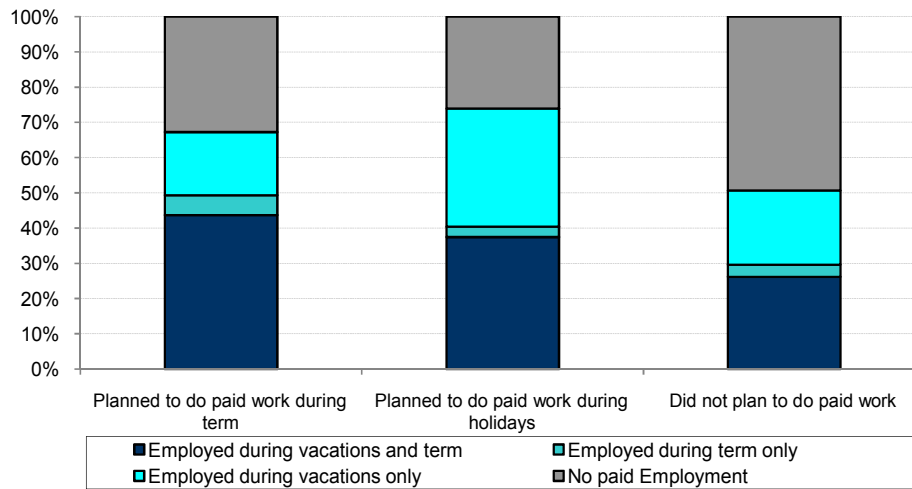


Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted*

Why did students undertake paid work during term and in vacations?

At Stage 1, we had asked respondents prior to embarking on their courses, whether they intended to do paid work to fund their studies while they were students, during or outside term. Half of all who responded saw work during term as one of the means by which they would fund their participation in HE, with 59 per cent planning to work during vacations (Purcell *et al.*, 2008:87). Of those who had accepted UK HE places to begin their studies in Autumn 2006 and who also participated at Stage 2, the proportions were similar. However, comparison of intentions to do paid work in their first year of study and what had actually happened showed substantial differences, as Figure 4.7 shows. Only half of those who had planned to do paid work during term time to supplement their funding did so, while 40 per cent of those who planned only vacation work to supplement other sources of funding did in fact do paid work during term and in total, a slightly higher proportion of them did paid vacation work in vacations only. Of those who did not plan to supplement their funding with paid work, 30 per cent nevertheless worked during term and a further 20 per cent during vacations.

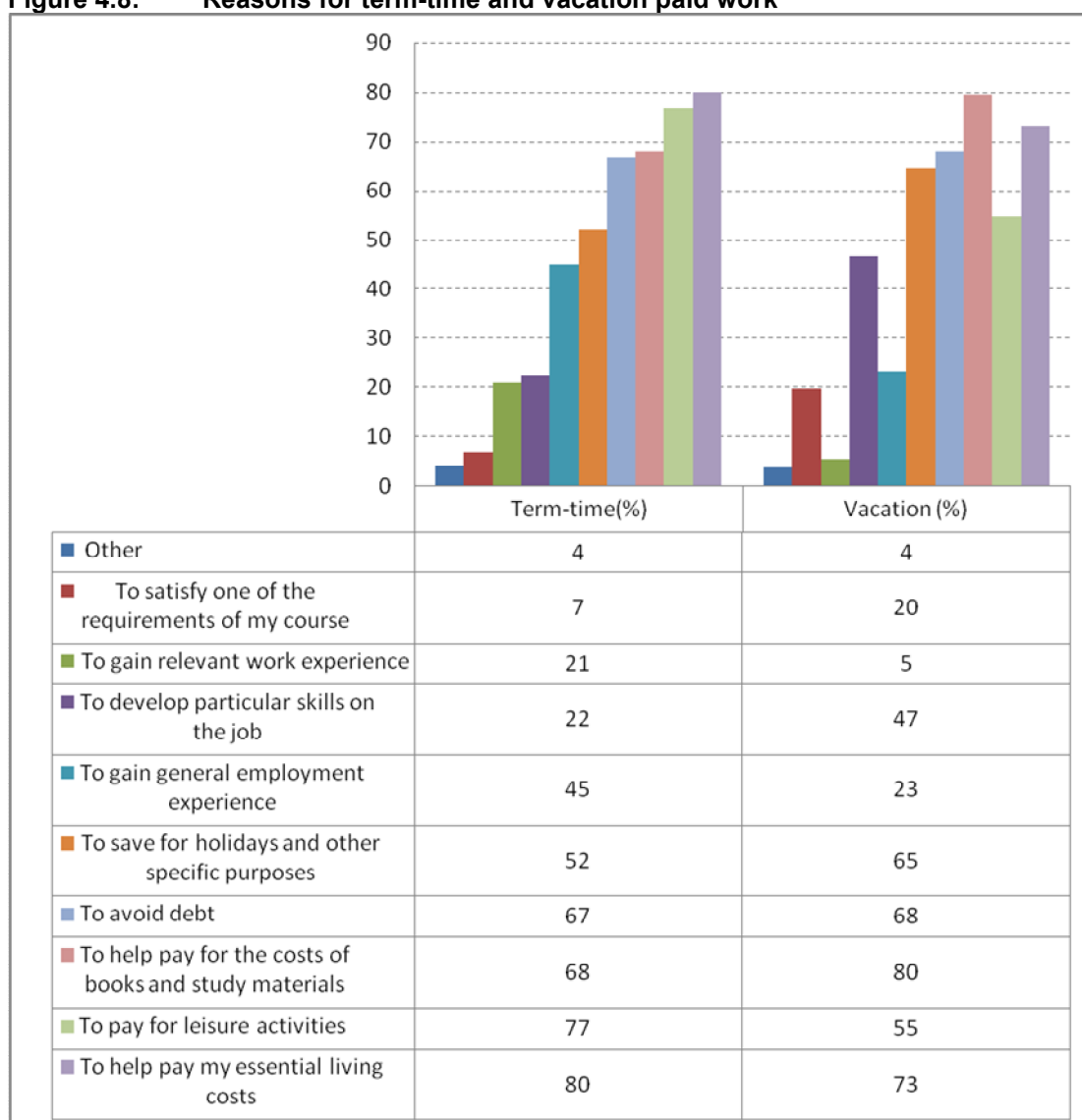
Figure 4.7: Relationship between plans to do paid work during term and vacations prior to start of course, and actual paid work reported in first year



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted

We need to explore further why a significant proportion of those who anticipated that it would be necessary and possible to do paid work to contribute to their costs did not do so. To an extent these discrepancies relate to reasons for doing paid work. As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, there are a range of pressures on students to work during term, not only financially, but in terms of the injunction to respond to the repeated research finding that students with work experience have greater success in obtaining appropriate employment after graduation and policy-makers' and employers' assertions that evidence of 'employability skills', as well as particular skills and knowledge, are highly valued by them in selection of recruits. We asked respondents why they had done paid work and Figure 4.8 shows the reasons they gave, with interesting differences in the proportions of responses under different headings according to whether the work was in term-time or vacations.

Figure 4.8: Reasons for term-time and vacation paid work



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted

There is obviously an overlap in the reasons listed, and responses refer to students' perceptions, but the options were well-tested in the pilot survey and cognitive testing workshops prior to the fieldwork, and reveal interesting patterns of variation among categories of respondent, as will be discussed. Payment for essentials and study costs were most frequently cited for types of employment, and although payment for leisure activities was the third most frequent reason cited for employment during vacations, with over three-quarters of students citing it, avoidance of debt was cited by around two-thirds of respondents as a reason for both term and vocational paid work. As Figure 4.8 and the following comments from respondents at Stage 2 showed, the reasons for working were not exclusively, or even necessarily, financial, although financial reasons were important – more so for some than others, in line with the socio-economic and subject-related participation rates discussed above.

Many students gave variants on the comment made succinctly by the one who wrote on her questionnaire:

'It was impossible for me to avoid debt entirely, but working helped to reduce my debt.'

[Female, white, 18 and under, Languages, highest tariff university]

Students reported having been considerably more likely to have worked during term to satisfy course requirements, while they were more likely to work during vacations to gain relevant work experience or to gain general employment experience and 'to develop particular skills on the job'. Respondents indicating 'other reasons' or adding qualitative comments reveal the diversity of circumstances under which students experience UK HE. The most common categories that such comments fall into are illustrated briefly by the examples below.

...because they enjoyed working:

'Fun'

[Male, black African, under 18, Social Sciences, Highest tariff university]

..for specific career and skills related reasons:

'To maintain professional skills (physiotherapy).'

[Female, white, 26 and over, Biology, Veterinary Science, Agriculture and related subjects, High tariff university]

'Being a mature student, my previous employers asked me to stay on two days a week in a management role which I agreed to do as it helps financially (I am a home owner and run a car etc)

[Female, white, 26 and over, Psychology, Biology, Vet Sci, Agr & related subjects, Medium tariff university]

..to enable repayment of previously-incurred debt or to meet existing commitments:

'Went to uni with a pre-existing debt in the region of £30k and no parental support'

[Male, white, 21-25, Engineering and Technologies, High tariff university]

'Mortgage. Also have to pay tuition fees as am graduate entry medical student'

[Female, white, 26 and over, Medicine and Dentistry, High tariff university]

....children and childcare, including

'To pay for leisure activities for my children'

[Female, white, 26 and over, Creative Arts and Design, Medium tariff university]

'To pay for the high cost of childcare.'

[Female, 21-25, Subjects allied to Medicine, High tariff university]

....parental pressures to do so

'My Parents insisted'

[Female, white, 18 and under, Interdisciplinary subjects, Medium tariff university]

...study-related travel and accommodation costs not otherwise affordable:

'To help pay for travel costs.'

[Female, Asian Indian, 18 and under, Business and Administrative subjects, Medium tariff university]

'The student loan doesn't cover the summer holidays so I have to work to afford the rent on my house.'

[Female, white, 19-20, Mass Communication and Documentation, Low tariff university]

...employer-related, including responses from students whose participation in HE was sponsored by an employer or had a career-track scholarship, or who had an existing relationship with an employer that they wished to maintain:

'Part of sponsorship agreement'

[Male, white, 19-20, Engineering and Technologies, Highest tariff university]

..for wider social and cultural reasons:

'to contact more local people, to learn from the society and to improve English and communication skill'

[Male, Asian Chinese, 21-25, Engineering and Technologies, High tariff university]

.....for non-essential but valued expenditure, indicative of interests and living standards:

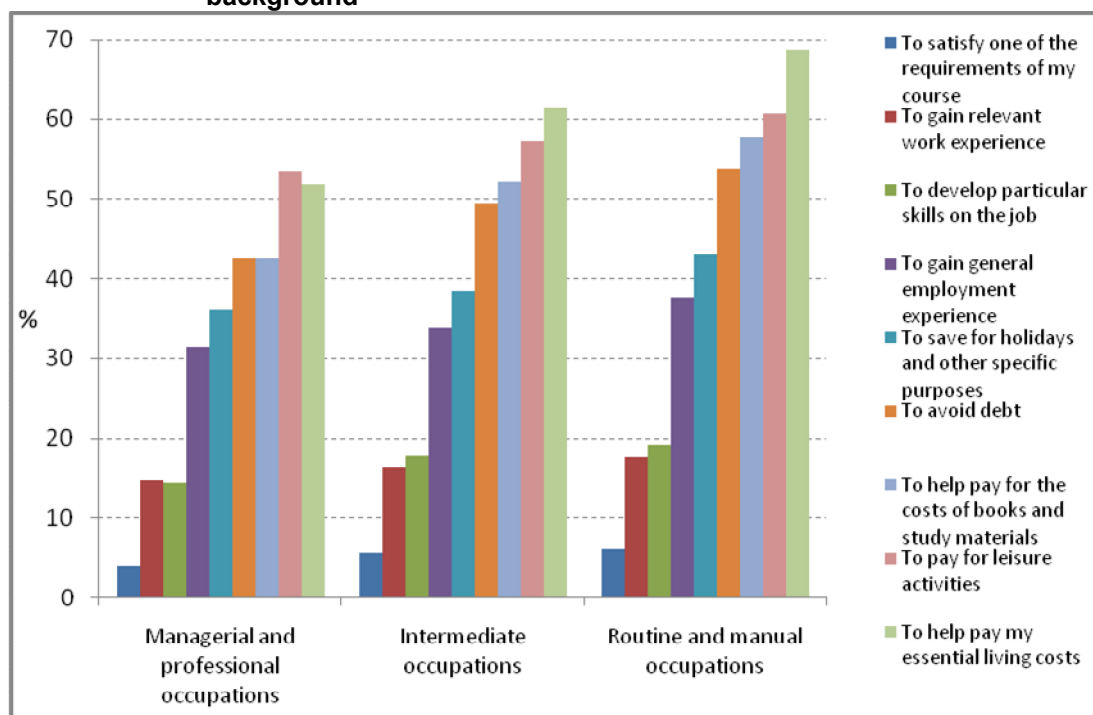
'As a car fan, I love to spend on it...'

[Male, Asian Pakistani, 21-25, Engineering and Technologies, Low tariff university]

The reasons students gave for doing paid work varied by socio-economic background and by subject and the interaction of the two, as was shown in the Stage 1 report, reflecting the different course choices according to social and educational background. Figure 4.8 shows the broad similarity of the relative importance of reasons across the social spectrum, but also the differences in the extent to which paid work was essential according to family socio-economic background.

Figure 4.9 gives the overall propensities of respondents to cite particular reasons. If we look at the extent to which the different reasons were given by respondents according to discipline and area of study, we find that those subjects where there is a greater probability of participation by less socially and educationally advantaged students, most reasons many more reasons tended to be cited. Education, Creative Arts and Mass Communications students were most often the most likely to have stated that they needed to work during term to earn money for the different activities given, followed by those who had opted for Business Studies and Subjects Allied to Medicine.

Figure 4.9: Reasons for doing paid work during term by broad socio-economic background



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted

- The most frequent categories to give **essential living costs** as a reason were the first three of these: 70 per cent of Mass Communications students, 69 per cent of Education students, 67 per cent of Creative Arts students, followed by Architecture students, embarking on one of the longest undergraduate courses.
- The most likely to have given paying for the **cost of books and study materials** as a reason for working were students in the same areas of study, with Education (64 per cent) and Creative Arts students (61 per cent) considerably more likely to do so than Subject Allied to Medicine (56 per cent) and Mass Communications (54 per cent).
- All these named subjects above were at the top of the list of subjects with the highest proportion of students who worked **to pay for leisure activities** but the range of probabilities by subject was narrower with this variable, ranging from 59 per cent of Education students to 49 per cent of Medicine and Dentistry students, the least likely to do paid work during term and, where they did, the least likely to give payment for leisure and holidays as a reason and among the least likely to give finance-related reasons generally. **Saving for holidays and other specific purposes** was given as a reason by between 47 per cent of Mass Communications students and 29 per cent of the Medicine and Dentistry students.
- The range of respondents citing **avoidance of debt** was from 37 per cent of the Medicine and Dentistry students in employment to 57 per cent of the Education students.
- In the first year, it is not surprising that **to gain relevant work experience** was most often cited by Business Studies (28 per cent) and Education (23 per cent) students. These were also the subjects where **to satisfy a requirement of my course** was most often given as a reason (10 per cent of the former and 4 per cent of the latter), and the same two were the subjects with students who were the most likely to cite the need **to develop particular skills for a job**.

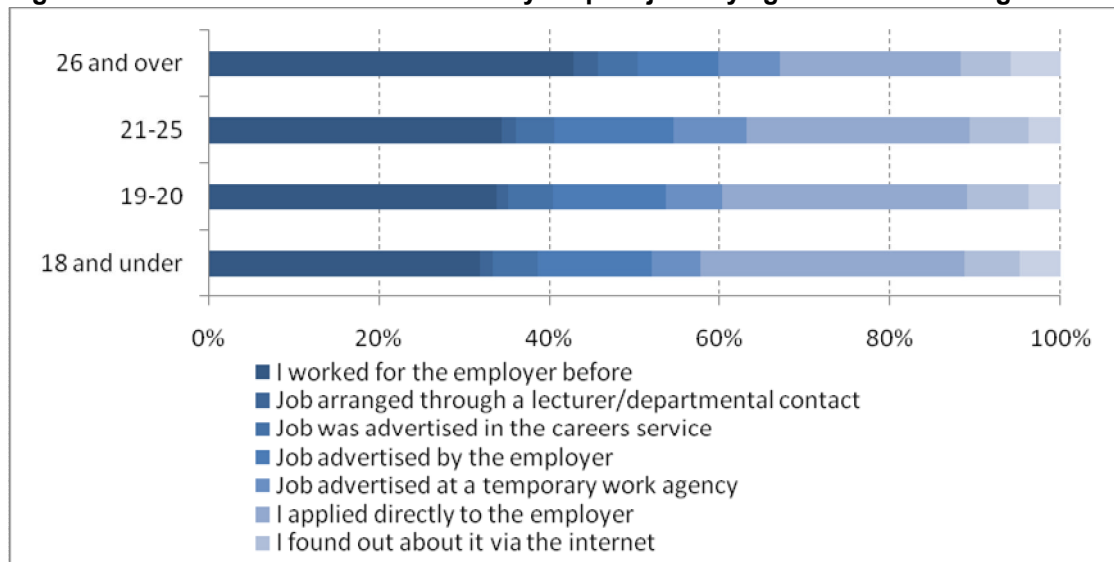
- It is perhaps more surprising, but an indication that the message about the importance of work experience and evidence of employability skills in career development is getting through, that the students who had most frequently done paid work **to gain general employment experience** were those doing the less directly vocational courses: 64 per cent of those studying Physical Sciences, 63 per cent of those studying Mathematics and Computing, 62 per cent of those studying Linguistics and Classics – along with 62 per cent of Business Studies students.

How did students obtain their jobs?

How does the ‘student-labour’ market work? Do students simply constitute additional job-seekers among an increasing recessionary labour supply competing for employment that meets their needs in the general low-skilled or part-time labour markets, or do they have routes into jobs or opportunities and obstacles that are different to the average non-student seeking such work, or access to different parts of the labour market? Previous research has shown that employers in some sectors, such as hospitality and call centres, advertise in HEIs and construct jobs around the availability of student labour (Purcell *et al.*, 1999), and we found some evidence of this in the Stage 1 survey, with secondary school students with part-time chain store retail experience being encouraged by the home-based employers to transfer to part-time employment in their HEI city of choice and even to select their HEI on the basis of store location.

In fact, at Stage 2, we found that around half of first year students who had done paid work had worked for their employer before, and that the probability of this rose by age, as Figure 4.10 shows, ranging from 46 per cent of those aged 18 or under when they embarked on HE to 59 per cent of those aged 26 and over.

Figure 4.10: Source of access to first year paid jobs by age when embarking on HE



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did paid work during term, weighted

The other most frequently mentioned source of employment was applying directly to the employer and via their HEI ‘job shop’ or careers service – which represented a fifth of access routes cited. A substantial minority (one in ten) had found their job via the internet. Only around 2 per cent of these first year students had obtained their paid work via a lecturer or departmental contact. Other routes to paid work mentioned in substantial numbers of cases

included personal contacts (via a friend or relative), through their universities as employees, via self-employment, individual advertising of availability to work, and as a result of doing voluntary work.

Some had found out about employment opportunities at their HEI Freshers' Fair and adverts in university halls of residence, and some worked directly for the university. In one case a Veterinary Nursing student had been directed by a lecturer to an opportunity to work in the university's small animal house, which was not part of formally required course-related work experience or placement programmes, but related to her career plans. Others found work through university initiatives such as the 'Students in classrooms' scheme which might or might not be related to longer term career plans. Yet others had done jobs in university catering or other operative, routine IT or clerical jobs at their institution or related to events held there. These were generally not related to course content or career plans.

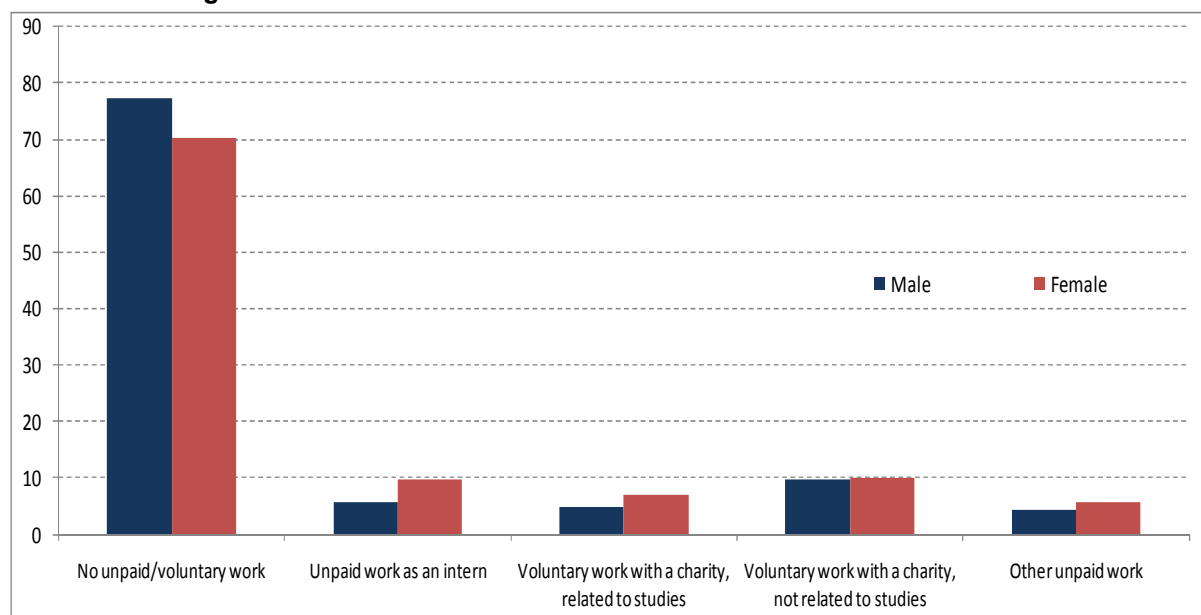
In the case of earning money during term involving self employment, this normally involved using skills and knowledge previously developed which might or might not be related to their current studies. Two contrasting examples were a self-employed music teacher, aged over 26, studying for BSc Engineering and a young male Biological Sciences student who reported that he had been approached to work part-time as a tennis coach, which suited him as he could arrange his own hours of work.

Examples where earlier experience of voluntary work had led to an opportunity for paid work included a female, aged over 26 studying for a BSc/LLB Criminology and Law who stated that she had found about her job when doing a voluntary job in Citizen's Advice Bureau, while a young male Social Studies student had been offered paid work at a gym 'after being spotted doing voluntary sports coaching'.

Unpaid and voluntary work: who did it and why?

As we saw in Figure 4.8, there were significant differences in the reasons given by students for working during term and in vacations, although clearly financial need was a key reason for both in many cases. A higher proportion of first year students worked in vacations than did so during term, and as with term-time working, there were socio-economic and demographic and educational differences between those doing vacation work. This is even more the case for those who did or did not do voluntary or unpaid work. The majority of first year undergraduates did not do voluntary or unpaid work, as Figure 4.11 shows, and males were less likely to do so than females.

Figure 4.11: Incidence and patterns of unpaid and voluntary work in first year by gender



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

Categories and patterns of unpaid work

The most common types were the following:

Voluntary work in local schools, normally in the location where they were studying. This represented 16 per cent of those who did not find it possible to fit their cases under one of the options provided, and included a School Governor (female mature student studying a subject allied to medicine), and a disabled student studying interdisciplinary subjects teaching dance at a local dance school.

University related activities, of whom nearly 90 per cent were aged 21 or under, such as student helper at careers fairs, assisting with student visit day and demonstrating in laboratories, working with a university-based scheme designed to encourage state school students to go on to higher education, writing for the university magazine, providing sound and lighting for university club nights and coaching for university sports teams.

Working in community based activities – such as **with young people**, in organisations like Brownies with which they had been involved prior to HE, or in activities designed to help with studies or provide experience related to career intentions - such as serving as Special Police officers, mentioned in ten cases, half of whom were studying criminology, law, social work or psychology. Participation in **church activities** sometimes reflected similar prior or current network membership but sometimes also related to their studies - including a Theology student who reported helping with a soup kitchen and a lay preacher also studying Theology. Those working in their communities were more often women - but mature students, in relation to their overall numbers in the sample, were disproportionately involved in these, perhaps unsurprisingly given their greater likelihood of studying in a location in which they were already embedded, with established relationships and responsibilities; for example, a mature

student studying Creative Arts and Design reported voluntary undertaking of caring work, to support an elderly friend.

Sports coaching - over a third of which exponents were studying sports exercise or related subjects. They covered a wide range, however, and examples ranged from the male student who coached kayaking to the female student coaching football.

Student Union unpaid activities, almost exclusively reported by students in the younger age groups (aged 22 or under), ranging from campaigning in elections for the SU presidency or manning the cloakroom in the Students' Union.

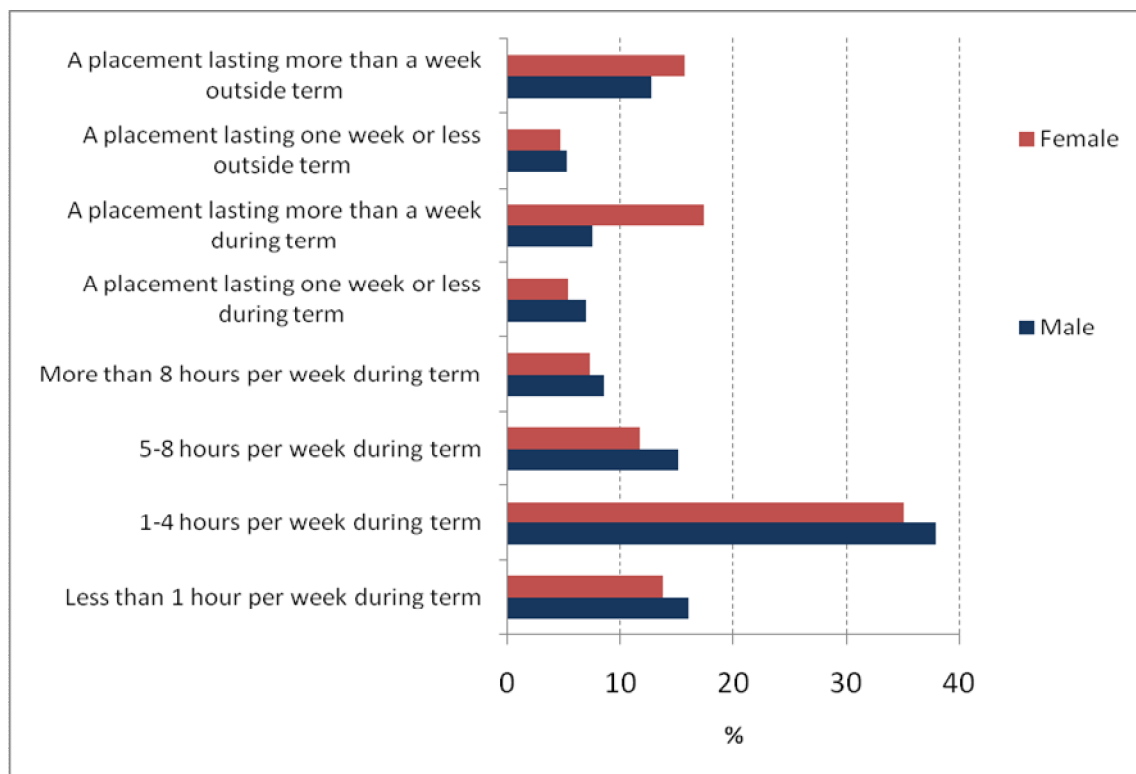
The small number who mentioned unpaid **political work** beyond student politics were all in the younger age groups, who helped with campaigning for national political parties.

Fundraising for charitable or other areas of interest included taking part in cricket matches to raise money for a hospital, working for a charity for homeless people, taking part in sponsored walks and fundraising activities organized by the Air Training Corps.

Unpaid work to help friends and family. A substantial proportion of respondents who fitted in this category reported doing work on behalf of friends that was related to their studies - such as the young male student of mathematics who was a maths tutor to a friend - but the remainder did voluntary work such as elder and child care for relatives, neighbours or fellow students. Some (mostly from the youngest age groups) reported unpaid work in their family business. Of those who cited caring activities, over half were aged over 30, many studying for 'caring' vocational degrees such as nursing and only one male in this group - although it is likely to be the case that this is a small fraction of the real extent of caring work (mainly, but by no means exclusively, carried out by women). Although 12 per cent of respondents had dependents, only one of these recorded 'unpaid work' associated with these - a young female Social Sciences student caring for a disabled parent - which is an interesting reflection of the conceptualisation of family responsibilities as related to relationships rather than work (Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Finch and Groves, 1983).

The more detailed patterning of unpaid and voluntary work undertaken by males and females were broadly similar, but women were more likely to report having done a placement lasting more than one week during term, suggesting course-related work, and those men who did such work to have worked slightly longer hours during term than women.

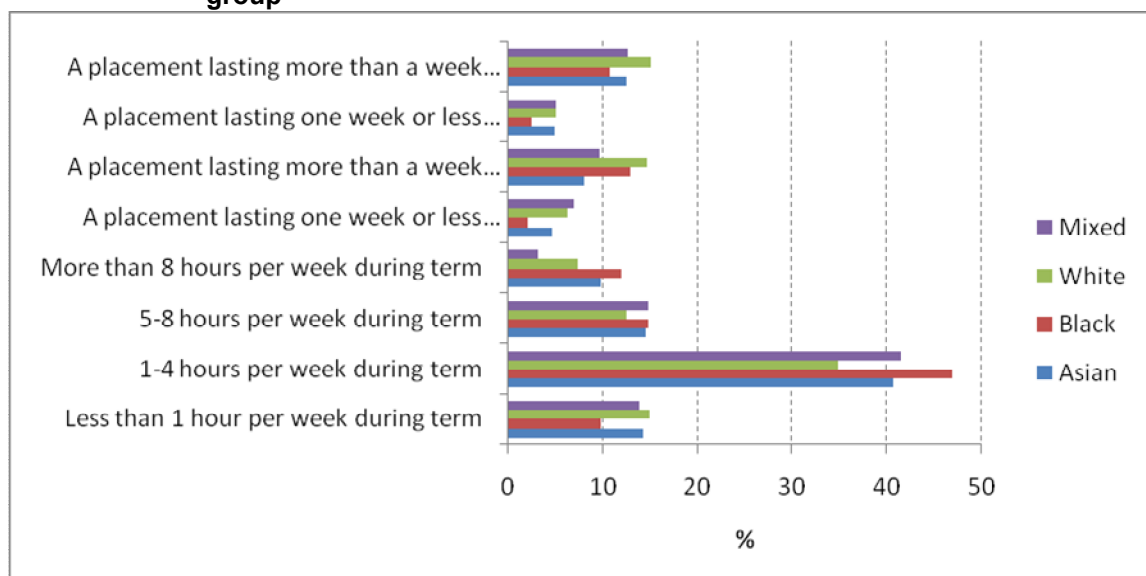
Figure 4.12: Categories of unpaid work during the first year of HE study by gender



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did unpaid work, weighted

There was also some variation in types of unpaid work done by different ethnic groups, as Figure 4.13 shows, which deserves further qualitative investigation, but these were not very substantial.

Figure 4.13: Categories of unpaid work during the first year of HE study by ethnic group

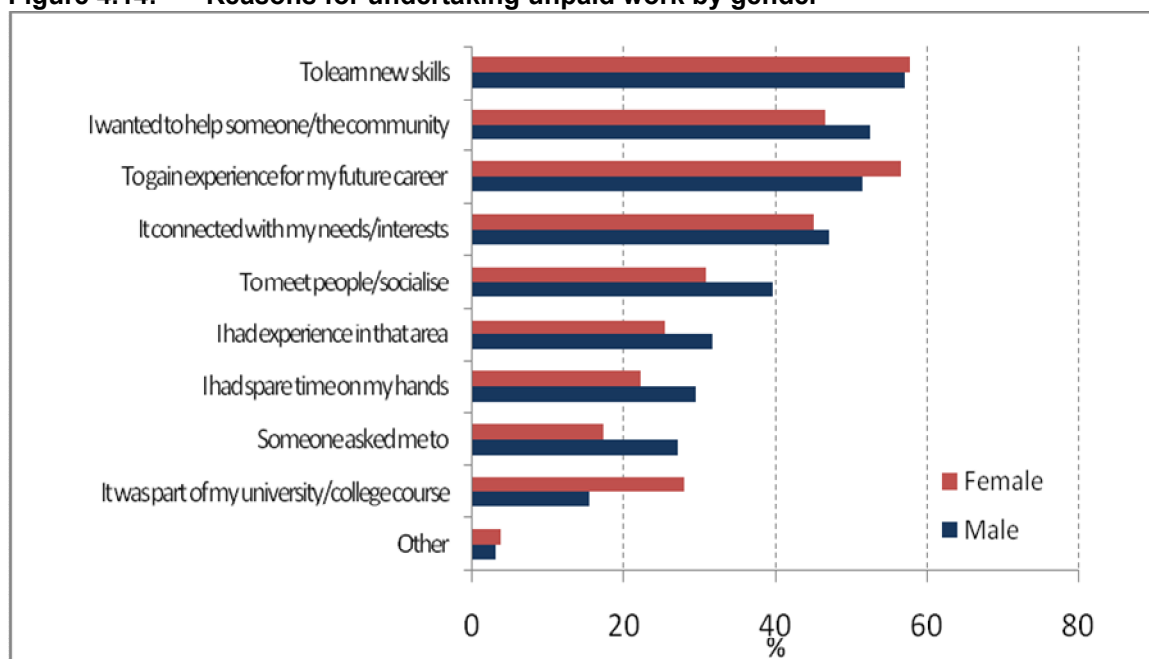


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did unpaid work, weighted

Why did students do unpaid work?

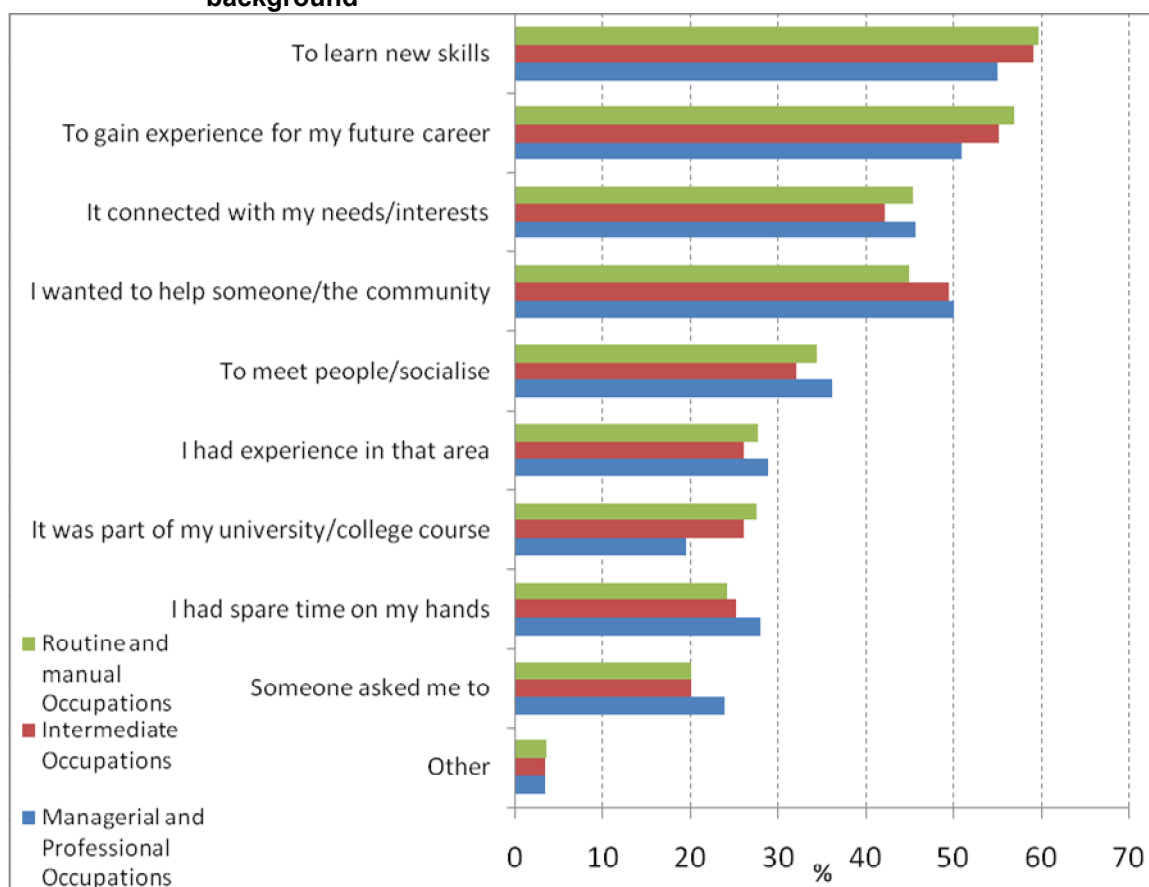
The reasons for undertaking unpaid work can largely be deduced from the types of unpaid and voluntary work cited above. However, we explicitly asked all respondents who had undertaken such work for their reasons for doing so. The order of reasons given for doing the work is very similar for both women and men, but reinforces the emerging picture that women were slightly more likely to have been doing career-related unpaid work, possibly reflecting the vocational courses, such as those related to medicine and education that they had a greater propensity to study on than men, as Figure 4.14 reveals, and there were small but interesting differences that require qualitative exploration according to broad socio-economic background, as shown in Figure 4.15.

Figure 4.14: Reasons for undertaking unpaid work by gender



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did unpaid work, weighted

Figure 4.15: Reasons given for doing unpaid work by socio-economic background



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all UK-domiciled current students who entered higher education in 2006 and did unpaid work, weighted

Of the minority giving 'other' reasons, the picture is largely of altruism, along, perhaps, with some evidence of accruing experience that might be of value in terms of career development.

Summary

- The introduction of student loans and top-up fees has resulted in an increasing proportion of the undergraduate population undertaking paid employment during their studies. It was clear from the Futuretrack Stage 1 responses that the most frequently-cited reason for undertaking paid work is financial, to help cover basic or more discretionary costs and expenditure during study. Employment during term was more often undertaken by students who stated that they did it to cover essential study and subsistence costs, whereas vacation work was undertaken by a larger number of students and less often to cover fundamental needs.
- However, it was also clear that both employers and students alike use student willingness to do paid work as providing a useful chance to gain skills and experience that will be useful when the student enters the labour force, as well as providing students with the opportunity to clarify what kind of employment might be most appropriate for them.
- The average number of hours worked per week during term time by those students who had undertaken some paid employment was just over nine, but this varied

considerably by discipline, socio-demographic background, ethnicity and subject studied.

- Only half of those respondents who said at Stage 1 that they planned to do paid work during term time actually did so, but 40 per cent of those who said they planned to only work in vacations ultimately worked during term time. Of those who said that they planned to do no paid work at all during their time in HE, 30 per cent ended up working during term-time and a further 20 per cent during vacations.
- Students working during term-time and working long hours were more likely to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, minority ethnic groups and disadvantaged educational backgrounds. They also worked for longer hours on average. This raises questions about whether these students have access to the same HE experience as students from other groups who are less likely to work, particularly as working during term-time and working long hours were found to be associated with being less involved in extra-curricular activities and less overall satisfaction with their courses.
- There was a negative linear relationship between average tariff access of HEIs, likelihood of undertaking employment during term, and weekly hours of paid work, with those from general HE colleges most likely to work, and to work the longest hours at one extreme and those from the highest access score HEIs least likely to work and, where they did, have the lowest average weekly hours.
- Male students were more likely than women to say that they had not undertaken any paid work during their first year in HE, although those who have been employed worked longer hours during term than the female students who had been employed.
- Patterns of paid working varied among the different UK countries, ranging from over half of Scottish-domiciled students doing paid work during term, followed by NI domiciled students, of whom precisely half did, and English and Welsh domiciled students who were more likely to work only during vacations and to have no paid employment at all in their first year.
- Paying for essential living costs and books and study materials were the most common reasons given for undertaking paid employment during term time. Paying for essential living costs and leisure activities were the most frequently cited reasons for working during vacations.
- Reasons for undertaking paid term-time work varied by subject, as well as the propensity to do so, mainly related to differences in the socio-economic backgrounds of students who had opted for different subjects, but clearly also related to the financial requirements of the course and the degree to which courses were vocational or not.
- The most common ways in which students had accessed paid work was via existing relationships with employers, by directly approaching employers or via their HEI temporary agency, Careers advisory service or 'job-shop'.
- Voluntary or unpaid work was done by a minority of students during their first year, 30 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men. Women were more than twice as likely as men to have done a placement lasting more than a week during term and also more likely to have done such a placement outside term and in contrast to the paid

work patterns, were more likely to have spent more hours on voluntary or unpaid work.

- Two of the most commonly given reasons for doing voluntary or other unpaid work were related to personal development - learning new skills and gaining experience for a future career. The other two most commonly given reasons were a desire to help someone or contribute to the social or academic community (and such reasons were more often given by mature students with established roles and relationships in the community), but a minority of social reasons - to meet people, and to have fun in relation to their interests - were also mentioned by a substantial minority.

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CHAPTER 5

Career planning, careers guidance and future aspirations: use of the Careers Service and changing ideas about the future

Introduction

The longitudinal design of Futuretrack 2006 allows an analysis of the process of the decision-making, as career ideas are expressed during the application process can be set in contrast to experiences during the first year in higher education. The first year of students in HE can be something of a 'reality shock' (Millward, 2005:178) in which vocational and educational expectations are exposed to reality at the HE institution (HEI). Previously acquired knowledge and vocational ideas is often countered by new influences, either by lecturers or other academic staff or, where relevant, by work experience. This chapter explores a number of areas which relate to the process of forming or changing career plans: which guidance or support offers of the Careers Service were used, and by whom; how often did students visit the Career Service; and who was not aware the range of career guidance and information available to them? What plans did students have after the completion of study, especially in terms of further study? What influences changes to their future ideas? The analysis showed that one important influence of students' careers planning was the chosen subject and the HEI.

The use of the Careers Service

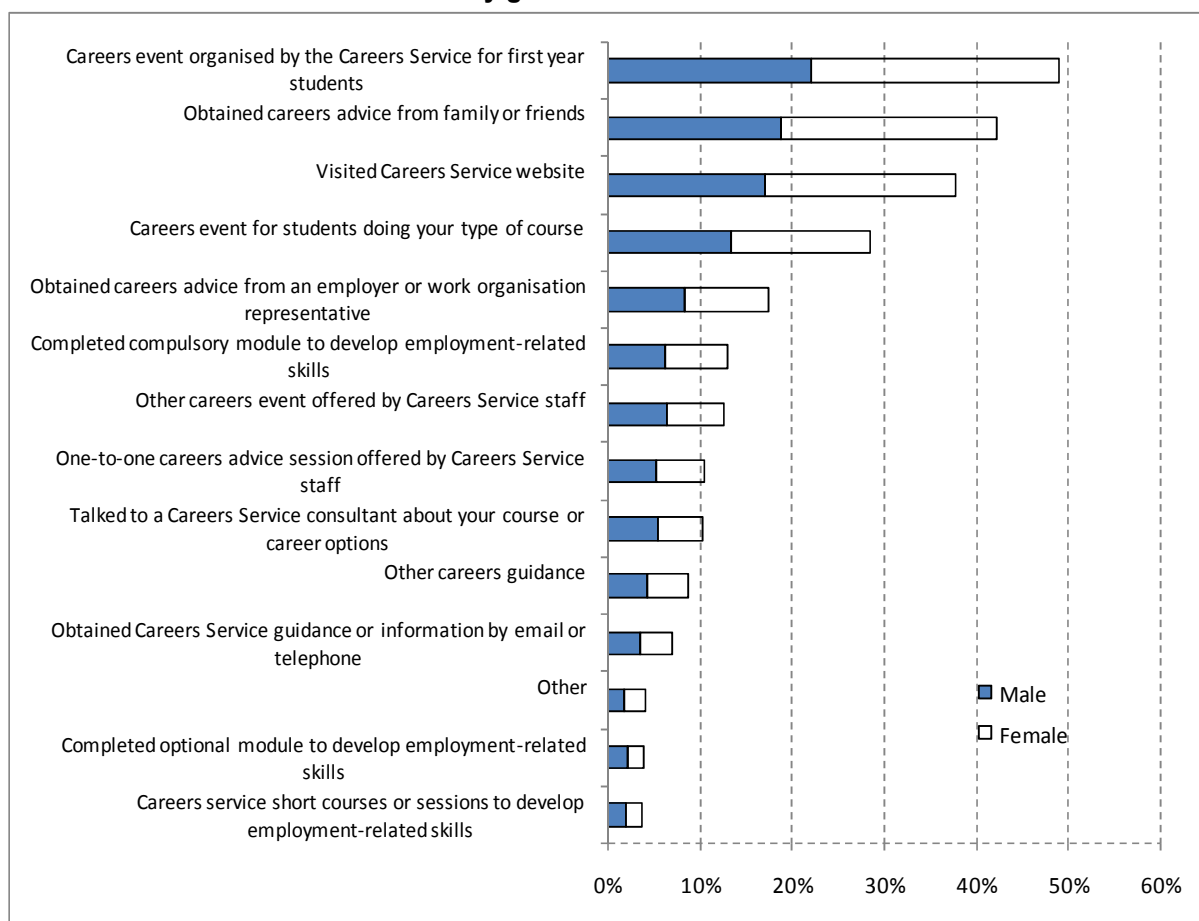
The most frequently used careers information or careers guidance opportunity for Futuretrack 2006 were careers events organised by the Careers Service for first year students; about half of all respondents stated that they took part in such an event during their first year at university (Figure 5.1). Forty two per cent of all respondents obtained careers advice from family and friends, 38 per cent visited the Careers Service website and 28 per cent took part in a careers event for students specifically for one type of course.

The type of careers information or guidance opportunities varied with the type of HEI. There were some differences between students at HE and HE/FE colleges and universities. Although half of all university students reported that they had taken part in careers events organised by the Careers Service for first years students, only 35 per cent of students of specialist HE colleges and 26 per cent of students of general HE colleges participated in such an event. The most frequently used source of advice for students of HE colleges came from family and friends.

Participation in events organised by the Careers Service varied with student's age. Over all ages, the 'Careers event organised for first year students' was the most frequent event cited. For the oldest age group, however, it was on a par with 'visited the careers service website'; reported by a third of all students of 26 years and over.

Other careers information or guidance opportunities mentioned by respondents included advice from university lecturers or tutors, employees or employers during placements and professional organisations (e.g. The British Psychological Society or the Army). In addition, students reported accessing handouts from the career centre, booklets, or the internet resources held there.

Figure 5.1: Careers information or guidance opportunities by type of higher education institution by gender



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Various students used the opportunity to explain their attitude to the Careers Service or careers guidance in general. Some students mentioned the vocational orientation of their course and the integrated careers information and guidance. In these cases, due to the close relationship between subject and occupation, careers information had been required prior to HE entry university.

'I'm studying physiotherapy - the course is completely geared to one career. We all came to this course with a great deal of careers information and guidance, given prior to deciding upon this course'

[Female, 26 and over, Subjects allied to Medicine, Medium tariff University]

The consideration of alternatives to the appropriate careers paths were seen as not necessary by some respondents of vocational subjects, as this student reported.

'As a dental student, it would be kind of pointless to get a dental degree and then waste it by not taking a job in the Healthcare sector or in teaching'

[Male, 19-20, Medicine & Dentistry, Highest Tariff University]

Careers guidance and information was expected with university or college lecturers rather than the Careers Service by some respondents.

'As I am on a course leading to registration as a midwife, advice and information on a career in midwifery is integral to the course.'

[Female, 21-25, Subjects allied to Medicine, Medium tariff University]

'Because my course is quite unusual, careers advice is given by the lecturers.'

[Female, under 18, Creative Art & Design, Medium tariff University]

This mature student referred to the importance of networking and the exchange of information between students.

'I am a mature student with long experience and good contacts in my particular industry. Therefore I did not need the sort of assistance that is described above - indeed I am able to provide it to others who may be interested in my particular branch'

[Male, 26 and over, Interdisciplinary Subjects, Highest Tariff University]

Other students studying less vocational subjects did not study in order to enter employment after graduating.

'I am a very mature student and doubt that I will be looking for career opportunities when I graduate'

[Male, 26 and over, Linguistics and Classics, Highest Tariff University]

and some stressed their intrinsic rather than occupational motivation for studying

'I'm not at university for a career'

[Female, 19-20, Social Studies, High Tariff University]

Occupational decision making and careers guidance was sometimes consciously postponed until later in the course.

'Decided I would leave all long term decisions regarding employment until my second year was complete.'

[Female, 26 and over, Social Studies, High Tariff University]

'Why would I want careers guidance in my first year? What possible good will it do?'

[Male, 21-25, Languages, Highest Tariff University]

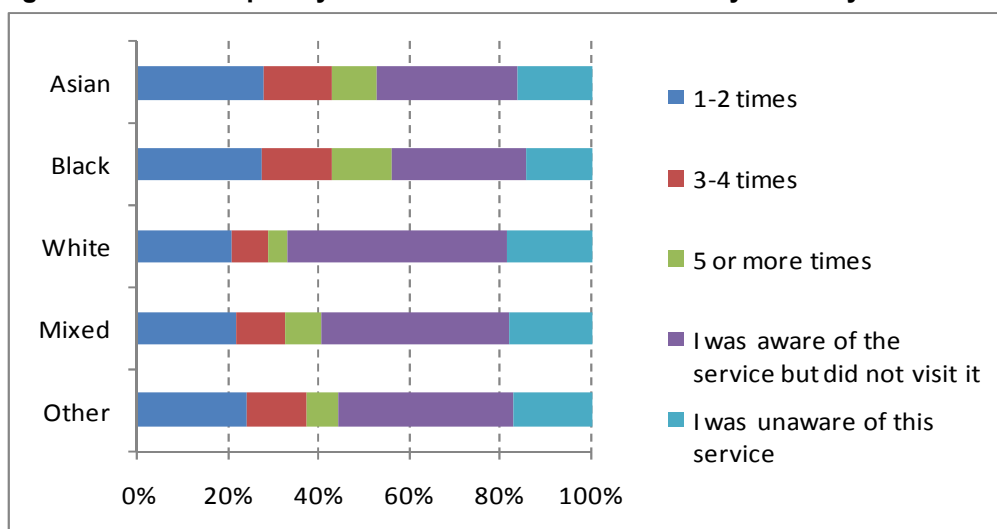
'I have no idea where I am going in life. All I know is that I do not like my course, but I love being a student. So that's what I planning on doing for 2 more years.'

[Male, under 18 years old, Mathematical & Comp Sci, High Tariff University]

Students were asked how many times in the 2006-07 academic session they had used the Careers Service at their university or college either by visiting it, telephoning consultants or logging onto its website. Most students (45 per cent) were aware of the service but had not visited it and about 18 per cent said that they were unaware of this service. Fourteen per cent had used the Careers Service three times or more often during their first year at university or college.

There is a strong division regarding the use of the Careers Service and ethnicity (Figure 5.2). Sixty seven per cent of white students were either unaware of the service or did not visit it; the highest proportion of all students. Black and Asian students were more likely to have used the Careers Service with 56 per cent of black and 53 per cent of Asian students reporting having used it at least once. The large data set of Futuretrack allows a closer look at the different ethnicities: black African students, Chinese students and Bangladeshi students were the most likely to use the Careers Service.

Figure 5.2: Frequency of use of the Careers Service by ethnicity



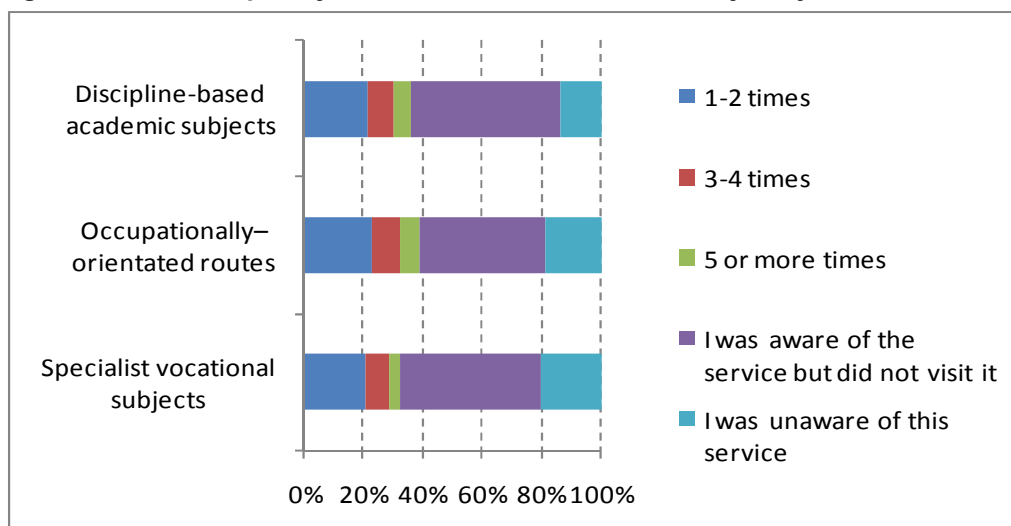
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

There was also diverse use of the Careers Service by subject. More than 80 per cent of Medicine & Dentistry students were either unaware of the service or did not visit it, as was the case for more than half of all students studying Law or Business Studies.

As in the first Futuretrack report (Purcell *et al*, 2008, p.22), a variable assessing the extent to which courses were likely to be vocationally-orientated was used to gain further knowledge about the relationship between the studied subject and the awareness of the Careers Service. Three groups of subjects were identified:

- Specialist vocational subjects (Architecture, Build & Plan, Medicine & Dentistry, Education, Law, Engineering, Technologies, Subjects allied to Medicine)
- Occupationally-orientated routes (Mass communication and Documentation, Interdisciplinary, other combined subjects, Mathematical & Comp Science, Social Studies, Business & Admin studies, Creative Arts & Design, Biology, Vet Science, Agricultural & related)
- Discipline-based academic subjects (Physical Sciences, Linguistics and Classics, Languages, History & Philosophical studies)

Figure 5.3: Frequency of use of the Careers Service by subject studied



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

In their first year, there was a discernible gradation in the likelihood of using the careers service according to these categories, with 38 per cent of students of occupationally-orientated subjects, 35 per cent of discipline-based academic subjects and 32 per cent of those studying discipline-based academic subjects had used the Career Service. Only 14 per cent of students of the last category reported that they were unaware of the Careers Service (compared to 19 per cent of students of occupationally-orientated and 20 per cent of students of specialist vocational subjects). It is likely that students of specialist vocational subjects were more likely to obtain careers guidance and support before entering HE while other students were less directly instrumental in their approach to HE study.

Eighteen per cent of all respondents stated that they were unaware of the Careers Service. A multivariate logistic regression model (Appendix 2, Table A5.1) was calculated to estimate factors associated with the awareness of Careers Service. Age, gender, ethnicity, degree of vocational orientation of the course, HEI and origin (UK, European, other overseas) were identified as related to students' awareness of the Careers Service. Table 5.1 provides a summary of the key findings from this analysis.

Table 5.1: Factors associated with students' awareness of the Careers Service

Factors associated with awareness of the Careers Service	Factors associated with lack of awareness of the Careers Service
Students 21 years and older	Students under 21 years
Male students	Female students
Black students	White students
Students studying discipline-based academic subjects	Students studying vocational subjects
Students studying at highest, high or medium tariff universities	Students studying at general or specialist HE colleges, overseas universities
European and other overseas students	UK students

Plans after completion of current course

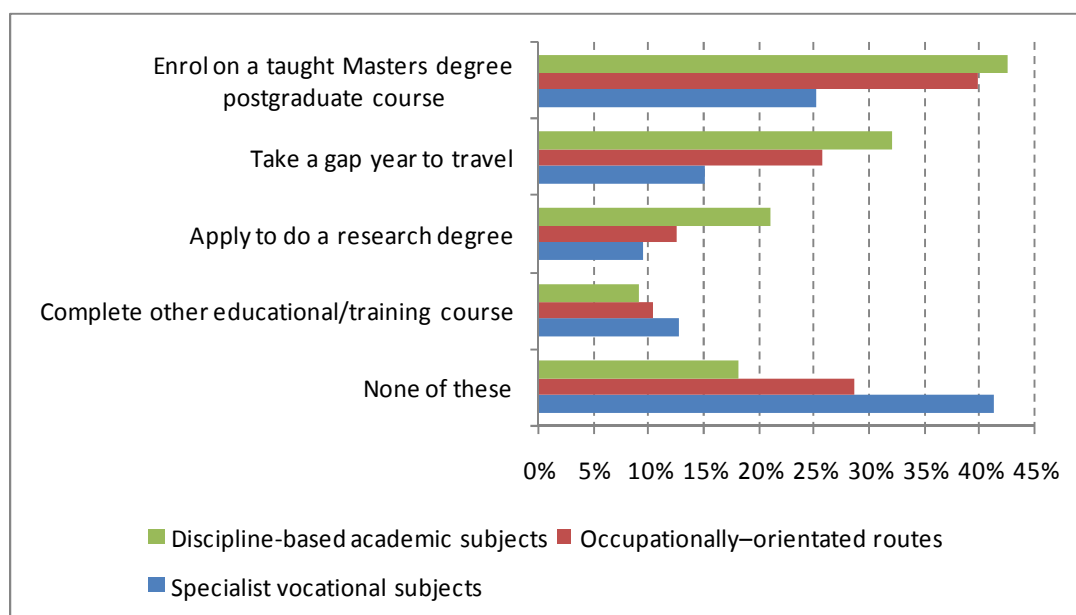
This section deals with the training plans of first year degree students after completing their current course of study. The most frequently anticipated next stage for those who told us about anticipated plans was further study on a Master's degree taught course (36 per cent of all degree students), followed by just under a quarter (24 per cent) planning a gap year. Thirty one per cent of all degree students stated that they did not plan any further training or to take a gap year, so it appears that at this stage, they anticipate entering employment immediately after completion of their course of study.

It is not surprising that the plans of students studying for a degree varied with the degree to which they were essentially vocational or more general academic course (figure 5.4). Forty three per cent of all degree students of discipline-based academic subjects (e.g. History, Philosophy) planned to enrol on a taught Master's postgraduate course, but this was only the case for 40 per cent of those studying more occupationally-orientated subjects (e.g. Social Studies) and 25 per cent of specialist vocational subjects (e.g. Medicine). The proportion of students studying discipline-based subjects or occupationally-orientated routes planning to apply to do a research degree was also higher than that of students studying specialist vocational subjects. Gap years are particularly interesting as about a third of all students studying discipline-based subjects and 26 per cent of students studying occupationally-orientated subjects plan that they will take a year off to travel. On the other hand, only 15 per cent of students studying specialist-vocational subjects plan to take a gap year to travel. Students studying specialist-vocational subjects, however, were more likely to plan to complete another education or training course than other degree students.

It can be assumed that students studying a vocational subject were more likely to try to find direct entrance to the labour market after finishing their degree. However, it may be important to state that as these responses stem from the time before the recession, they might have changed. Current newspaper reports¹³ suggested that in the short term, higher proportions of students might plan to remain in HE to postpone entry to a problematic labour market. This will be an important issue when analysing the third stage of Futuretrack 2006, still in the field at the time of writing this report.

¹³ E.g. 'Huge increase in demand for postgraduate degree courses', Lipsett, A. in the guardian 17 February 2009; The Sunday Times 22 February 2009.

Figure 5.4: Plans after completion of first degree by degree to which course was vocational



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time degree level students, weighted.*

Other variations were found according to gender, ethnicity, age and HEI. Thirty eight per cent of male degree students reported that they planned to enrol on a taught Master’s degree course, compared to 35 per cent of female degree students. Slightly more female students (28 per cent) than males (25 per cent) reported that they planned a gap year.

Around half of all black degree students and 40 per cent of Asian degree students planned to enrol on a taught Master’s degree postgraduate course, compared to 35 per cent of white students. More degree students from ethnic minorities than white students anticipated that they would study for another professional qualification as 20 per cent of Asian student and 15 per cent of black students planned to do so (10 per cent of white students). More white degree students planned to enrol on a PGCE (13 per cent of white students compared to 7 per cent of Asian and 8 per cent of black students). A gap year was more frequently planned with white students, 26 per cent stated that they planned to travel for a year (14 per cent of black and 13 per cent of Asian students).

Younger students were more likely to plan to enrol on a postgraduate Master’s course than more mature students, or to take a gap year to travel after completing their current course. In general, students studying at a higher tariff university were more likely to plan further study for a Master’s degree postgraduate course, a research degree, or for another professional qualification. They were also more likely to state that they planned a gap year after the completion of their courses.

There were no strong differences according to the socio-economic status of students. For example 37 per cent of degree students with parents in higher managerial and professional occupations planned to enrol on a postgraduate taught Master’s course and 14 per cent planned to apply for a research degree (compared to 35 per cent of degree students with parents in routine occupations who planned to enrol on a taught Master’s postgraduate course and 12 per cent who planned to do a research degree). Twenty six per cent of degree students with parents in higher managerial and professional occupations planned to take a

gap year to travel, this compares to 21 per cent of degree students with parents in routine occupations.

Knowledge about future occupations and qualifications required

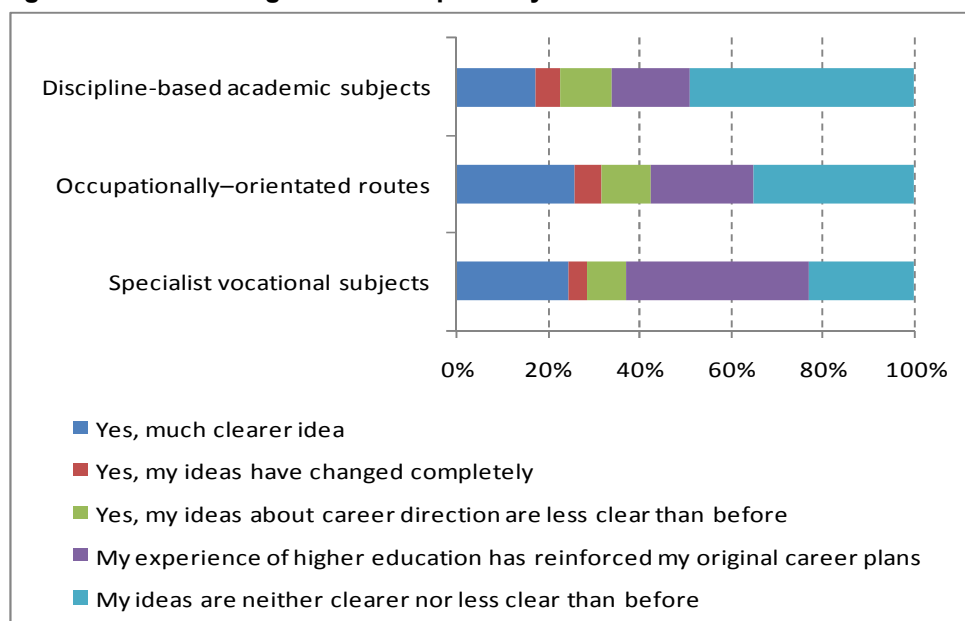
As seen earlier, the process by which career decisions are made is crucial for the analysis. Some students plan their careers ahead and inform themselves before enrolling on an appropriate course. Other students choose a subject of interest and then, during or after their time at university or college, try to find an appropriate career attached to it or go into jobs where their degree subject is not relevant. Most students, however, appeared to fit somewhere between these lines and choose a subject and subsequent potential occupation before studying and amend it according to their experience.

The time spent at college or university allows for the reconsideration of previous ideas. Students were asked whether their ideas about their careers had changed since they started their course. A third of all students stated that their ideas were neither clearer nor less clear than before, 26 per cent stated that their experiences of HE had reinforced their original career plans and a quarter said that they had a much clearer idea of what they wanted to do. Only 10 per cent stated that their ideas were less clear than before and 5 per cent stated that their ideas had changed completely.

It is no surprise that changes in career plans vary by the degree to which courses were vocational (Figure 5.5). Students on specialist vocational courses such as Education or Medicine & Dentistry were more likely than students on other subjects to consider that their experience of HE had reinforced their original careers plans (40 per cent). In such cases it can be assumed that the majority of the careers decisions had taken place before entering university or college, and the first year at university or college strengthened their original careers ideas. On the other hand, fewer than 50 per cent of students of discipline-based academic subjects such as History or Philosophy considered that their careers ideas were either clearer or less clear than before. In most of these cases, careers decisions had not been made (except in the loosest sense) prior to applying for HE and had not become clearer substantially by the end of their first year. Students studying occupationally-orientated routes took up a middle position as far as their career plans were concerned.

Interestingly, students of both strongly vocational and discipline based courses showed less interest in offers of the careers centre than students of 'occupationally – orientated courses' (see Figure 5.3). Students of specialist vocational courses and courses transferring general skills were – although being aware of the service – less likely to take part in offers from the Careers Centre.

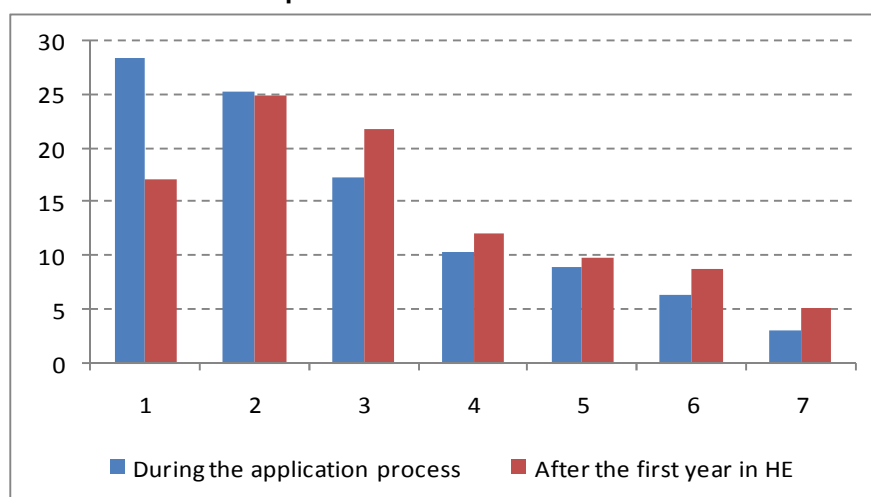
Figure 5.5: Changes in career plans by extent to which course was vocational



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

In both stages of Futuretrack 2006 we asked respondents to rate themselves “on a scale of 1-7 where 1 means ‘in terms of long-term career planning I have a clear idea about what I want to do’ and 7 means ‘I have no idea what I want to do’”. The question allows students to assess their vocational ideas, and there might be some discrepancies with the reality. However, it can be used to analyse students’ current ideas and therefore of careers-decision making approaches. Figure 5.6 shows changes in the responses to this question from the time during the application process compared to the time after the first year in HE.

Figure 5.6: Changes in degree to which students had clear ideas related to their career plans



* Where 1 means ‘I have a clear idea about occupation and qualifications required’ and 7 means ‘I have no idea’

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, accepted applicants, weighted.

During the application process, students were generally more convinced that they had had a clear idea about the occupation the eventually want to enter and the qualifications required to do so. One year later, and experience of HE, some students were less convinced that they had a clear idea in terms of long-term career planning. Twenty nine per cent of students

stated during the application process that they had a clear idea about the occupation and qualifications required, this figure was decreased to 18 per cent after the first year in HE.

Sixteen per cent of respondents stated that during the application process they had had a clear idea ('1') about their future occupation and the required qualifications but one year later they were less clear ('2' to '7') about their occupational ideas. It is interesting to have a closer look at this group of students. During the application process they were convinced that they had a very clear idea about their future occupations and the required qualifications. It can be assumed that the experience of their first year in HE has exposed them to different ideas so that they became less clear about their vocational orientation.

Most of those responded with a '2' (58 per cent) after one year in HE. Twenty three per cent responded '3' and 19 per cent stated a '4' or higher on the scale. Responses *while* applying for HE (Futuretrack 2006 Stage 1) were previously connected with gender, age, ethnicity, entry qualifications, subjects, social background and type of schooling at line of application (Purcell *et al*, 2007, p.19ff).

The following analysis asks which factors could be identified with a change in the careers clarity. A multivariate logistic regression model (Appendix 2, Table A5.2) was estimated to identify factors associated with change in responses from '1' (clear idea during application process) to any other answer.

Table 5.2: Factors associated with students' change of ideas about the occupation they eventually want to enter and the qualifications required to do so

Factors associated with changes of ideas from '1' during the application process to another category	Factors associated with no changes of ideas from '1' during the application process
Mature Students (21 years or older)	Under 21 year olds
Female students	Male students
Black students	White students
Specialist vocational subjects	Discipline-based academic subjects
Specialist HE Colleges	Highest tariff university
Excellent or very good self-confidence	Good, adequate, or not very good self-confidence
Completed compulsory module to develop employment-related skills	Visited the Career Service website
Obtained careers advice from an employer or work organisation representative	

Interestingly, the use of the Careers Service did not have any significant impact (Appendix 2, Table A5.2).

It seems that this group of students were very confident before starting their courses regarding their ideas about their future occupation. However, after one year of studying they were less confident about their vocational ideas. This may be particularly significant given that students of vocational subjects were very often were not aware of what their Careers Services has to offer (see Table 5.1). It is unlikely that students of vocational courses will consider adapting their ideas once they started with their courses as – by definition – the aim of the courses was clear defined – unless these do not conform to their expectations or they find that they have made a mistake in their choice.

Summary

- The most frequently used form of careers information or careers guidance used by respondents in their first year were careers events organised by the Careers Service for first year students, followed by careers advice from family and friends, visit to the Careers Service website and careers events for students specifically doing for one type of course. The first and third of these were likely to have been initiated by the careers service and/or particular academic, indicative of increased effort in HEIs to draw the attention of students to the range of career options and services available to them early in their HE careers.
- The use of the Career Service varied according to age, subject, type of HEI attended and domicile. Black and Asian students more likely to have used it than white students and mature students, male students, black students, students studying discipline-based academic subjects, students studying at higher or medium tariff universities and European or other overseas students were more aware the services it offered than other students.
- As far as plans for further HE study beyond current courses was concerned at this stage of their courses, the most frequently reported plan was to enrol on a taught Master's degree postgraduate course, followed by a gap year. Fewer than a third of all degree students did not plan any further training or education after completion of their course of study.
- Changes in career plans vary by the degree to which respondents had opted for a vocational subject, with students on specialist vocational courses were more likely to state than students on other subjects that their experience of HE had reinforced their career plans. On the other hand, students in general discipline-based academic subjects most often reported that their perception of the occupation they would enter on completion of their courses was neither clearer nor less clear than before.

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CHAPTER 6

Mature students and their experience of the first year: the impact of starting from a different context

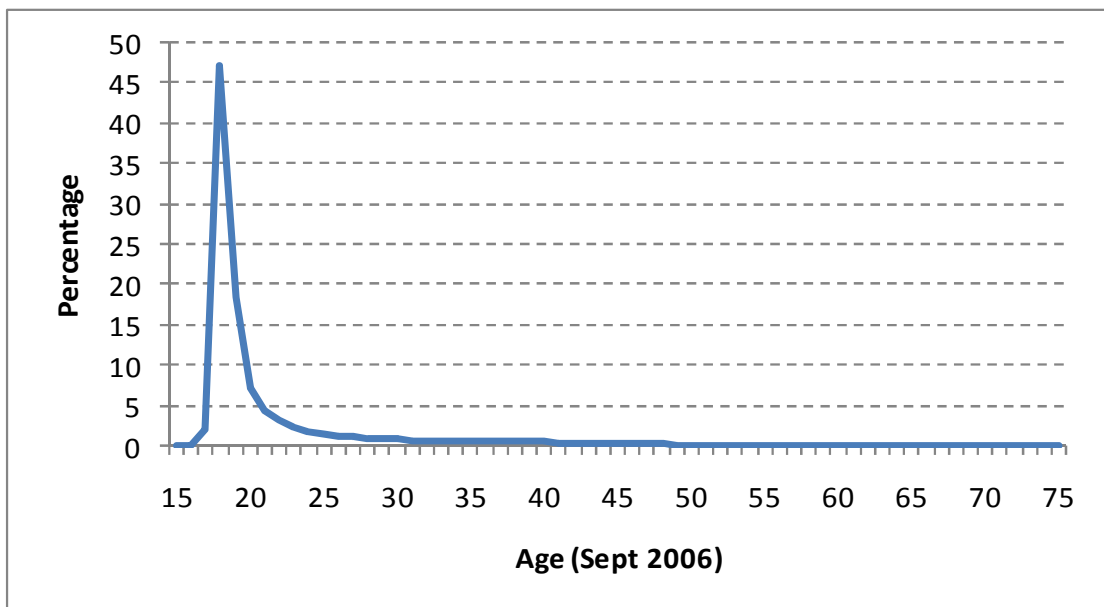
Introduction

This chapter examines the situation of mature students during their first year in higher education (HE) in the academic session of 2006-07. Mature students are a heterogeneous group, ranging from students who have delayed entry to higher education for a few years, to retired people making up for earlier lack of opportunity or adding to their qualifications in the third age, although officially defined as students aged 21 or over when they entered higher education in 2006¹⁴. We classified the group of students older than 25 years as 'older mature students' and the age group of 21 to 25 year olds as 'young mature students'. The chapter describes the characteristics of mature students and examines their responses to questions about their first year in higher education. Finally, information is presented on the long-term perspectives of mature students in relation to younger students.

Characteristics of mature students

Only 2.5 per cent of respondents who had completed a year in HE were 17 or younger and the proportion of the sample aged over 50 was 0.5 per cent. The majority of students responding to the second Futuretrack enquiry were under 20 years old in September 2006 when they entered higher education (75 per cent) (Figure 6.1). About 13 per cent were 21 to 25 years old, and the remainder (12 per cent) were 26 years and older.

Figure 6.1: Age structure of students entering higher education in 2006



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

¹⁴ In England, UCAS defines mature students as aged 21 or over at the start of the course. In Scotland, mature students are defined as 20 or over. For this analysis, we did not distinguish between England and Scotland to simplify matters, and used the English definition.

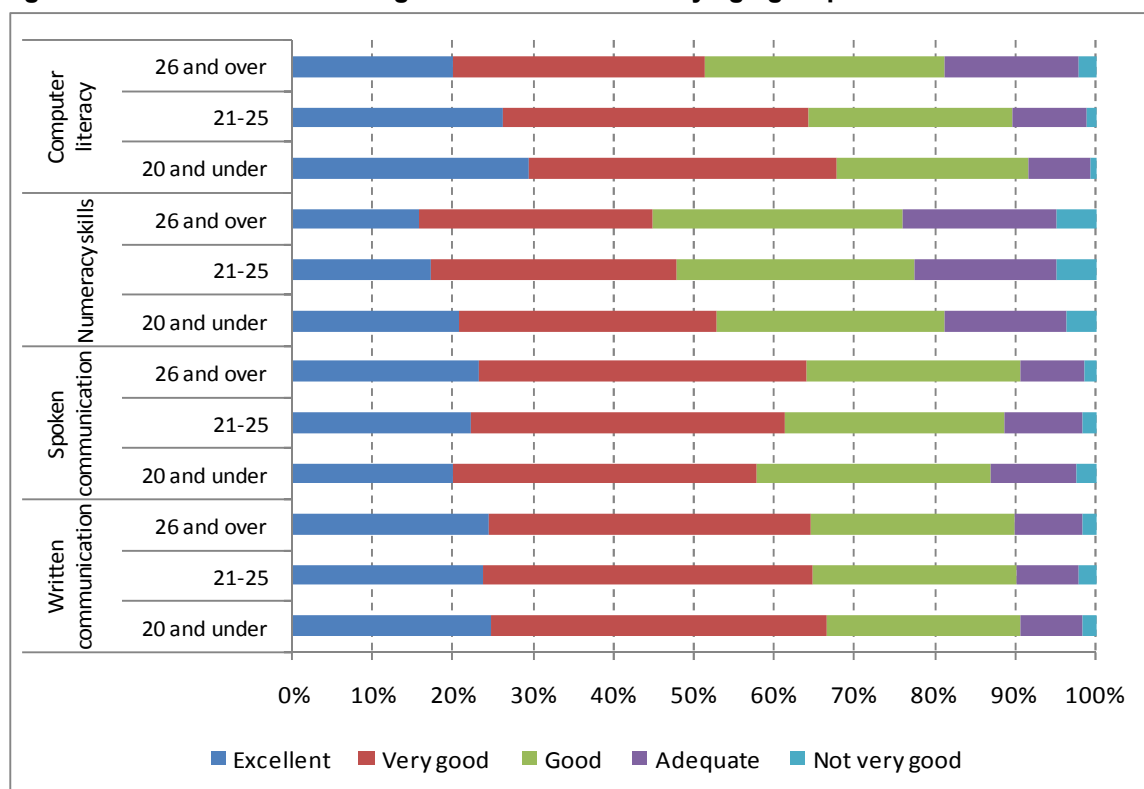
At the time of the application process, about 43 per cent of older mature students were employed and 40 per cent were studying at further education (FE) colleges. Similarly, 43 per cent of young mature students were employed at the time of the application process and 34 per cent were students at FE colleges. Younger students (20 years or younger), on the other hand, had mainly applied directly from secondary school, either immediately after finishing secondary education, or after a gap year. There was a higher proportion of women in the group of older mature students (62 per cent) although the gender proportions of young and young mature students were about the same (55 per cent of all young students and 51 per cent of all young mature students were female).

Compared with younger students, there were more black mature students (8 per cent of older mature and 6 per cent of young mature students, compared with 3 per cent of young students), mainly African black students. On the other hand, the majority of Asian students can be found in the youngest age group (13 per cent of the youngest student group and 11 per cent of young mature students, compared to 4 per cent of older mature students). The most popular subjects studied by older mature students were Subjects allied to Medicine (23 per cent), followed by 12 per cent of Social Studies students and 11 per cent of Art and Design students. Young mature students were not quite as concentrated in these subject areas as older mature students, however, 10 per cent studied Subjects allied to Medicine, 11 per cent Business and Admin studies and 12 per cent Creative Arts and Design students. Mature students were less likely to come from a family of higher managerial and professional occupations (16 per cent of the families of older mature students belonged to higher managerial and professional occupations, compared to 23 per cent of younger mature students and 27 per cent of young students) but were more likely to come from a semi-routine or routine occupational background (27 per cent of the families of older mature come from a semi-routine or routine occupational background, compared to 19 per cent of younger mature students and 17 per cent of young students).

Young mature and older mature students were less likely than younger students to study at a highest tariff university and more likely to study at a general or special higher education college. Previous research has shown that this is a result of the expansion of the post 1992 universities and their formal and informal links with FE which opened up the system to non-traditional students (Davies *et al.*, 2002). Thirteen per cent of older mature students and 9 per cent of young mature students reported having long-term illnesses, health problems or disabilities (compared with 6 per cent of young students). It was not surprising that mature students were more likely to report having children or adult dependants: 13 per cent of older mature students and 4 per cent of young mature students stated that they had a child or children under 5 living with them (compared with 1 per cent of younger students). Twelve per cent of older mature students reported one or more adult dependant(s) living with them, compared to 2 per cent of young students and 3 per cent of young mature students.

Figure 6.2 shows students' self-rated strengths and weaknesses by age group. No significant differences could be observed in terms of written communication. However, mature students rated their numeracy skills and their computer literacy significantly lower than younger students. On the other hand, mature students rated themselves higher on the scale dealing with spoken communication. Young mature students took up a middle position between young and older mature students.

Figure 6.2: Self-rated strengths and weaknesses by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Experiences of the first year in higher education

There were some differences between mature students and younger students regarding the retention rates after the first year in higher education. On average 77 per cent of all respondents reported that they had completed the first year in HE, compared to 71 per cent of older mature and 76 per cent of young mature students. There are some differences in terms of the type of course that students had started in Autumn 2006. About 6 per cent of all 21 to 25 year olds and 7 per cent of older mature students reported that they enrolled in a foundation degree, compared to 4 per cent of younger respondents. The majority of mature students had started shorter courses, only 16 per cent of older mature students and 21 per cent of young mature students had enrolled themselves on a course lasting four years or longer (compared to 28 per cent of younger students).

The proximity of mature students to their higher education institution and their daily commute differs from their younger peers. The majority of older mature students reported that they lived at home with their family or partner (58 per cent), at home on their own (16 per cent) or in rented self-catering accommodation (11 per cent). Twenty nine per cent of young mature students lived at home with their family or partner, however, students' hall of residence was also a common form of accommodation with 28 per cent of young mature students reporting that they lived there. Only 7 per cent of older mature students lived in a student hall of residence, which was the most common type of accommodation for the youngest student group. As a result, mature students spent more time travelling to their higher education institution (HEI). Whilst 61 per cent of all young students spent less than 20 minutes, more than half of all older and a third of young mature students spent at least half an hour travelling (one way). Previous research (for example Redmond, 2006) has discussed this detachment from non-academic aspects of college life of mature students as a disadvantage in terms of

opportunities past university life. This remains to be seen, however, it is clear that the life of mature students is characterized by 'a balancing act played out between competing worlds of home, college and work' (Redmond, 2006:131). Other research (Davies *et al.*, 2002; Reay, 2003) showed that mature students held various combinations of roles next to their studies such as part-time or full-time work and caring responsibilities.

The following findings regarding participation in extra-curricular activities have to be seen in light of this distance between accommodation and HEI. Of the older mature students, 13 per cent reported their involvement with a university or college sports society or club and 19 per cent stated that they were involved with an external sports society or club. While 39 per cent of younger students said that they participated in the university or college sports society or club, a similar proportion took part in events at an external university or college sports society or club (18 per cent). Mature students were less likely than younger students to report being an office holder in any society or club.

The following quotations illustrate the connection between family responsibilities, commuting and non-participation in extra-curricular activities.

'Having a family of 7 plus living more than an hours drive away from the uni more than takes up what little free time I have.'

[Female, 45 years old, Biology or Veterinary Studies, Medium Tariff University]

'I am a single parent of two kids and do not have time to take part in much out of hours activities.'

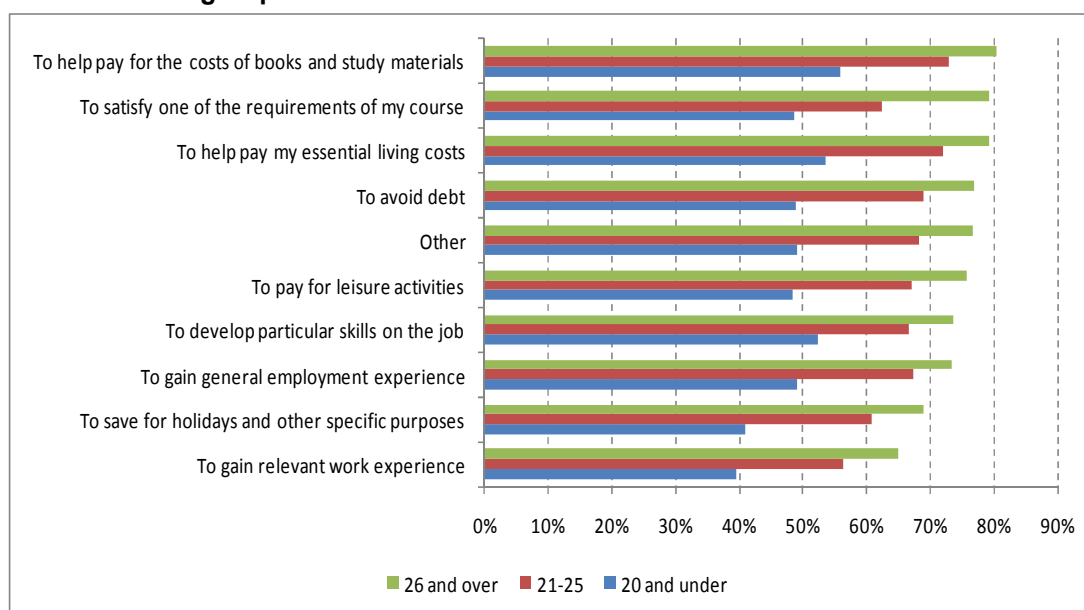
[Female, 33 years old, Mathematical & Computer Science, Medium Tariff University]

'There was lots available but I chose not to participate as I am a single parent with a young son who needs any spare time I have outside of my studies.'

[Female, 30 years old, Law, High Tariff University]

The mature students' sample was polarised as far as participation in paid work was concerned. Forty four per cent of older mature students stated that they did not do any paid work in the academic session 2006 – 2007, which can be explained partly by parental responsibilities for children as 56 per cent of those who did not do any paid work had children living with them. In contrast 41 per cent of older mature students reported that they worked both during term-time and during vacation(s). A third of younger students worked only during vacation, but this pattern was only followed by 13 per cent of mature students. Young mature students were the most likely to work both during vacation and term-time with 45 per cent reporting that they did so. There was a strong gender difference as 48 per cent of female older mature students reported that they did not do any paid work at all compared to 36 per cent of male older mature students.

Figure 6.3: Reasons given for undertaking paid work during term-time by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

The reasons given by students to explain why they worked during term-time are shown by age group in Figure 6.3.

The most common reasons for paid work during term-time for older mature students were to help pay for the costs of books and study materials, to satisfy one of the courses' requirements and to help pay their essential living costs. Young mature students also mainly worked to help pay for the costs of books and for their essential living expenses but, in contrast to mature students, work was not as likely to be a requirement of their course. Another reason which was especially common for mature students was to maintain their commitment to employment as the following quotations demonstrate.

'I am a mature student, and have worked continually for the past 25 years. I had no intention of giving up my career in order to obtain my qualification.'

[Female, 42 years old, Mass Communications and Documentation, Lower Tariff University]

'Main reason is to have continuous teaching on my CV'

[Male, 25 years old, Interdisciplinary subjects, Specialist HE College]

'Self-employed prior to starting course and need to continue work for long term career prospects'.

[Female, 42 years old, Creative Arts and Design, Medium Tariff University]

For some mature students work was compulsory rather than optional. Either they were sponsored by their employer and were obliged to work during their studies, or they continued to work in order to maintain their professional qualifications and contacts.

'To keep my assessor qualifications valid'

[Male, 49 years old, Subjects allied to Medicine, Medium Tariff University]

'To maintain professional contacts in preparation for post degree self-employed consultancy'

[Female, 48 years old, Mathematics and Computer Science, General HE College]

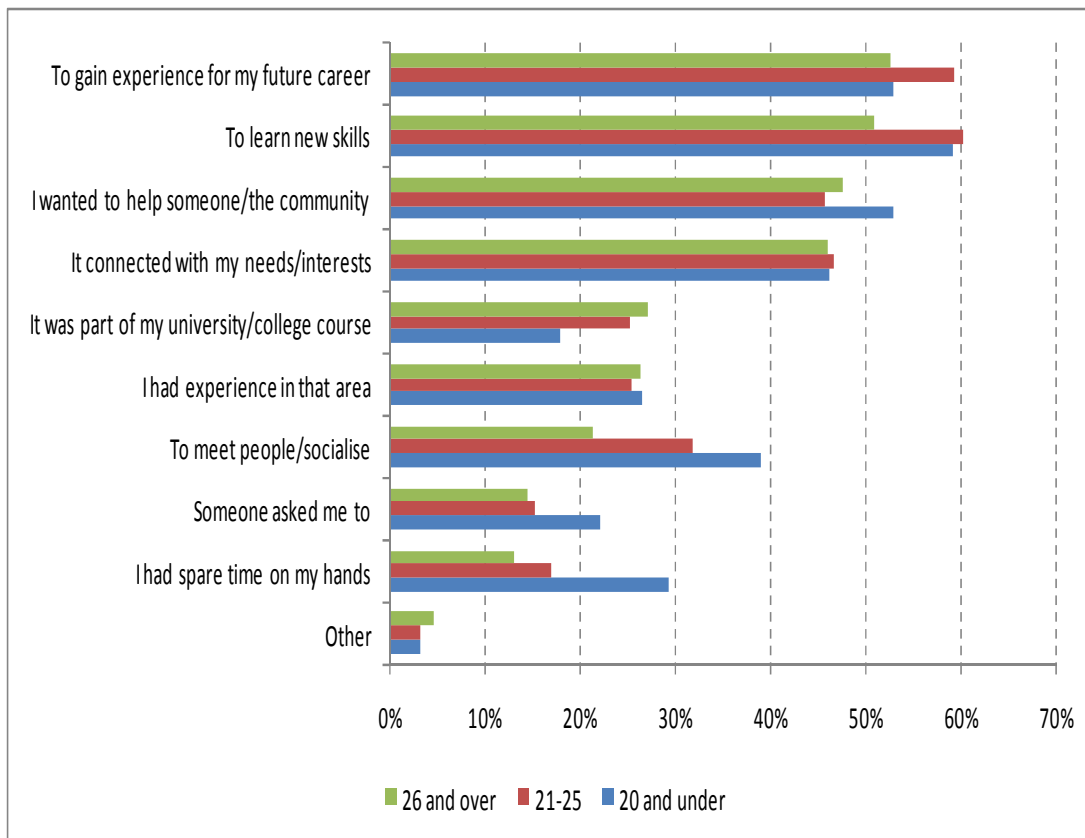
There were not that many differences regarding the reasons why students worked during vacations. Younger students were more likely to work during vacations because they wanted to pay for leisure activities, to save for holidays and other specific purposes, or because they wanted to gain general employment experience. Mature students reported that they did some paid work during vacations because they wanted to help pay for their essential living costs and to help pay for the costs of books and other study materials.

The two most common ways by which students obtained paid work were that they had worked for the employer before and by direct application to the employer. Older and young mature students worked significantly longer (on average 13 hours) during term-time than younger students (8 hours on average).

Thirty one per cent of older mature students and 28 per cent of young mature students stated that they undertook voluntary work in the last academic session either as an intern or with a charity. This was slightly higher than the figure for younger students (27 per cent).

Figure 6.4 shows the reasons for doing unpaid work by age group. All groups of students mainly undertook unpaid work because they wanted to gain experience for their future career. For mature students, it was less important to learn new skills or to meet new people and socialise.

Figure 6.4: Reasons given for doing unpaid work by age group



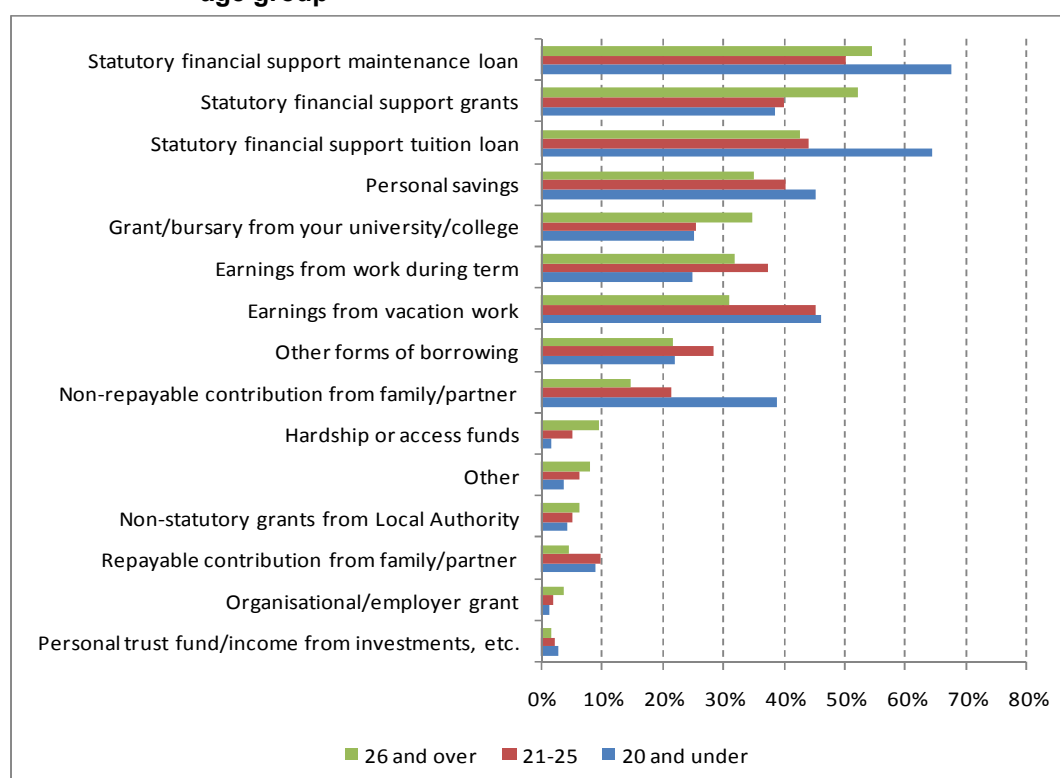
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Financial situation of mature students

Previous research (for example Davies et al., 2002) has shown that many mature students see enrolment in higher education as a gamble in which they were risking not just their own but their families' situation – in terms of money but also in terms of time.

Statutory financial support was the most important source of funding for their course for all students (Figure 6.5). Older mature students were more likely than younger students to state that they had a grant or bursary from the higher education institution or that they received financial support from hardship or access funds. Other means of funding mentioned by mature students were bursaries from the General Social Care Council (GSCC), NHS Bursary, pensions, or other benefits (such as child tax benefit, Income support). The first two of these indicate that older mature students were more likely to be opting for vocational subjects such as social care or health care, or that they studied after already having worked for some years.

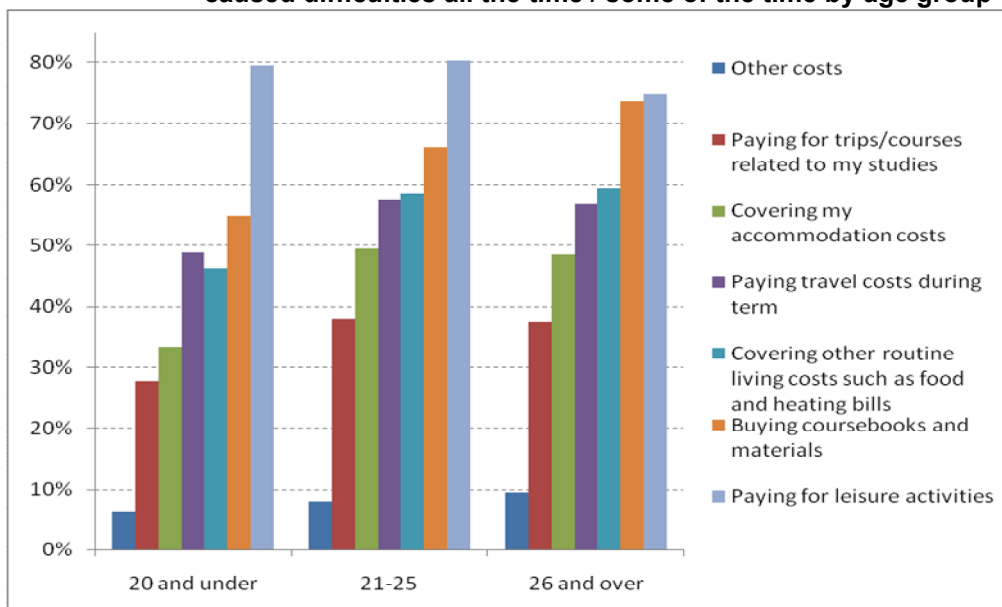
Figure 6.5: Sources of financial support for participation in higher education by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

More young mature students and older mature students than younger students, stated that they experienced difficulties when covering accommodation or other routine living costs (e.g. food, heating bills) (Figure 6.6). Both older and young mature students stated more often that they experienced difficulties with travel costs. The other area in which some mature students stated that they struggled financially was childcare costs.

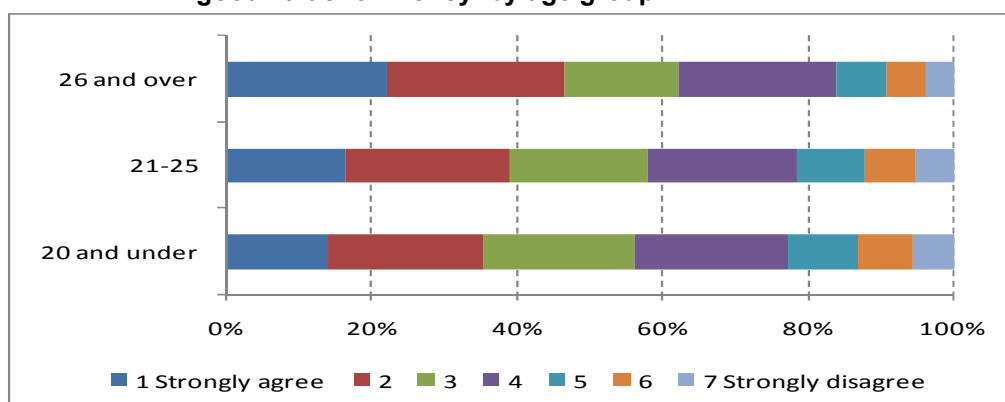
Figure 6.6: Proportion of students who reported that lack or shortage of money caused difficulties all the time / some of the time by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Most older and young mature students were content with the value for money provided by their course (Figure 6.7). More than 60 per cent of mature students stated that their course was good value for money which presumably reflected the fact that they had chosen it on the basis of greater knowledge or clearer idea of the direction in which the career was headed (see also Figure 6.10). It will be important to follow-up mature students' opinion on the value for money of their course in the light of their increased risks while taking up an HE course (Davies et al., 2002) but also in terms of the rates of return from mature study. Previous research has forecast that especially mature male students can expect a sizeable loss on their study (Egerton and Parry, 2001). Also might be indicative of lower expectations or a less discriminating approach to higher education. They were more likely to be 'first generation' students and many had chosen their courses on the basis of a more restricted range of options.

Figure 6.7: Proportion of students who agreed with the statement 'My course was good value for money' by age group

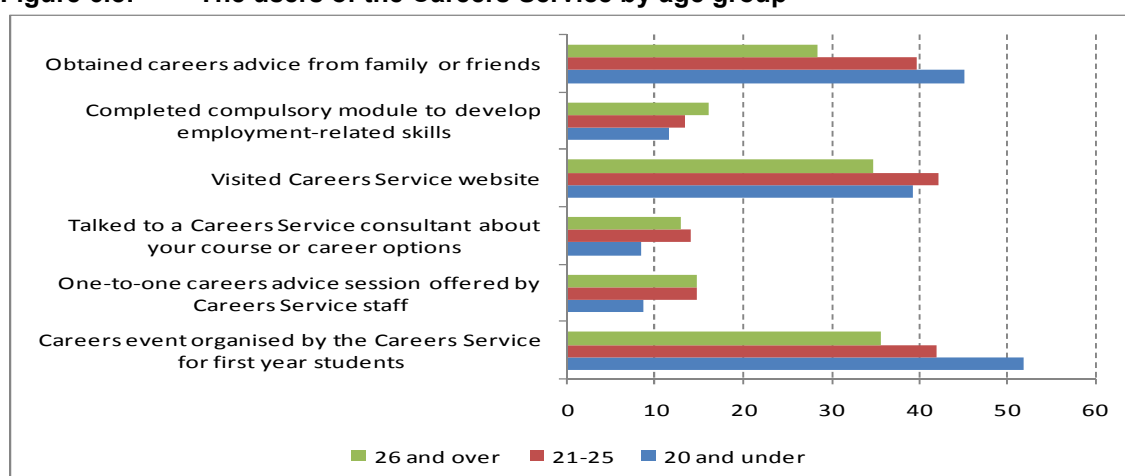


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

The longer term perspectives on education and occupations

Mature students were less likely to have used their HEIs' Career Service than younger students. While more than half of all younger students participated in a careers event organised by the Careers Service for first year students, only 42 per cent of young mature and 35 per cent of older mature students reported having done so. This might reflect the likelihood that they did not perceive themselves to require the services in sessions organised for various students. Mature students were more likely to have participated in individual advice sessions or conversations with a consultant than have taken part in a careers event. Figure 6.8 shows the participation of mature students in selected careers information or guidance opportunities.

Figure 6.8: The users of the Careers Service by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

Half of all older mature students and 43 per cent of young mature students stated that they were aware of the Careers Service but had not visited it (compared with 45 per cent of younger students). In general, about 31 per cent of older mature students used the Careers Service, compared to 37 per cent of younger students. However, the age group reporting of the highest use of the Careers Service was the young mature students: 41 per cent of them used the Careers Service. Many mature students considered that they were already aware of their career options which confirms previous research in which mature graduates were more likely to have 'taken their courses with a clear intention of enhancing their employment opportunities (Purcell *et al.*, 2007:61). Respondents explained that their previous work experience had already enabled them to find their own way into employment or to have a good idea of what they wanted to do and how to do it.

'Already in full time job, course that I am doing runs alongside working'

[Female, 41 years old, Education, Lower Tariff University]

'As a mature student I have a clear goal in mind already'

[Female, 49 years old, Social Science, High Tariff University]

'Having previously been at work for 30 years I am already aware of my options and will seek more information in the future if I require it'

[Male, 45 years old, Engineering and Technology, Lower Tariff University]

'I know exactly where I am going'

[Male, 26 years old, Engineering and Technology, High Tariff University]

Some mature students, because of their age, were not planning to seek employment after graduation.

'I am a pensioner and have no desire/need to work when I finish'.

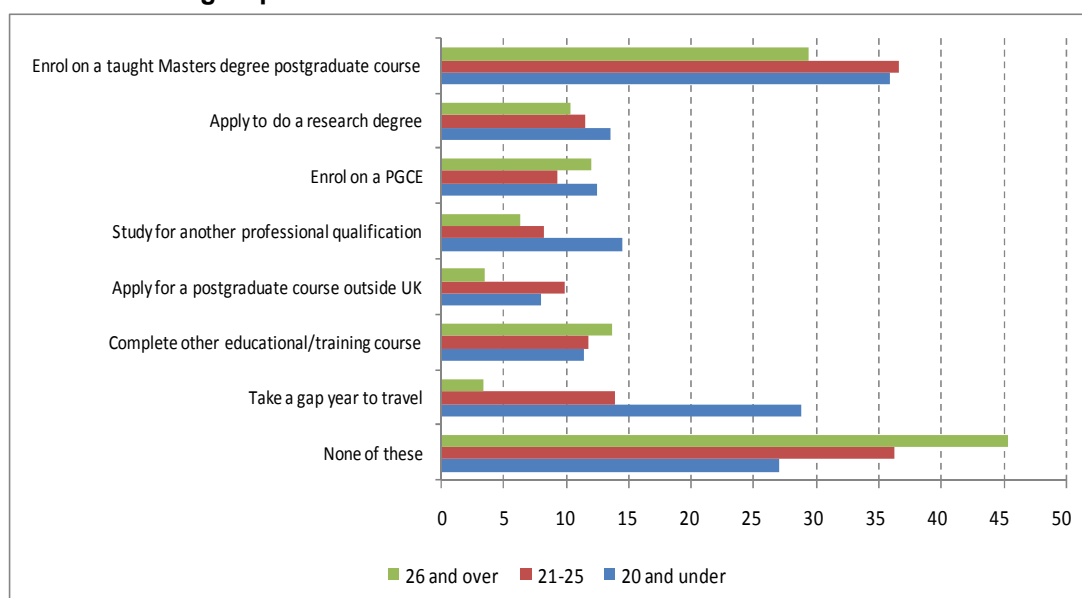
[Male, 56 years old, interdisciplinary subjects, High Tariff University]

The following student criticised the Careers Services as being focussed on younger traditional students.

'Found that there was more emphasis on younger student careers, not careers for the mature students with family/time commitments'.

[Female, 41 years old, Business and Administration, High Tariff University]

Figure 6.9: Prospective plans after completing current course of study by age group

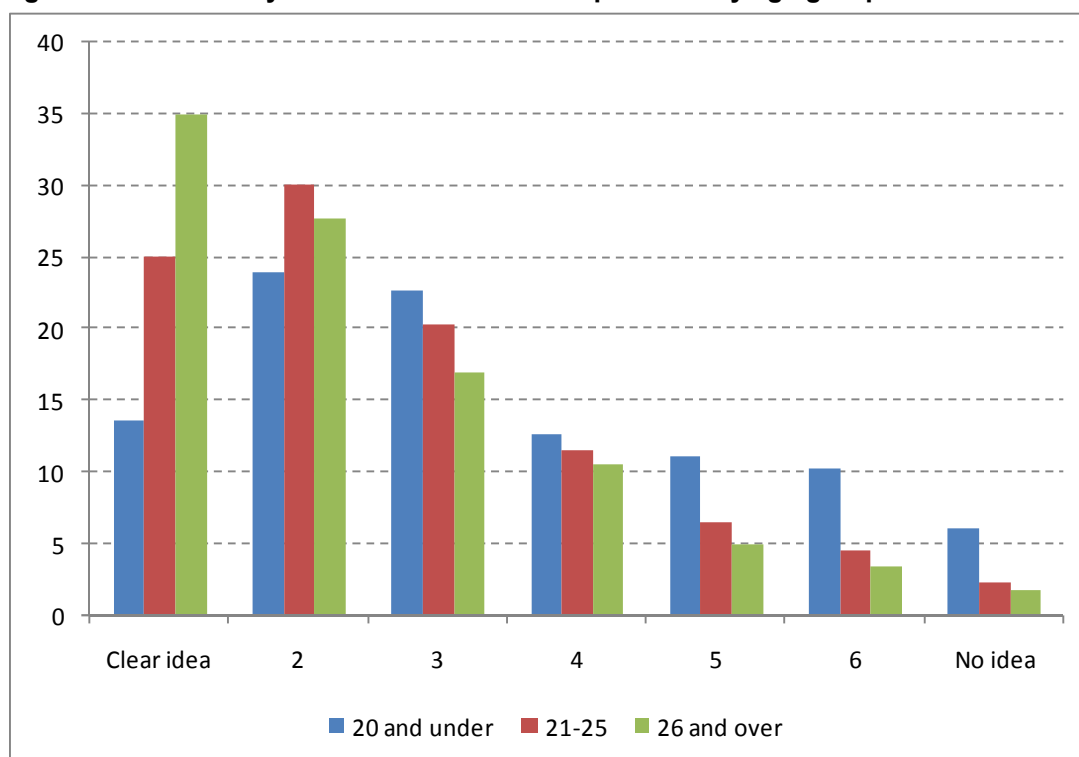


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

In general mature students were less likely to plan any further study, with the exception of those who planned to enrol on a taught Master's degree course, in line with their greater likelihood of having clear vocationally-related career plans at the outset and, for some, the fact that they might be returning to previous jobs or organisations where they had previous experience. A significant minority planned to obtain a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) (Figure 6.9). Younger students were much more likely to plan to take a gap year to travel after their time at university or college. About 45 per cent of mature students reported that they did not plan to study for another postgraduate course, another education or training course or to take a gap year. It can be assumed that most mature students planned to enter the labour market directly after graduation. As the quotes above indicated, some mature students were pensioners or would enter retirement after graduation, but as only 3 per cent of our sample was 40 years and older, this was a very small number.

As indicated in the Stage 1 responses, many mature students were very clear in their career orientation before entering higher education. Earlier, we saw that many mature students stated that due to their previous employment experience they knew what they wanted to do after graduation. Figure 6.10 shows that both older mature and young mature students were much clearer about their long-term career planning than younger students.

Figure 6.10: Clarity of ideas about career aspirations by age group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1 and 2 dataset, registered full-time students, weighted.

More than a third of all older and 30 per cent of younger mature students stated that their experience of higher education had reinforced their original career plans (compared with 24 per cent of younger students). Another quarter of the older mature students and of younger students said that they had a much clearer idea of what they wanted to do since they started their course whilst 31 per cent of younger mature students said that they had a much clearer idea of what they wanted to do. Twenty eight per cent of older mature students and 26 per cent of young mature students said that their ideas were neither clearer nor less clear than before which is a much smaller proportion compared to younger students (36 per cent).

Summary

- Three-quarters of the students were less than 20 years old in September 2006 when they entered higher education. Approximately 13 per cent were 21 to 25 years old, and the remainder were 26 years and older. It can be assumed that this age group had already fully finished the transition from secondary school to work and were likely to have gained at least some employment experience.
- The proximity of mature students to their higher education institution and their daily commute differed from their younger peers; the majority of mature students reported that they lived at home with their family or partner and participated less often in extra-curricular activities.

- Mature students were polarised as far as participation in paid work was concerned. In addition to other reasons, many mature students worked to maintain their employment and professional contacts.
- Mature students were less likely to participate in careers events organised for first year students and more likely to take part in individual advice sessions.
- Mature students were less likely to plan further study after finishing their studies. A very high proportion stated that they had a clear idea about their future occupations.

CHAPTER 7

Students with disabilities and long-term illnesses that might restrict higher education options: their characteristics and the impact of these on their first year experience

Introduction

This chapter examines the higher education experiences of students with a disability or long-term illness. Although data on the proportion of the population who consider themselves to have a disability or long-term illness that restricts their participation in various activities is not complete, it is clear that disabled people's participation in higher education has historically been low (see, for example, Parker *et al*, 2007). The National Audit Office (NAO) found in 2002 that an 18 year old with a disability or health problem was only 40 per cent as likely to enter HE as an 18 year old without a disability or health problem (NAO, 2002:2). However, the role that higher education can play in the inclusion of vulnerable students, including those with disabilities, who are at risk of social exclusion has been highlighted in various government White Papers and policies, and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act of 2001 makes it illegal for HEIs to discriminate against disabled students, either in the application process or while they are in higher education. Nonetheless, Fuller, Bradley and Healey (2004:456) report with reference to the work of Riddell, Tinklin and Wilson (2002) that,

'The empowering potential of higher education may not always be achieved... Success at degree level can be critical in terms of lifelong impact on earning capacity and location in the labour market yet disabled students tend to encounter more barriers to learning at university and to achieve poorer outcomes in terms of final degree classification, despite having comparable qualifications to other students when entering the same university.'

(Fuller, Bradley and Healey, 2004)

At Stage 2 respondents were asked whether or not they had any long-term illness, health problems or a disability which restricts (or may be seen to restrict) their ability to do academic work. Seven per cent of Stage 2 respondents who had entered higher education in 2006 reported that they had: a similar proportion to that reported by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2008)¹⁵. This indicates that the proportions of students reporting a disability to their HEIs has been increasing, from around 4 per cent ten years ago, to the current figure of around 7 per cent (HESA, *ibid.* and 1998), although the disabled population remains under-represented in the student population as a whole.

As will be seen, when the disabled student cohort is analysed by type of disability, some of the groups are very small. In such cases the information so presented will be qualified as potentially unreliable. The data have been analysed according to the then standard options offered in the Stage 2 questionnaire. Data are presented in this disaggregated format when it appears that there are clear differences between the different sub-groups, but the patterns revealed must be regarded as indicative and subject to further investigation, particularly for the smaller categories of reported disability.

¹⁵ The classification we used allows for comparison with previous cohorts of students and graduates, but from the 2003 entry onwards, UCAS has used a Learning Difficulties category that groups dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties and eliminated the Personal Care Support category - a consequence of disability rather than a category of disability and one rarely cited by respondents without other reported disability that explain why personal care is required. This is a more useful classification and will be used for future analyses. See http://www.ucas.com/about_us/stat_services/dictionary_of_terms/d/

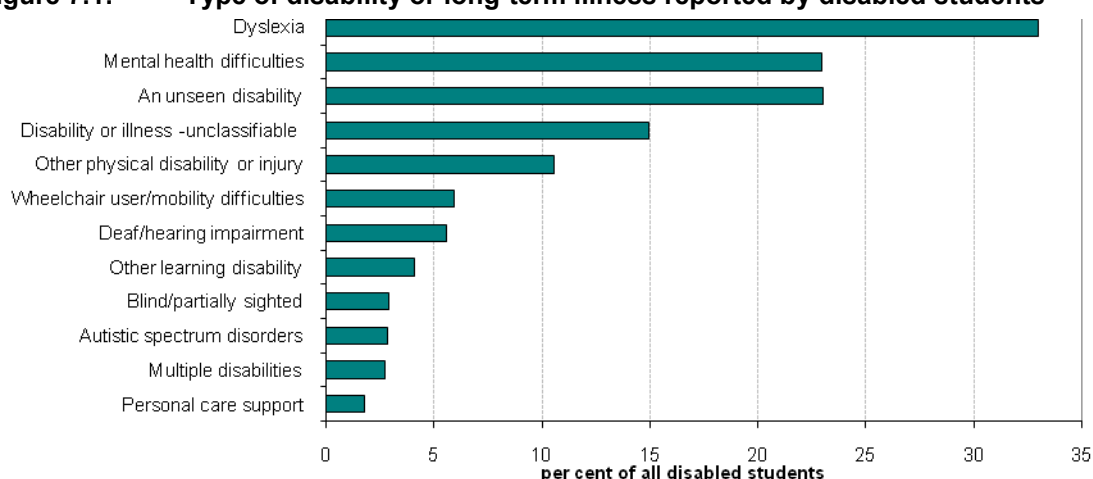
Characteristics of students with disabilities or long-term illnesses

As Figure 7.1 shows, dyslexia was the most commonly-reported disability, cited by a third of respondents who declared a disability or long-term illness. The dyslexic group is one of the fastest growing categories of disability among HE students, as the condition has become more frequently diagnosed and has entered the public domain. HESA data show that over the past ten years, not only have the absolute numbers of students reporting that they are dyslexic increased, but that dyslexia is now reported by more than 40 per cent of disabled students, compared to around 20 per cent ten years ago (HESA, 1998-2008).

The extent to which this growth is due to a greater willingness to disclose information is not known, although authors such as Riddell *et al.* (2005:630) believe this has played a significant role. The proportion of students reporting mental health difficulties is relatively large in the Futuretrack sample, with 23 per cent of respondents who indicated that they had a disability saying that they were experiencing mental health difficulties. This is higher than the figure of just under 6 per cent reported by HESA (HESA, 2009). There is evidence to suggest that mental health problems have become more prevalent among the traditional student-aged population (Collishaw *et al.*, 2004) and that widening access will increase the numbers of students with mental health difficulties (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2003: 24-25). Data reported by HESA show that, over the past ten years, the proportion of students with mental health difficulties has almost doubled, although this is from a relatively low base. However, it has been suggested by the Greater London Authority (GLA) (Barer, 2007), based on a comparison with Labour Force Survey data, that people with mental health difficulties are one of the most under-represented groups in higher education.

Students were able to select more than one category of disability if appropriate. The categories are not related to the severity of the disability or the extent to which it has an impact on the students' lives therefore there may be a high level of diversity within each category. The data here are self-reported and previous research findings suggest that this may indicate some under-reporting of disabilities so the exact extent of bias cannot be estimated but the distributions shown in Figure 7.1 indicate the relative incidence of the different reported disabilities.

Figure 7.1: Type of disability or long-term illness reported by disabled students



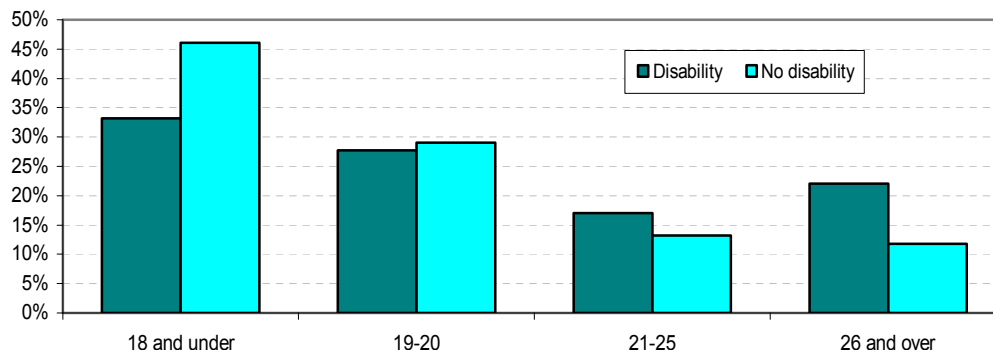
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all respondents with a disability or long-term illness who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

The most common disability or illness mentioned by students in the ‘other disability or illness’ was myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. The most common disability in the ‘other learning disabilities’ category was dyspraxia (problems with the organisation of movement). The ‘other physical disability or injury’ group was much more diverse than these two ‘other’ groups, with back injuries and various joint problems being common.

Compared to the sample as a whole, female students were slightly more likely to report a disability or long-term illness than male students. Females make up 55 per cent of students with no disability or long-term illness, but 58 per cent of students reporting a disability or long-term illness were female. This is contrary to the findings of Riddell, Tinklin and Wilson (2002 and 2005) who found that disabled students were slightly more likely to be male, which they attribute to the higher prevalence of dyslexia among males. This distribution of different disabilities in men and women in the wider population, skews some categories heavily in favour of one particular gender, for example, almost three quarters of respondents reporting an autistic spectrum disorder were male, while women made up around two thirds of the respondents with mental health difficulties, other disabilities or illnesses, and wheelchair users and those with mobility issues.

Disabled students tended to be older than students without disabilities when they entered higher education. As Figure 7.2 shows, 46 per cent of students without a disability or long-term illness were 18 or under when they entered higher education, compared to just a third of students with a disability.

Figure 7.2: Age on entry to higher education of students with and without disabilities



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all respondents who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

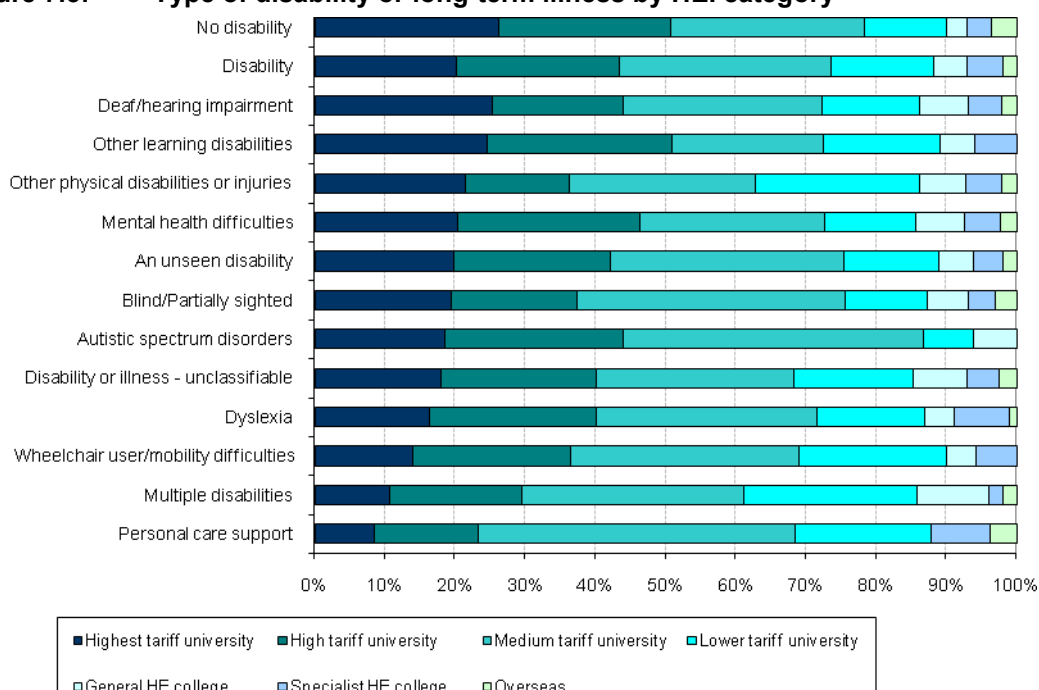
There were some clear differences in the age distribution of self-reported disabled students according to the type of disability or long-term illness reported. At least 40 per cent of the students with autistic spectrum disorders and those with other learning disabilities were 18 and under when they entered higher education, while less than a quarter of students with mental health difficulties, wheelchair users and those with other mobility difficulties, and those with multiple disabilities were in this age group. Over a third of students who were wheelchair users or who had other mobility difficulties, those with multiple disabilities and those with other physical disabilities or injuries were 26 or over when they entered HE. Overall, students who reported disabilities that limited their mobility entered HE later than students with other disabilities, suggesting that they may encounter more resistance to, or concern about, their capacity to earlier entry – perhaps in the secondary education system and at home rather than from HEIs at the application stage.

Among disabled students, white students are slightly over-represented, making up 84 per cent of students with disabilities, compared to 80 per cent of students without a disability or long-term illness. They are most heavily over-represented among students with autistic spectrum disorders (91 per cent), dyslexia (88 per cent) and mental health difficulties (88 per cent). Under-representation of white students occurs primarily in the very small groups, particularly blind and partially-sighted students and students reporting their need for personal care support, while Asian groups are particularly under-represented among disabled students as a whole.

Riddell, Wilson and Tinklin (2002) found that disabled students tended to come from higher social class backgrounds, which they suggest reflects the fact that it is only the most well-qualified and motivated disabled students, coming from backgrounds where their families and carers are likely to be well-informed about HE and to see it as ‘the normal thing’ for bright young people to do, who gain access to higher education. However, in the Futuretrack cohort, there were only small differences between the disabled students and those without a disability, with the students without a disability being slightly more likely to come from a higher managerial and professional background and less likely to come from a routine and manual background.

Figure 7.3 shows the type of HEI, according to the new classification by access requirements that students were attending by reported disability. Students with a disability or long-term illness were much less likely than those without to be attending a highest or high tariff university. With the exception of the students in the ‘other learning disabilities’ category, there is no group among the disabled students who are as likely as students without a disability to be attending a university in the highest access category.

Figure 7.3: Type of disability or long-term illness by HEI category



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all respondents who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

Students with disabilities were more likely than those without to be studying for shorter courses, and less likely to be studying for degrees lasting at least four years. They were

over-represented in some subjects, for example, 15 per cent of students with a disability or long-term illness were studying creative arts and design, compared to 9 per cent of students without a disability. Students with disabilities were particularly under-represented in business and administration studies, with only 5 per cent studying these subjects, compared to 9 per cent of students without a disability. Students with particular disabilities were also particularly over-represented in certain subjects. Twenty two per cent of students with autistic spectrum disorders were studying mathematics or computer science, as were 16 per cent of blind or partially sighted students, compared to an average of 7 per cent for all disabled students, and 7 per cent of all students without a disability. Twenty one per cent of students with mental health difficulties were studying creative arts and design, as were 19 per cent of students with dyslexia, compared to 15 per cent of all disabled students and 9 per cent of students without a disability.

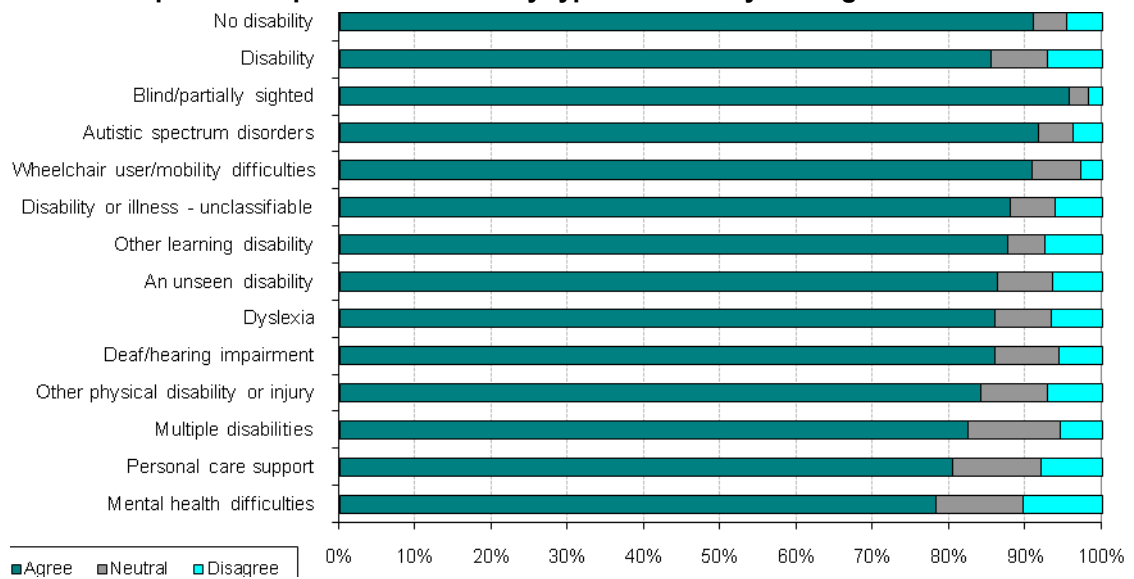
Comparison of these data with the figures for ten years ago (National Audit Office, 2002) shows that although there have been changes in the types of subjects disabled students were studying, and that inroads have been made into some subjects more than others, under-representation of disabled students in Medicine and Dentistry has remained consistent, as has the over-representation of disabled students in Creative Arts and Design subjects. A similar pattern is observed when looking at the data provided by HESA. Although the proportions of disabled students tends to fluctuate, probably because of the relatively small numbers of students involved, disabled students were consistently under-represented in Medicine and Dentistry and over-represented in Creative Arts and Design.

Disabled students were slightly more likely to have entered HE and subsequently left, with 5 per cent having done so, compared to 3 per cent of students with no disability or long-term illness. They were also slightly more likely to have changed courses, with 9 per cent now being registered on a different course to the one they started in 2006, compared to 7 per cent of students without a disability. Disabled students were more likely than students with no disability to say that they had changed their course because they found the coursework too easy or because the teaching staff at their HEI advised them to change.

Disabled students' experience of higher education

When asked to evaluate their experience of higher education, students with disabilities were less likely to agree that it had been a positive experience overall, with 85 per cent agreeing and 7 per cent disagreeing, compared to figures of 91 per cent and 5 per cent for students without a disability. There were, however, differences within the group, with blind and partially sighted students and students with autistic spectrum disorders being more likely than students without disabilities to agree that their experience of HE had been positive overall. Students with mental health difficulties were the least likely to evaluate their experience positively: somewhat to be expected, given that the experience of entering HE can itself be a stressful process. However, Baker, Brown and Fazey (2006:46) suggest that lack of resources and growing demand has meant that many HEIs may be under-prepared and under-resourced to meet the particular needs of students with mental health difficulties.

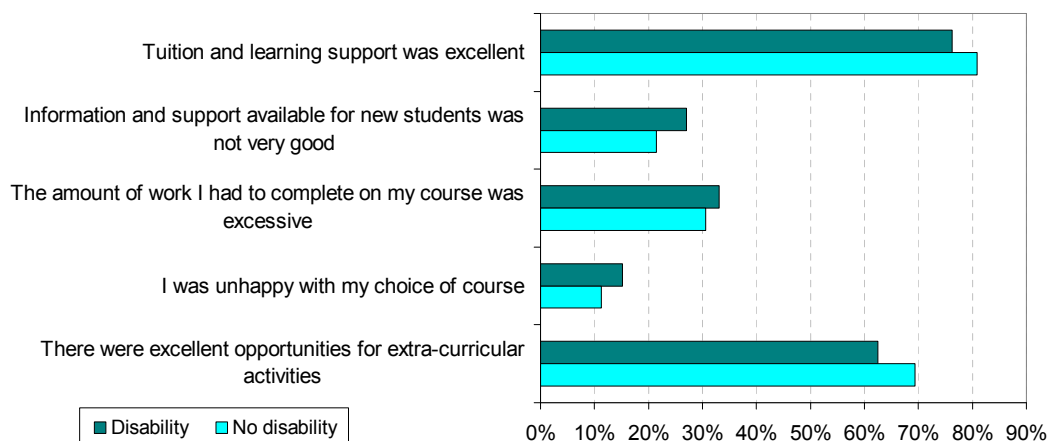
Figure 7.4: 'Being a student at the university or college where I studied was a positive experience overall' by type of disability or long-term illness



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all respondents who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

Students with disabilities were slightly less happy with their experiences across a range of measures, as Figure 7.5 shows. On other measures, such as feedback on their work, library and web resources, and relationship with staff at their institution, there were no significant differences between the responses of disabled students and those without a disability. A similar pattern of disabled students being slightly less happy with their academic experiences than students without a disability while still being generally positive about them was also found by Surridge (2008) in analysis of the 2007 National Student Survey data.

Figure 7.5: Agreement with various statements about higher education experience by whether students had a disability or long-term illness



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all respondents who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

Blind and partially sighted students were the most likely to agree that tuition and learning support were excellent, with 84 per cent agreeing, and wheelchair users and those with mobility difficulties were as likely as students without a disability to agree, with 81 per cent doing so. Conversely, only a third of the students reporting the need for personal care support agreed, and the students with other physical disabilities and other learning disabilities were also much less likely to agree with the statement than average. These groups, together with deaf and hearing impaired students were also the most likely to agree that the information and support available to new students was not very good, with around a third of each group agreeing.

Students with autistic spectrum disorders were the least likely to agree that the amount of work they had to complete on their course was excessive, with only 23 per cent doing so, 10 per cent less than the average across all disabled students, and more than 7 percentage points less than students without a disability. They, together with the students in the other disability or injury and other learning disability groups, were also the least likely to say that they were unhappy with their choice of course, although even the figures for these groups were at least 2 per cent higher than the 11 per cent of students without a disability who agreed that the amount of work they had to complete on their course was excessive.

Disabled students were more polarised in their opinions about the standard of work required on their course than students with no disability. They were more likely than students with no disability to say that the standard of work required on their course was lower than they had expected, with 16 per cent doing so, compared to 14 per cent of students with no disability, however, they were also more likely to say that the standard of work was higher than expected, with 27 per cent of disabled students saying this, compared to 25 per cent of students with no disability.

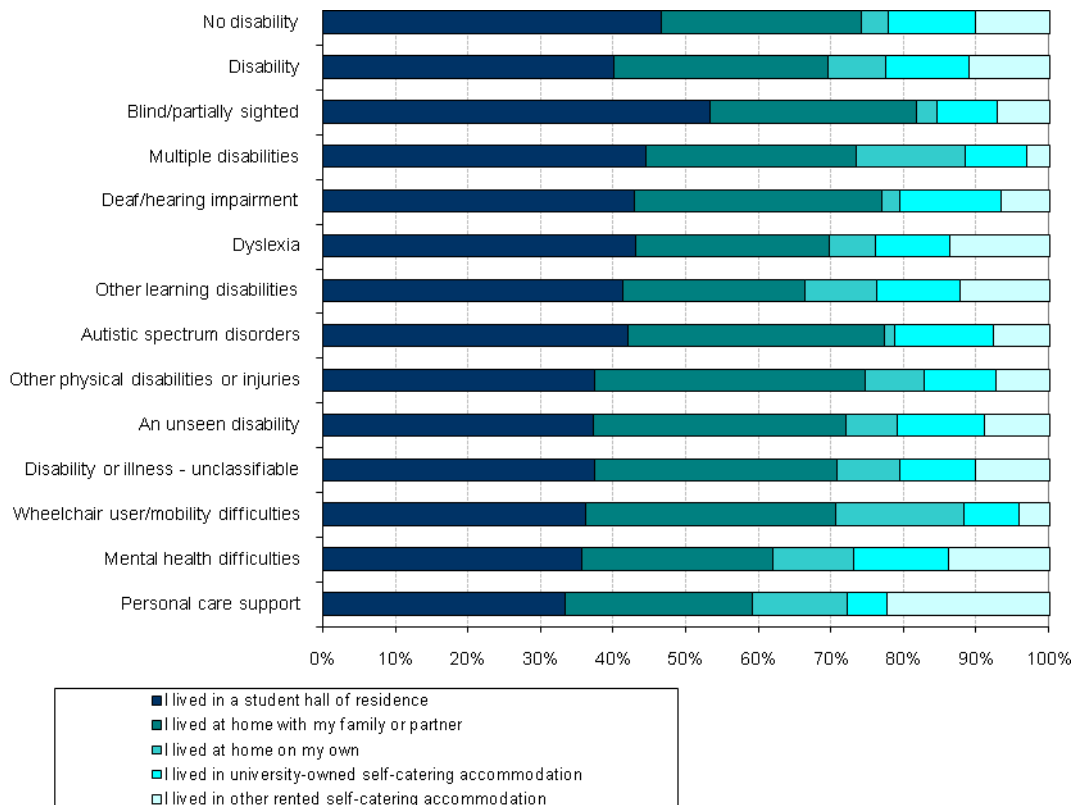
Students with multiple disabilities, other physical disabilities and injuries, and other learning disorders were at least 5 per cent more likely than students with no disability to say that the standard of work was easier than they had expected, and students reporting the need for personal care support, unseen disabilities, other physical disabilities and injuries, and particularly blind and partially sighted students were at least 5 percentage points more likely to say that the standard of work was higher than they expected. Students with autistic spectrum disorders were more than 5 per cent less likely than students without a disability to say that the standard of work was higher than they had expected. Disabled students and those with no disability had similar attitudes towards how hard they were expected to work, with roughly 44 per cent saying that they were required to work harder than they had expected, and around 15 per cent saying they were required to work less hard than expected.

Although disabled students were overall more likely than students without a disability or long-term illness to have taken part in extra-curricular activities, they were also less likely to agree that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus. This appears to have affected some groups in particular. While the proportion of students without a disability who agreed with the statement was 69 per cent, only 54 per cent of students citing personal care support, 56 per cent of students who were wheelchair users or who had other mobility difficulties, and 58 per cent of students with mental health difficulties did so. This may reflect the type of HEI these students attend, as well as their exclusion from certain types of activity. Only the blind and partially sighted students, who were very positive across all measures, were more likely than students with no disability to agree that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities in or around their HEI.

Disabled students' accommodation

Figure 7.6 shows the type of accommodation students lived in during their first year in higher education. Overall, disabled students were less likely than students without a disability to be living in traditional student halls of residence. Only blind and partially sighted students were more likely than students without a disability to be living in a student hall of residence. Students with learning difficulties and mental health difficulties were not particularly likely to live at home with their families, but the all other categories of disabled students were more likely to do so.

Figure 7.6: Type of first year accommodation by type of disability or long-term illness



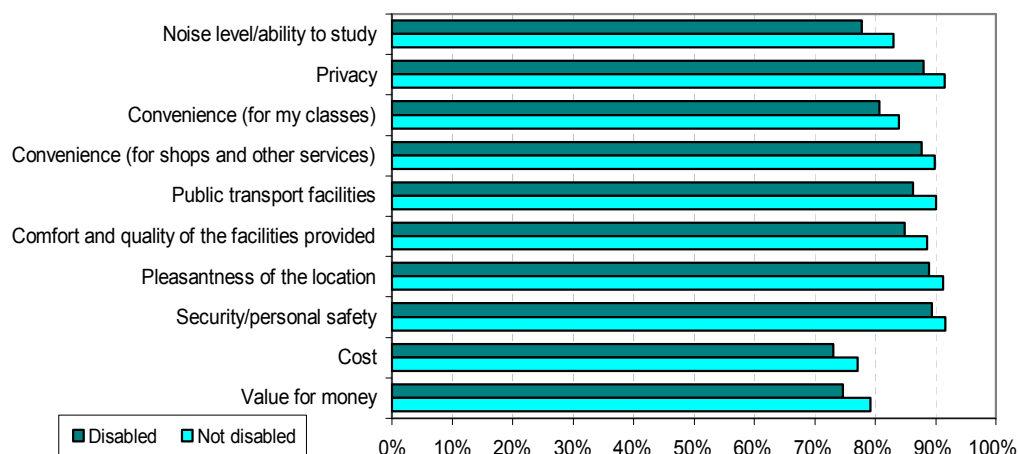
Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all respondents who entered higher education in 2006 and were currently registered, excluding a small number of students in other types of accommodation, weighted*

Across all groups, the disabled students were less likely than students without disabilities to say that arranging accommodation for their first year had not been a problem. Sixty four per cent of students with no disability said that arranging accommodation had not been a problem, compared to 56 per cent of students with a disability or long-term illness. Students with physically limiting disabilities were particularly likely to have experienced difficulties. Under 50 per cent of students who were blind or partially sighted, deaf or hearing impaired, wheelchair users or experiencing other mobility difficulties, those with multiple disabilities and those with other physical disabilities or injuries said that arranging accommodation had not been a problem, and the figure was particularly low for the small group of respondents citing personal care support, of whom just 28 per cent said that arranging accommodation had not been a problem.

The situation had improved somewhat when students were looking for accommodation for their second year. Overall, just 15 per cent of disabled students said that fixing adequate second year accommodation had been difficult, compared to a figure of 13 per cent for students without disabilities. While blind and partially sighted students were again among the groups who had experienced most difficulty, the other groups with physically limiting disabilities were not – students with dyslexia and mental health difficulties were the second and third most likely to have found it difficult. Students with disabilities were more likely than those without to be planning to live in university-owned accommodation in their second year. Overall, 14 per cent were planning to do so, compared to 12 per cent of students without disabilities, but more than 20 per cent of students who were blind or partially sighted, were wheelchair users or had other mobility difficulties, had personal care support or multiple disabilities planned to live in university accommodation in their second year, as did 30 per cent of those with autistic spectrum disorders.

Overall, as Figure 7.7 shows, disabled students were slightly less likely to find their first year accommodation adequate across a range of measures than students without disabilities.

Figure 7.7: Percentage of students finding their accommodation at least adequate across a range of measures



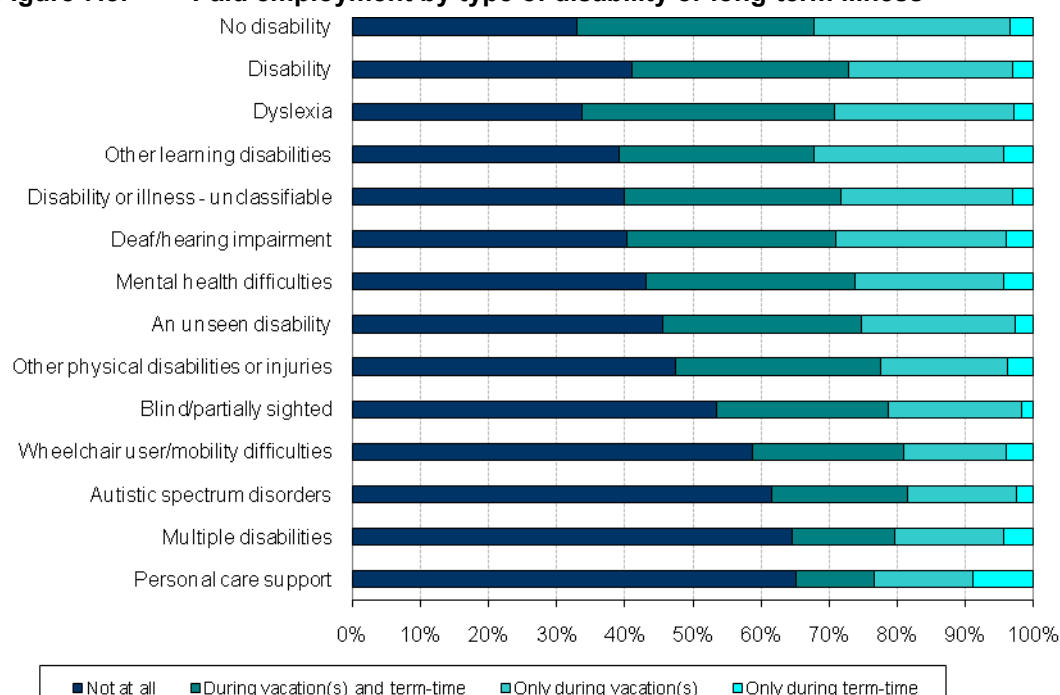
Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted*

As was the case with other measures of satisfaction, disabled students were slightly less satisfied with their accommodation than students who were not disabled. There were, however, differences among the different groups, with the blind and partially sighted students indicating high levels of satisfaction. On six of the ten measures, blind students were more likely than students with no disability to report that their accommodation was adequate or good, as was also the case for students who were wheelchair users or with other mobility problems. Conversely, lower proportions of students with mental health difficulties said that their accommodation was adequate or good than students without a disability, and those with other disabilities on all ten measures of satisfaction, and students with autistic spectrum disorders reported lower rating of seven of the measures. On average, 79 per cent of students with mental health difficulties rated their accommodation as at least adequate, which was the lowest figure of the various disabled groups (although still around 4 out of 5), and students with multiple disabilities were less likely to rate their accommodation as adequate or good. Blind and partially-sighted students were similar to students with no disability with nearly 9 out of 10 doing so, and over 80 per cent of all the categories did so.

Disabled students, employment and career planning

Overall, students with a disability or long-term illness were less likely to have done paid work during their first year of HE study, with 41 per cent not done so, compared to a third of students without a disability. As Figure 7.8 shows, there was a high level of variation between the different disabled groups. Students with learning disabilities were almost as likely to have worked at some point during the year as students with no disability, while students with physically limiting disabilities were less likely to have worked, as were students with autistic spectrum disorders.

Figure 7.8: Paid employment by type of disability or long-term illness



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted*

The number of hours students were employed during term-time was very similar between those with and without disabilities. Students with learning disabilities, who might be expected to have had less time to do paid work during term-time, were in fact more likely than students without a disability to have worked in such employment for more than 21 hours per week, with this being particularly common among the group of students who had learning disabilities other than dyslexia. A quarter of this group who worked during term time worked for more than 21 hours per week, compared to 14 per cent of students with no disability and 13 per cent of students with a disability. There has been some evidence that balancing paid work and study contributed to mental health problems; for example reported by Carney *et al.* (2005) in a recent analysis of data from a full 3rd year cohort of students at a high tariff Scottish university.

It is interesting to compare the proportions of disabled students doing paid work with those doing voluntary work. Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were more likely than those without to have done some kind of voluntary work. Thirty six per cent of students with a disability had done voluntary work, compared to 26 per cent of students with no disability or long-term illness. Whether this indicates that students with disabilities had experienced difficulty in finding paid employment, or were more inclined to be altruistic requires further exploration. They were however, more likely than students without disabilities to say that they

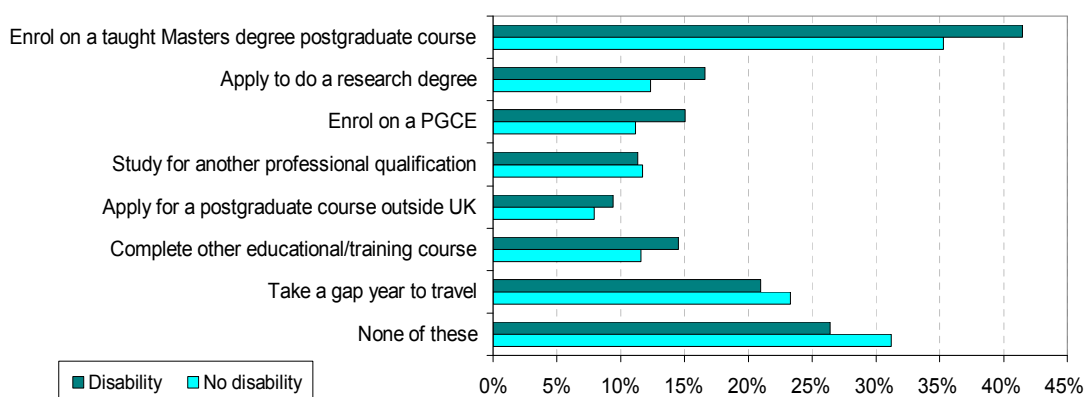
were doing voluntary work because they already had experience in that area, that it connected with their needs and interests, and that they wanted to help someone or the community. Students who were deaf or hearing impaired or blind or partially sighted were the most likely to have done voluntary work, with 44 per cent and 43 per cent respectively having done so. Only students with autistic spectrum disorders and those who required personal care support were less likely than students without a disability to have done voluntary work, and these two groups were among the three least likely to have done paid work (together with students with multiple disabilities), suggesting that for these groups, there were particular barriers that prevented them undertaking any form of work outside their courses.

Despite the greater likelihood that they will not have had experience of employment while they were in higher education, students with disabilities were only slightly less likely than students without disabilities to say that they had a clear idea about the kind of occupation they would like in the future and how to do so. When students were asked how their ideas about their future career had changed while they were in higher education, their responses were also similar to students with no disability or long-term illness. There was, however, some differentiation between the students with different types of disabilities, particularly in relation to the proportions who said that their career ideas had changed completely. Blind and partially sighted students, deaf and hearing impaired students, wheelchair users and those with other mobility difficulties, students with mental health difficulties and students requiring personal care support were all much more likely than average to say that their ideas had changed completely.

It is not known how these ideas have changed – whether these students had simply found new areas that they were interested in, or whether they perceived particular avenues to have opened up or closed down as a result of their experiences in higher education. In addition to volunteering, disabled students were also more likely than students without a disability to be office holders or student representatives at their HEI. Eighteen per cent of students with a disability had been an office holder or student representative, including 27 per cent of deaf or hearing impaired students, 22 per cent of students with multiple disabilities, and just over 20 per cent of blind or partially sighted and dyslexic students, compared to 15 per cent of students without disabilities. The only group that was less likely than students without a disability to have been office holders or student representatives, were the students with autistic spectrum disorders, which is not unexpected, although even in this group, 14 per cent had held such a position. It is not possible to say what proportion of these office holding students were holding posts that were specifically for disabled students, for example as disabled students representatives within their department or hall of residence, although it is likely that the existence of these positions will have inflated the figure for disabled students slightly.

Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were more likely than those without to be planning to continue studying in some form after they had completed their current course. The motivations for this are not known, although it may be that disabled students feel that they must be more highly qualified in order to be competitive in the job market, particularly given their lower levels of employment during their time in higher education. Qualitative follow-up of these students would be particularly valuable.

Figure 7.9: Intentions for the year after graduation by whether students had a disability or long-term illness



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted*

There were some clear differences between the different disabled groups, for example, 28 per cent of students with autistic spectrum disorders planned to apply to do a research degree, 26 per cent of blind and partially sighted students, 26 per cent of students with multiple disabilities, and 23 per cent of wheelchair users or those with other mobility difficulties planned to enrol on PGCE courses, and 24 per cent of blind and partially sighted students planned to complete some kind of other educational or training course.

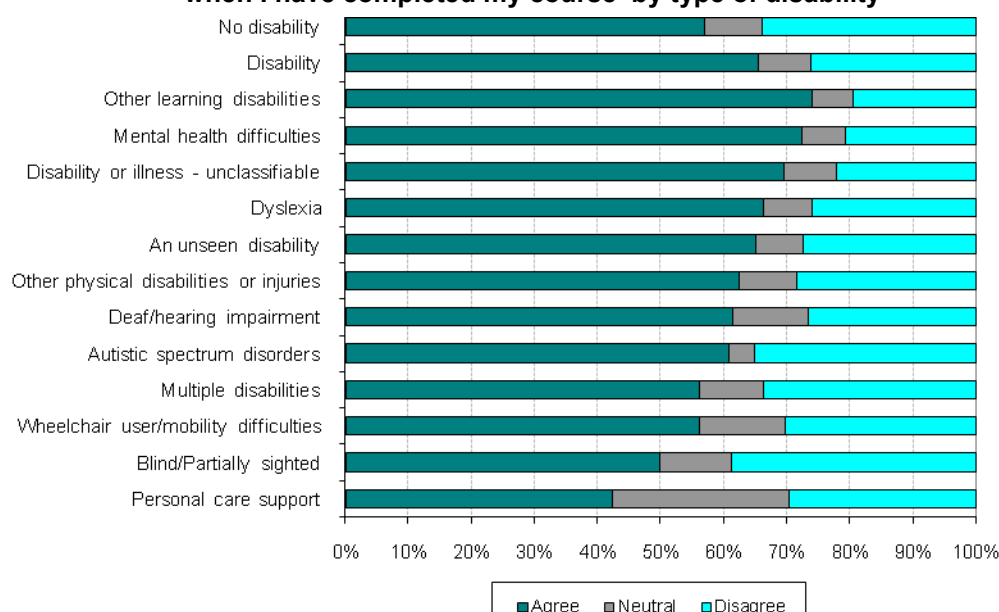
Disabled students' finances

While similar proportions of students reporting a disability or long-term illness strongly agreed with the statement that they had managed their finances well in the last year, on average they were more likely to have given a negative response on the scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Eighteen per cent of disabled students strongly agreed that they had managed their finances well, and 65 per cent agreed to some extent, whereas the comparative figures for those not reporting a disability were 18 per cent and 70 per cent. At the other end of the spectrum, 7 per cent of disabled students strongly disagreed with the statement compared to 4 per cent of students with no disability, and 23 per cent disagreed to some extent, compared to 19 per cent of students with no disability or long-term illness. Students with mental health difficulties were the least likely to agree that they had managed their finances well, with 31 per cent disagreeing (suggesting the likelihood of a reflexive relationship between the causes and effects). Conversely, 72 per cent of blind and partially sighted students agreed that they had managed their finances well, and only 12 per cent disagreed.

Equal Ability Limited *et al.* (2006:82) found that financial obstacles deterred many disabled people from entering post-19 education generally, and that not knowing whether they would be able to find the kind of employment needed to pay back grants and loans was a key concern for many disabled people. Among the Futuretrack cohort, students with mental health difficulties were also the group that was most likely to say strongly agree that they were worried about the prospect of having to repay loans and debts when they had completed their course. Forty five per cent strongly agreed that they were worried, compared to an average of just over a third of all students with disabilities, and around a quarter of students with no disability or long-term illness. As Figure 7.10 shows, students with physically limiting

disabilities were less likely to agree that they were worried about repaying loans and debts, which may reflect the type of support they receive while they are in higher education. These students were more likely than other disabled students to report that they did not expect to have any debt when they graduated, although students with disabilities were less likely than those without to say that they expected to graduate with no debts, with 10 per cent saying this, compared to 15 per cent of students with no disability or long-term illness. Nearly 39 per cent of students with multiple disabilities expected to have debts of over £20,000 when they graduated, as did more than a third of students with other learning disabilities and mental health difficulties. Overall, 32 per cent of students with a disability anticipated graduating with debt of more than £20,000 compared to 29 per cent of students with no disability. Wheelchair users and those with other mobility difficulties, deaf and hearing impaired students, and students with autistic spectrum disorders all had lower proportions of students expecting to graduate with at least £20,000 worth of debt than the average for all students with no disability or long-term illness.

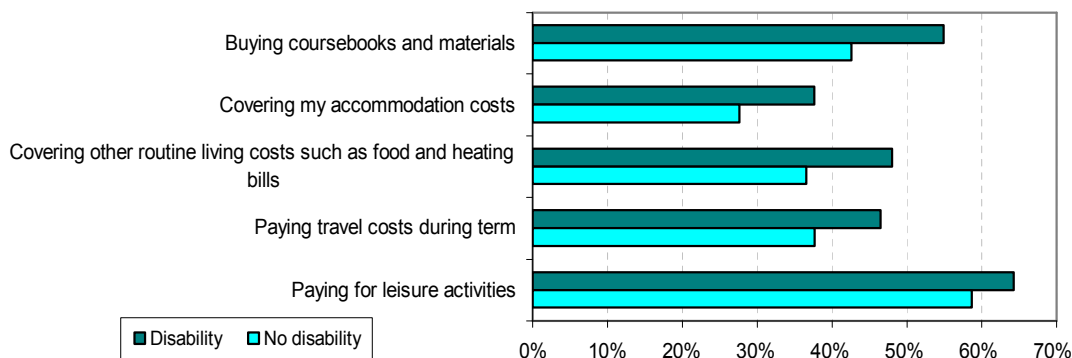
Figure 7.10: 'I am worried about the prospect of having to repay loans and debts when I have completed my course' by type of disability



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted

These higher expectations of debt relate to the higher proportions of disabled students who reported that they worried some or all of the time about paying for various activities. As Figure 7.11 shows, disabled students were significantly more worried about paying for their accommodation and study materials.

Figure 7.11: Proportion of students who worry all or some of the time about paying for particular activities by whether the student had a disability



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students who entered higher education in 2006, weighted*

Students with mental health difficulties were among the most likely to worry across all the different areas, and students reporting personal care support were also more likely than average to say that they worried at least some of the time. Students with autistic spectrum disorders were by far the least likely to say that they worried some or all of the time about paying for the different areas, and they were significantly less worried than students who did not report having any disability or long-term illness.

Summary

- Dyslexia was the most common disability reported by respondents to the Stage 2 survey. Characteristics such as gender and age were skewed within the different disability groups, with, for example, the students with autistic spectrum disorders being predominantly young and male.
- Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were less likely than students with no disability to be attending highest and high tariff universities.
- Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were overall less likely to rate their experience of HE positively. This was true when they were asked to assess the quality of their teaching and learning experience, opportunities for extra-curricular activities, accommodation and financial situation.
- Disabled students were less likely than students reporting no disability to have undertaken employment during their course, but they were more likely to have engaged in voluntary work. It is clear that these students volunteer to work with organisations that work with disabled students because they have a greater awareness of the need for volunteers. However the difference in figures between disabled and other students may also suggest that disabled students face more obstacles to finding suitable paid employment, particularly as they were more likely than those reporting no disabilities to report financial constraints.
- Students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities tended to be the group that was most similar in their responses to the students with no disability, suggesting, not surprisingly, that disabilities that place physical limitations on students have a greater

impact on their experience of higher education. Conversely, those reporting mental health illnesses were least likely to respond positively about their HE experience across the full range of dimensions explored. Among those with physical disabilities, those reporting visual and hearing disabilities were most likely to respond positively.

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CHAPTER 8

Non-UK students studying at UK HE institutions: who, why, what has their experience been and how did they evaluate it?

Introduction

The UK has one of the most international student populations within the group of countries which form the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). International students make up 14 per cent of the enrolments in tertiary education in the UK (compared to an OECD average of just under 7 per cent). In 2006, there was a 2.7 per cent increase in the total foreign student intake worldwide from the previous year, but the market share of the UK has remained about the same over the last six years. Eleven per cent of all students studying outside their home country study in the UK which makes it the world's second most popular destination for foreign students after the USA (OECD, 2008(A):348ff).

Countries in which English is the main language have an advantage in the international competition for foreign students, as language spoken and used in instruction is a decisive factor when choosing the overseas study location. However, an increasing number of institutions in other countries (mainly in Scandinavia) now offer courses in English to overcome their linguistic disadvantage. Other important factors when deciding on the country of study are tuition fees and cost of living. In the UK, there are higher tuition fees for international students than for domestic students. European students, although paying the same tuition fees as UK students, might pay less or no tuition fees at all in their home countries. Additionally, students can achieve a similar or the same qualification in another country without having to pay high tuition fees. The Bologna Process, therefore, has strengthened the position of other countries. The growing competition from other countries increases the need to observe the situation of non-UK students studying in the UK. A recent survey (Bekhradnia *et al.*, 2006) showed that

'Non-EU overseas respondents were considerably less satisfied than others with the value for money received on their course. [...] This should set alarm bells ringing. Value for money could be improved by reducing costs or improving the product. If it is not, in due course we will kill the golden goose that international students represent, and this finding needs to be taken very seriously indeed.'

The following chapter discusses the experiences of Futuretrack respondents from an origin from outside of the UK. It focuses on their study load, non-curricular activities, financial issues and their long-term prospects. Finally, the situation of non-UK applicants who did not proceed to UK higher education will be discussed.

The origins of non-UK students studying in the UK

Non-UK students are defined by their country of origin. Of all UCAS applicants in 2006, 5.9 per cent were classified as European¹⁶ and 8.7 per cent came from other overseas countries. The acceptance rate¹⁷ of non-UK students was lower than that of UK students, with 61 per

¹⁶ 'Non-UK European' students are defined according to the UCAS definition of the EEA and Swiss nationals. The EEA is made up of all the countries in the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

¹⁷ The acceptance rate as used here means the percentage of those who were applicants to a UK HEI in 2006 and initially accepted UK higher education places at the application stage.

cent of European students and 61 per cent of other overseas students being accepted to study in the UK compared to 80 per cent of UK students. Of all accepted students, 30 per cent of European students and 23 per cent of other overseas students responded to the Futuretrack Stage 1 survey compared to 26 per cent of UK students. The response rate of accepted non-UK students to the second survey was similar to accepted UK students (European: 12 per cent, other overseas: 7 per cent, UK: 9 per cent of all accepted applicants).

In addition to the UCAS classification, the Stage 2 survey asked for respondents' place of birth. Using the place of birth, the group of overseas students could be split according to their continent of birth. This enables us to compare the different groups within the Futuretrack sample and the main subjects students from different domiciles have chosen to study providing some details about the distribution within each continental group with students allocated to the category that applied in 2008 when they started. Table 8.1 shows these distributions by actual countries of birth and the comparative subject distribution of those from each continent.

Table 8.1: Countries of birth and main subjects by continents of birth

	Main countries of birth	Main subjects
African students (overseas students born in Africa)	40 per cent Nigeria 10 per cent Kenya 8 per cent Zimbabwe 6 per cent Ghana 6 per cent Mauritius	19 per cent Engineering, Technologies 18 per cent Business & Admin studies 13 per cent Law 9 per cent Mathematical & Comp Sciences 8 per cent Social Studies
Asian students (overseas students born in Asia)	23 per cent China 17 per cent Malaysia 10 per cent India 10 per cent Singapore 8 per cent Pakistan 3 per cent Japan 3 per cent Sri Lanka	19 per cent Engineering, Technologies 18 per cent Business & Admin studies 12 per cent Interdisciplinary studies 8 per cent Social Studies 8 per cent Law 6 per cent Mathematical & Comp Sciences
North American students (overseas students born in North America)	72 per cent USA 28 per cent Canada	20 per cent Interdisciplinary studies 11 per cent Social Studies 9 per cent Hist & Philosophical studies 9 per cent Biology, Vet Sci, Ag & related
Other overseas students (as classified by UCAS)	24 per cent UK 16 per cent Norway 8 per cent Bulgaria 5 per cent Switzerland 5 per cent Romania	20 per cent Interdisciplinary studies 16 per cent Business & Admin studies 12 per cent Social Studies 7 per cent Creative Arts & Design 7 per cent Biology, Vet Sci, Ag & related 7 per cent Law 6 per cent Engineering, Technologies
European students (as classified by UCAS)	12 per cent Germany 11 per cent Poland 10 per cent UK 8 per cent Ireland 6 per cent France 4 per cent Sweden 4 per cent Cyprus 4 per cent Lithuania	18 per cent Interdisciplinary studies 14 per cent Business & Admin studies 10 per cent Social Studies 7 per cent Biology, Vet Sci, Ag & related 8 per cent Creative Arts & Design 7 per cent Engineering & Technologies

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all accepted applicants, Stage 2 respondents only, weighted

However, it is important to be aware that the use of the continent of birth is only a rough estimate of the origin of students as it excludes migration before coming to the UK (e.g. a Chinese student born in Australia will count as Australian). In addition the exclusive use of the country of birth does not show the status of students in the UK. For example, 10 per cent

of students classified as European and nearly a quarter of other overseas students were born in the UK (Table 8.1). For the following analysis the UCAS classification was used to classify students as UK students, European students, and other overseas students. The continent of birth of other overseas students was utilised to classify respondents in 'African students', 'Asian students', 'North American students' and 'other overseas students'.

About 67 per cent of all overseas students from Africa and 60 per cent of all students from Asia are male. African students are usually older (average mean: 23.5 years) than all other students with an average mean of 21 years. Seventy one per cent of African students were classified as black, 11 per cent as Asian. Ninety per cent of Asian origin students were classified as belonging to the Asian ethnicity, mainly Chinese.

First year in higher education in the UK

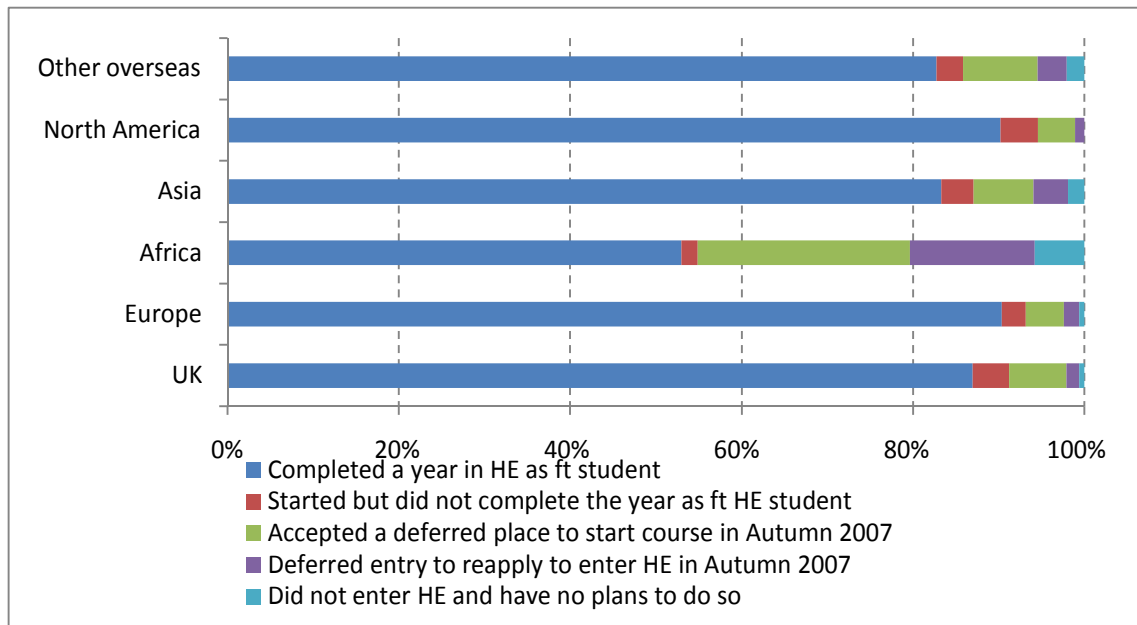
Outcomes for overseas students were very diverse. Of all accepted students from Africa only approximately 53 per cent completed the first year in higher education (Figure 8.1), although about a quarter accepted a deferred place to start their course in Autumn 2007. When asked what they did between Autumn 2006 and Autumn 2007, most (43 per cent) stated that they undertook paid work to gain experience related to their career plans. Thirty six per cent said that they studied to improve their higher education qualifications. Some African students reported visa or immigration problems entering the UK such as a 28 year old Nigerian man, who said:

'I have been trying to get visa to enter the UK. The entry clearance officer is "impossible". I was refused visa again due to a miscalculation of available funds on the part of the clearance officer.'

About 6 per cent of accepted students from Africa did not enter higher education at all.

The proportion of European and North American students completing a year in higher education as full-time students is higher than that of UK students; roughly 90 per cent of European and North American students completed a year compared to 87 per cent of UK students. About 83 per cent of accepted students from Asia and other overseas countries did so, as Figure 8.1 shows.

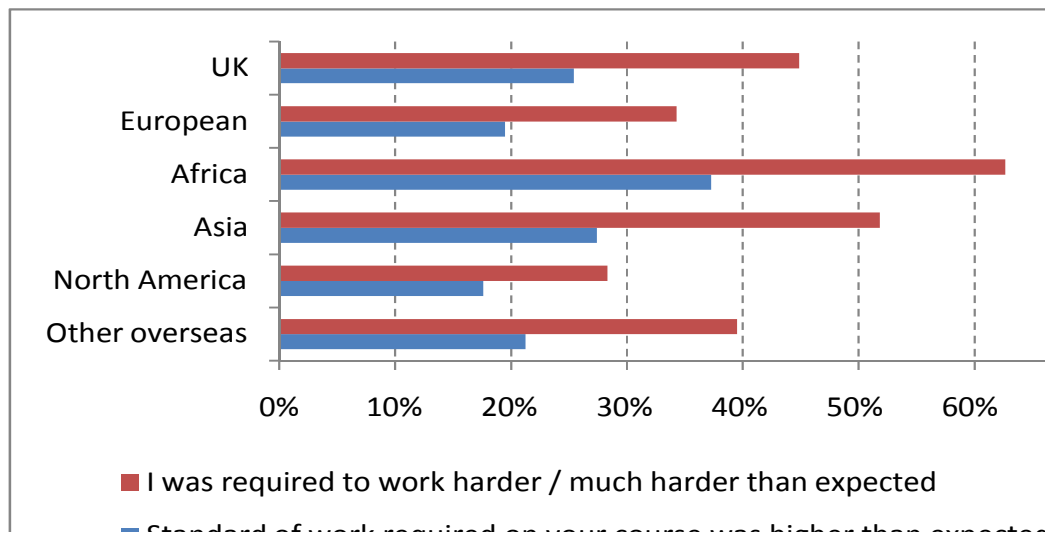
Figure 8.1: What happened after applying for HE by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all Stage 1 and Stage 2 accepted respondents, weighted

There are many differences regarding expected and experienced standard of work required and students' workload (Figure 8.2). Whilst North American and European students were less surprised by the standard of work and the workload than UK students, students from other overseas countries found the standard of work higher than they had expected. Thirty seven per cent of African students and 27 per cent of Asian students found the standard of work on their course higher than they had expected. Similarly, 63 per cent of Africans and 52 per cent of Asians stated that they were required to work harder on their course than they had expected.

Figure 8.2: Standard of work and workload higher than expected by regional origin

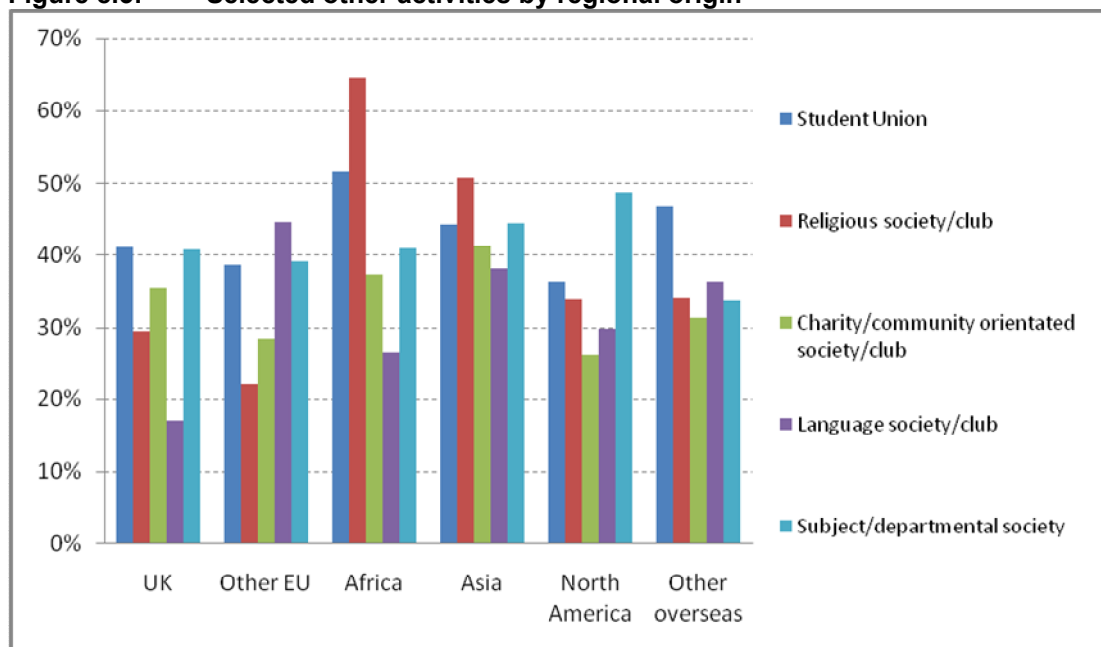


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

Students also differ in their participation in extracurricular activities (Figure 8.3). North American students reported greater involvement in subject or departmental societies whilst European, Asian or other overseas students were the most likely to be involved in a language

society or club. Asian and African students showed a higher than average propensity to take part in charity or community orientated societies and religious societies and clubs. A higher proportion of African and other overseas students reported involvement in Student Union organisations than other students.

Figure 8.3: Selected other activities by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

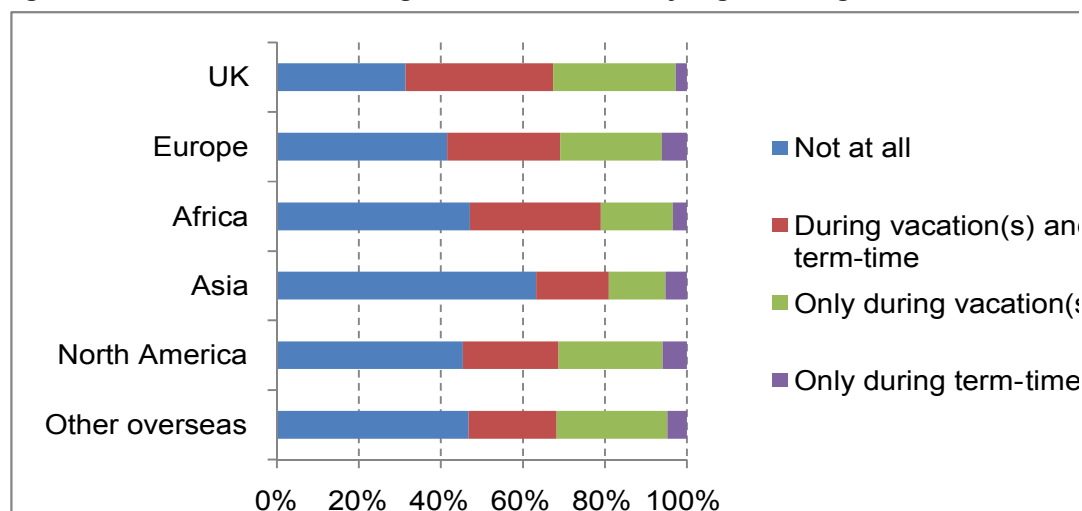
About 70 per cent of UK students stated that they were doing paid work in the academic session 2006-2007 (Figure 8.4). The participation in paid work, however, varies substantially by origin. In general, international students are entitled to work a maximum of 20 hours a week during their period of study and up to 40 hours a week during the holiday period (UK Higher Education Europe Unit and UK Higher Education International Unit, 2009, p.18). Most international and European students, however, reported a lower employment rate. Overseas students from Asia were least likely to report doing paid work during their time in the UK. One reason for the lower employment rate of non-UK students could be that mainly affluent students or students funded by bursaries or other awards can afford to study abroad in the first place. Very often, the funding of the studies needs to be arranged before planning to study in the UK at least so that the essential costs of living are covered as requested in the UCAS website¹⁸:

'Before you decide which university or college to attend, you need to be absolutely certain that you can pay the full cost of your tuition fees [...], the everyday living expenses [...], books and equipment for your course; travel to and from your country'.

UK students, on the other hand, have more flexibility in terms of their plans to finance their studies.

¹⁸ <http://www.ucas.com/students/nonukstudents/feesnonuk> (2009-04-06)

Figure 8.4: Paid work during term or vacations by regional origin



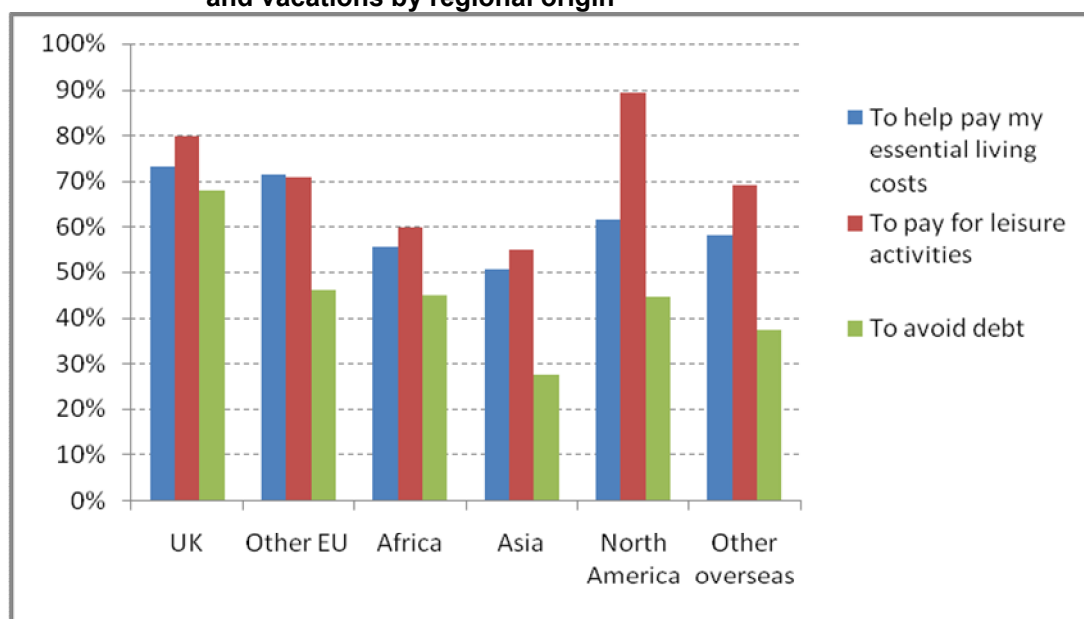
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

UK and non-UK students differ not only in terms of the proportion of students doing paid work but also in their reasons for doing so. Respondents were asked about their reasons for doing paid work both during vacation and term-time. Two key dimensions were revealed; earning money for various reasons (essential living costs, leisure activities, avoiding debt) was one common motive, but many students did paid work primarily because they wanted to get some employment experience in general, in an area relevant to their studies, or to try out potential options and contexts.

Non-UK students as a whole were less likely to be working because of anticipation of debt (Figure 8.5a) or in order to gain employment experience (Figure 8.5b). Whilst about three quarters of working UK students did so to avoid debt, this reason was reported to be much less important for non-UK students. It is hardly surprising in the light of this result that non-UK students were less worried about their debts than UK students; about 50 per cent of non-UK students from Africa and 41 per cent of non-UK students from Asia and other overseas strongly disagreed with the statement 'I am worried about the prospects of having to repay loans and debts when I have completed my course'. Non-UK students from Europe or North America were also less concerned with debts than UK students; about a quarter of other European students and a third of North American students strongly disagreed with the statement. In contrast, 63 per cent of all UK students agreed strongly or less strongly (selecting 1 to 3 on the 7 point scale where 1 meant 'agree strongly', 2 meant 'agree' and 3 meant 'agree somewhat') that they were very worried about the prospect of having to repay loans and debts after completion of the course on a seven point scale. Only about 11 per cent of all UK students disagreed with the statement.

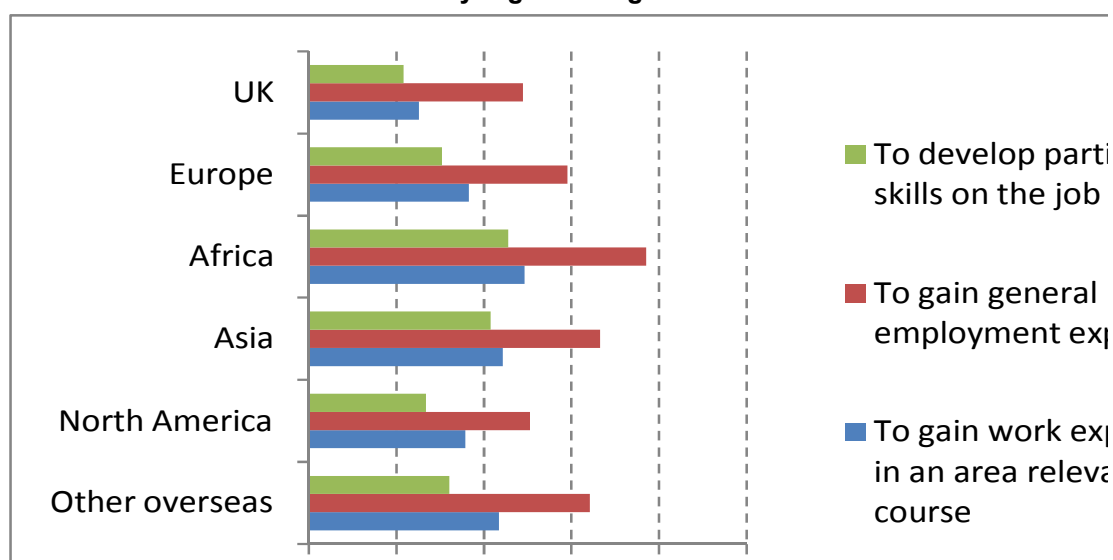
As seen in a previous study, international students expressed greatest frustration over difficulties in obtaining relevant work experiences (International Focus, 2008, p.4). If non-UK students from Asia or Africa undertook paid work, they mainly did so to gain general employment experience. Students from North America, other overseas students and European students show a similar pattern to UK students. Their main reasons for working were to pay for essential living costs and leisure activities, and to gain general employment experience, as Figures 8.5a and 8.5b show.

Figure 8.5a: Selected financial reasons for undertaking paid work during term-time and vacations by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

Figure 8.5b: Selected skill-related reasons for undertaking paid work during term-time and vacations by regional origin

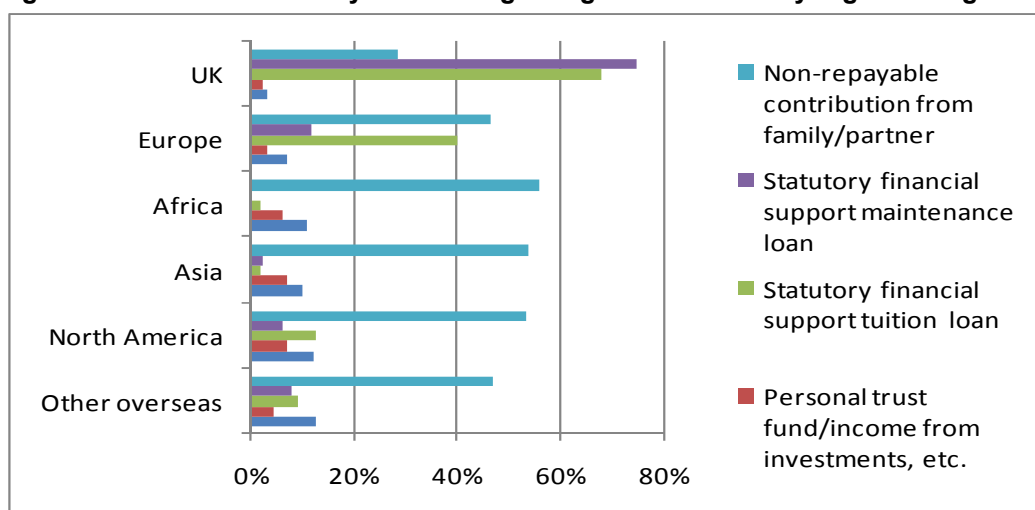


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

Non-repayable contributions from family or partner were the most important source of income for non-UK students especially from overseas (Figure 8.6). About half of all European and overseas students reported that they funded their participation in higher education in this way. Another important way to fund higher education was through public financial support from their home countries which non-UK students stated when they reported 'other' ways to fund their higher education. For UK students, the main sources of income were statutory financial support tuition and maintenance loans. These loans were not used by most non-UK students, although a high proportion of European students cited statutory financial support tuition

loans¹⁹. Non-UK students might be able to qualify for student loans or grants from their home country government (e.g. German students might qualify for BAFOeG loans).

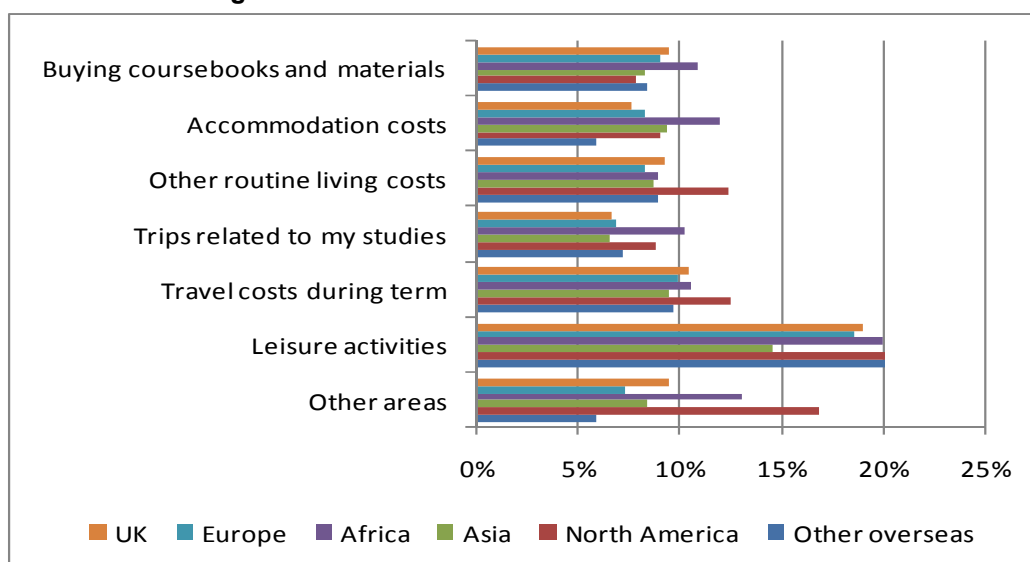
Figure 8.6: Selected ways of funding of higher education by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

Compared to UK students, non-UK students did not report more difficulties due to lack or shortage of money (Figure 8.7). Some North American students reported that they were never able to afford leisure activities or struggled with other routine living costs (e.g. food and heating bills), but generally there are no significant differences between UK and non-UK students.

Figure 8.7: Difficulties due to lack or shortage of money (all the time) by regional origin



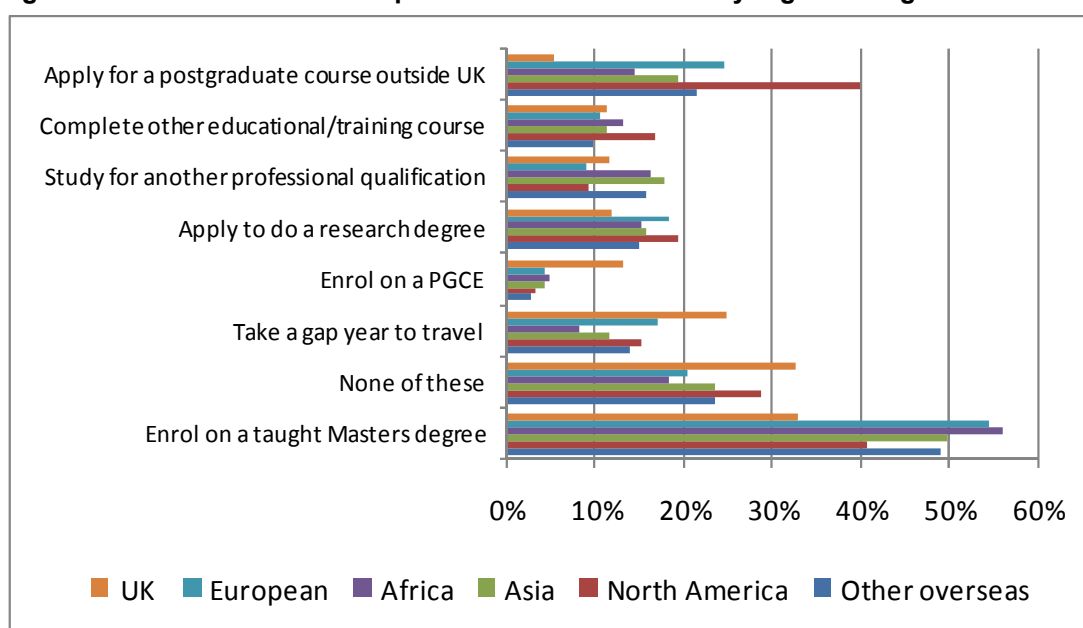
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

¹⁹ The conditions under which international students can apply for students support can be found at the website of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA): http://www.ukcosa.org.uk/student/source_funding.php. European students are generally entitled for a loan to pay their tuition fees.

The longer term perspective on employment and further training

The following section deals with students' career plans (Figure 8.8). It is not surprising that a higher proportion of non-UK students reported that they planned to apply for a postgraduate course outside the UK. This highly mobile population either planned to return to their home countries or to move on to another country. However, non-UK students in general were more likely than UK students to say that they planned to enrol on a taught Master's degree. Approximately the same proportion of non-UK students as UK students reported plans to study for another professional qualification or to apply to do a research degree (not shown). About a quarter of UK students reported that they were planning to take a gap year to travel after completion of their current course. Gap years, however, do not seem to be as popular for non-UK students, only between 8 per cent (African students) and 17 per cent (European students) planned to do so.

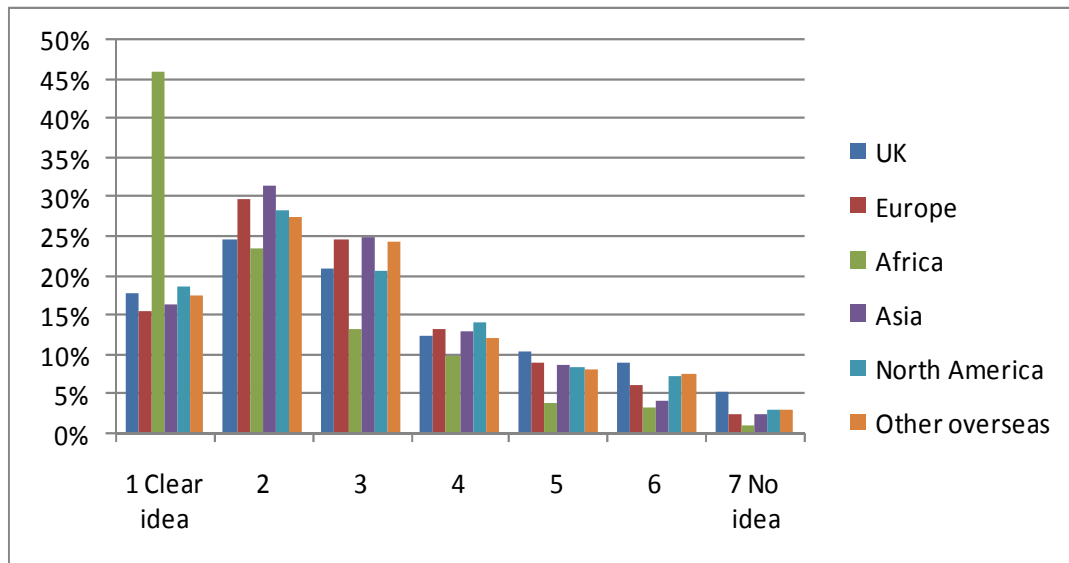
Figure 8.8: Plans after completion of current course by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

Figure 8.9 displays an overview of the career plans of students at the end of their first year in higher education. '1' means 'I have a clear idea about the occupation I eventually want to enter and the qualifications required to do so' and 7 means 'I have no idea what I will do after I complete the course I have applied for'. African students reported firmer career plans than all other students which may be explained by the higher age of African students and their most popular choice of subject (Engineering and Technologies), which, as other chapters have shown are two of the factors that are related to clear ideas about respondents' future careers.

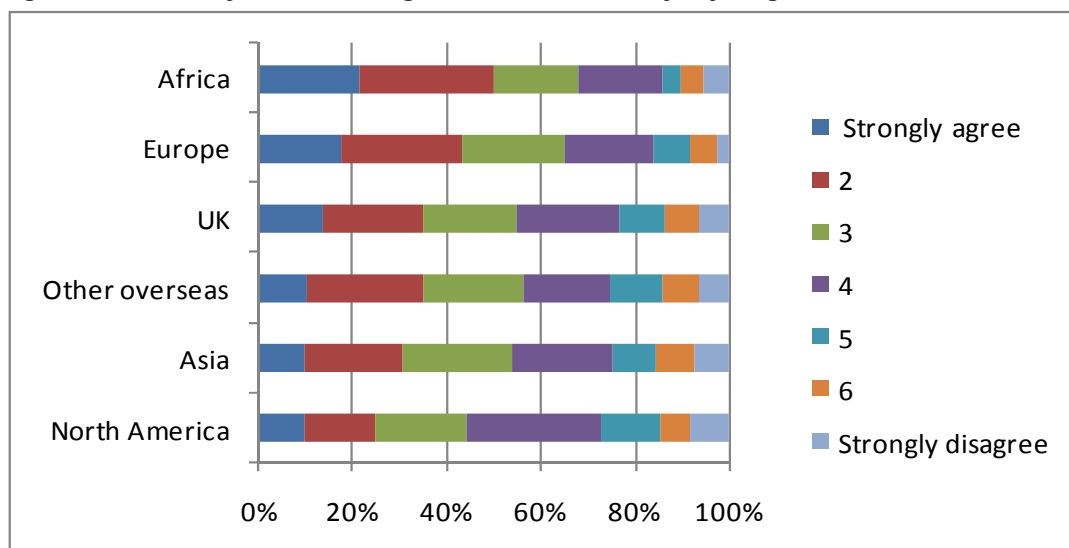
Figure 8.9: Clarity of occupational plans by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

The negative results of the HEPI study regarding the attitudes of non-UK students' about the 'value for money' their courses offered were mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. These findings were not reproduced in this survey. Figure 8.10 shows most students agreed that their course was good value for money. African and European students were the most content with their course being good value for money. Overseas students from Africa were most content with their course being good value for money followed by European students. Overseas students from North America were the least likely to report being content with their course, and although less than a third overall scored in the bottom three categories that clearly constitutes disagreement with the statement

Figure 8.10: 'My course was good value for money' by origin

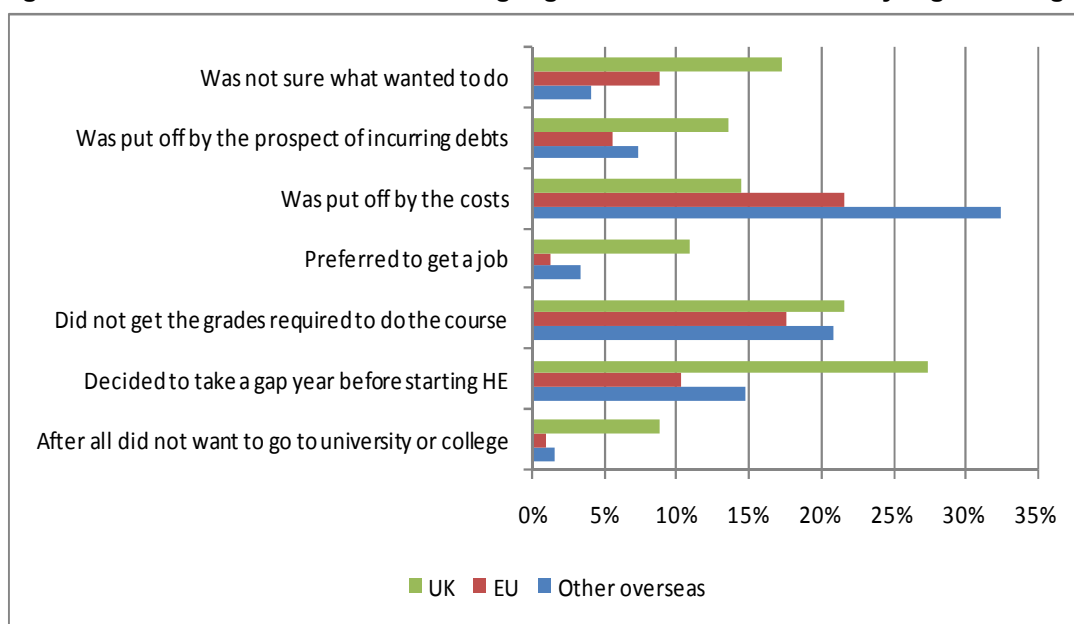


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, weighted.

Non UK-applicants who did not proceed to UK higher education

The following section provides an overview of what non-UK students did when they did not start their course of higher education in the UK. It is based on respondents of a short survey of UCAS applicants of which 11 per cent are European and 15 per cent are from overseas. For this analysis, we only distinguished between UK, European and other overseas students, as the subsamples sizes are too small to present robust data.

Figure 8.11: Reasons for not entering higher education in the UK by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all non-respondents survey respondents, weighted

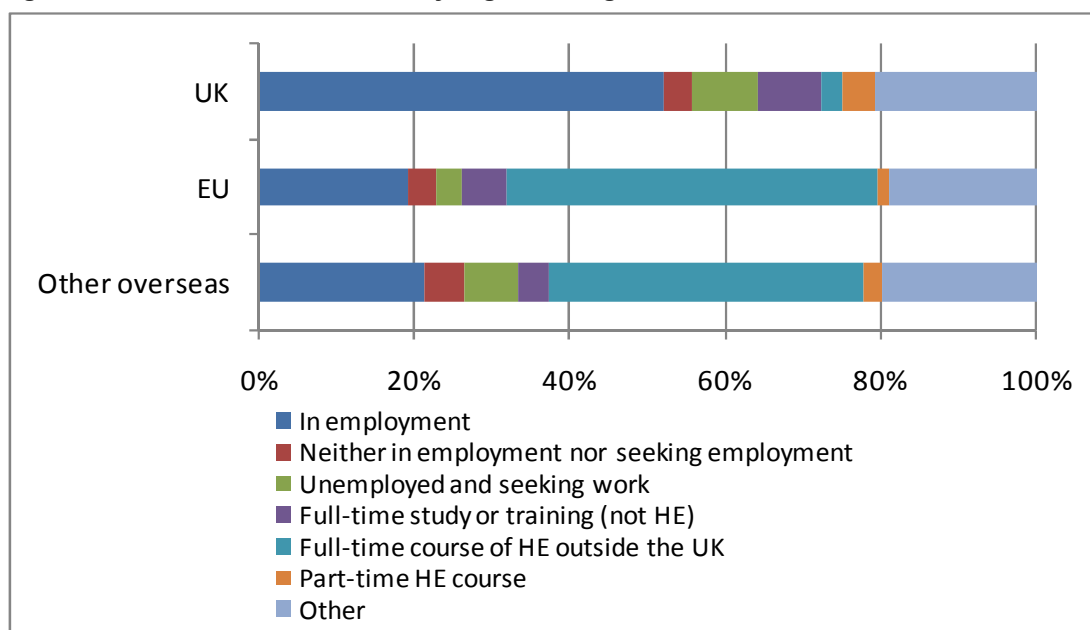
Respondents were asked why they did not proceed to full-time higher education in 2006 (Figure 8.11). As discussed before, non-UK students were less concerned about incurring debts and more about the costs. The UK respondents were more likely not to go to university or college at all and to get a job or to take a gap year, whereas not surprisingly a high proportion of non-UK students went on to alternative studies.

About 40 per cent of non-UK students stated 'other' reasons for not proceeding into full-time higher education in the UK. The main reasons were that they choose to study somewhere else, either in another country or in their home countries. A significant minority reported problems getting their finances organised (e.g. failed to obtain a home government scholarship) and of getting visas. Some had to do their National Service. Also, some simply did not get accepted by the UK university to which they had applied.

A 19 year old female applicant, who went on to do a foundation degree in Malaysia, described her plans as follows:

'Because the course I was given was not what I wanted and the fee was too high for me. So I decide to do my first degree somewhere else and come and continue with my masters there in the UK'.

Figure 8.12: Current situation by regional origin



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all non-respondents survey respondents, weighted

About half of all UK applicants who decided against studying started employment full-time, part-time or were self-employed (Figure 8.12). About 40 per cent of other overseas and 47 per cent of European students reported that they started a full-time course of higher education at a university or college outside the UK. The most popular destinations for European students were Ireland (15 per cent) and Poland (13 per cent). Other overseas students who did not start their studies in the UK went on to study in the USA/ Canada (20 per cent), Singapore (10 per cent), Malaysia (8 per cent) and Australia (8 per cent). From the data, however, it is not possible to state whether non-UK students decided to stay in their home country and start to study there or whether they decided to study in another foreign country.

Summary

- The UK is one of the most important destinations for non-UK students from Europe or other overseas. The population of European and other overseas students is very diverse according to their regional origin.
- Only about half of all accepted students from Africa completed their first year in HE in the UK although about a quarter accepted a deferred place to start their course in the following year. More than a third of all African students found the standard of work on their course higher than they had expected and two thirds of African students reported that they were required to work harder than they had expected. Roughly half of all African students worked during term-time and/or during vacations, the most important reason being to gain general employment experience. After the completion of their courses, more than half of all students from Africa anticipated enrolling on a Master's degree. African students were the most clear about the occupation they eventually wanted to enter and the qualifications required to do so which might reflect that they are older than the average students.

- Eighty per cent of accepted students from Asia completed their first year in higher education. Students from Asia were the least likely to report undertaking any paid work. Half of all students from Asia plan to continue their studies and were most likely to apply for a taught Master's degree.
- There are similar patterns from non-UK students from Europe and from the North Americas. Ninety per cent of students completed a year in higher education which was the highest proportion compared to all other students. They were less likely to report that they were required to work harder or much harder and that the standard of work was higher than expected. About two thirds of non-UK students from Europe and from the North Americas reported that they did paid work. Students from North America (40 per cent) and European students (25 per cent) were the most likely to plan to apply for a postgraduate course outside the UK.
- The most important ways of funding for all non-UK students were non-repayable contributions from family or partner. Additionally, 40 per cent of non-UK students from European countries reported of getting statutory financial support tuition loans.
- Non-UK students from Europe or overseas were in general content with their course being good value for money.

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CHAPTER 9

Those who took different career routes: an exploration of the experience since application of those who did not proceed to full-time higher education, those who took gap years or deferred entry, and those who changed courses but remained in higher education

Introduction

This chapter looks at those applicants who did not enter higher education; those who entered higher education but who are not currently registered as full-time HE students; those who changed courses but remained in HE; and those who took gap years.

The first year in higher education is a key time in a student's HE career. As Tinto (1993:152) has stated, the first year '*represents a strategic leverage point where the investment of scarce resources can yield substantial future benefits in both learning and persistence*'. Several authors have found that students who leave higher education are most likely to do so during their first year (See for example, Quinn *et al.*, 2005; Thomas, 2002; Yorke, Ozga and Sukhnandan 1997; Yorke 2000). In a recent report the National Audit Office (NAO) (2007:21) reported that the most common time for students to withdraw from their courses was in the summer term, around the traditional examination time, although this could reflect inaccuracies in recording of leaving dates.

The UK has consistently had an estimated graduation rate that is slightly higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average, and graduation rates have not significantly declined as HEIs have attempted to widen participation (OECD, 2008b), with around 83 per cent of those who start a full-time degree course proceeding to obtain some kind of qualification (Davies and Elias, 2003:ii). However, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) (2009) found that the 2006/7 cohort, which was the first to be subject to the £3,000 top-up fees in England and Wales, had a drop-out rate that was 0.3 percentage points higher than the previous year, and the Government remains concerned that retention rates are maintained as access is widened. As Yorke (1998:65) states, an open access policy, or other kinds of widening participation initiatives, carry with them the risk that those accepted under such policies may decide that higher education is not what they want to do. Additionally, although the non-completion rate has remained relatively static, levels of withdrawal from some institutions, in particular those with large numbers of non-traditional students, have been increasing in recent years (HESA, 2009; Laing and Robinson, 2003). Consequently, the Government has set various targets for the HE sector. In the 2002 Spending Review, the Department for Education and Skills was given the target:

'By 2010, increase participation in Higher Education towards 50% of those aged 18 to 30. Also, make significant progress year on year towards fair access, and bear down on rates of non-completion' (HM Treasury, 2002)

The participation target was reiterated in the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review, which stated:

'Increase participation in Higher Education towards 50 per cent of those aged 18 to 30 with growth of at least a percentage point every two years to the academic year 2010-11' (HM Treasury, 2007)

They have stated that there are both economic and social benefits arising from completing higher education. They note that people with an HE qualification earn more than those without, that they are less likely to be unemployed and that they are more likely to be promoted. Additionally, they link participation with social citizenship, suggesting that graduates are more likely to be engaged citizens and that there is a strong positive correlation between the cohesiveness of local communities and participation in higher education (Department for Education and Skills, 2003:59).

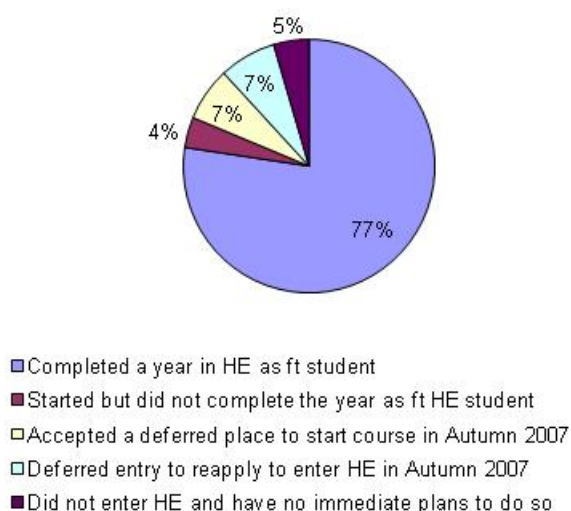
The increased emphasis on maintaining completion rates while widening access has put greater emphasis on the role that HEIs can play in attracting and retaining students. Consequently, it is important for policy makers and HEIs to understand why some people who apply to enter HE end up taking different routes that are contrary to the traditional linear model of progression in which students are expected to complete their studies within a fixed and predetermined time, and to remain on the course on which they initially enrolled (Quinn *et al.*, 2005:13)

Characteristics of applicants who took alternative routes

A great deal of attention has been paid in the literature to the personal characteristics shared by students who make successful and unsuccessful transitions into HE²⁰. This first section looks at the characteristics of Futuretrack respondents who have taken different routes, some into HE, others into different types of education or into the labour market.

Over three quarters of the participants in the Stage 2 survey had completed a year in higher education as a full-time student; 4 per cent started but did not complete a year as a higher education student; 7 per cent accepted a deferred place to start a course in Autumn 2007; 7 per cent deferred entry to reapply to enter HE in Autumn 2007; and 5 per cent did not enter higher education and had no immediate plans to do so.

Figure 9.1: What happened after applying to enter higher education



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants, weighted

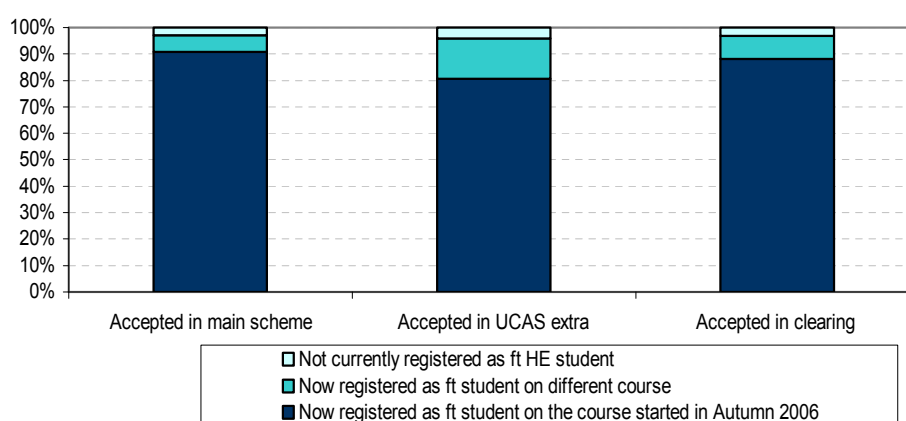
Of the respondents who had entered higher education in 2006, 90 per cent were registered on the same course they had started in Autumn 2006; 7 per cent were now registered as a full-time student on a different course; and 3 per cent were not currently registered as full-time

²⁰ See Harvey, Drew and Smith (2006) for a comprehensive review of the literature on this subject.

higher education students. This means that the proportion of students in the Futuretrack Stage 2 sample who are no longer in HE is somewhat smaller than the numbers found by HESA (2008) for the 2005/6 cohort, but higher than that found by the National Audit Office (2007). HESA (2008) found that 9 per cent of students were no longer in higher education, and they do not count students who were recorded as leaving HE before the December of their first academic year²¹, while the NAO (2007) found that 97 per cent of their sample had registered for a second year in HE.

Route into HE appears to play a role in applicants' subsequent HE careers. As Figure 9.2 shows, applicants who were accepted in UCAS extra were the most likely to be registered on a different course than the one they started in Autumn 2006, which suggests that perhaps hastily-taken decisions may more often lead to regret or re-evaluation (although the numbers here are relatively low). Fifteen per cent of applicants accepted through UCAS extra had changed their course, compared to 9 per cent of applicants accepted through clearing and 6 per cent of those accepted through the main UCAS scheme. 'UCAS extra' applicants also had the largest proportion of those who had entered higher education but were not currently registered, although the differences between the groups were smaller when looking at people who had left higher education. This might be expected, as the majority of applicants who enter HE through UCAS extra and not have been studying on their first choice of HEI or course. Yorke, Ozga and Sukhnandan (1997) also found that students who accepted places on courses that had not been their first choice were more likely to leave. Baxter and Hatt (2000) found that entry through clearing was correlated with students' performance during their first year in HE, but that this was due to the courses students who entered HE through clearing chose and their motivations for choosing them, rather than the simple fact that they entered through clearing.

Figure 9.2: Route into higher education by situation of applicants after one year



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all accepted applicants, weighted

There was only a small difference between women and men in terms of the progress of their higher education careers. Men were slightly more likely than women to have changed courses, and women were slightly more likely than men to have left higher education altogether, but the differences were small. When looking at all applicants, the pattern is similar. Of the respondents who applied to enter HE, 77 per cent of men and 78 per cent of women would go on to complete a year as a higher education student. This is somewhat contrary to the findings of other authors (see for example, Quinn *et al.*, 2005:4), who found

²¹ HESA Performance Indicators for HE Entrants 2005/6 and 2004/5. Table T3a Non-continuation (HESA 2008)

that young men were likely to have successfully completed their courses and gained a qualification.

Age also seems to have had little impact, except in the case of those aged 26 or older on entry who were less likely than the other groups to have changed course from the one they started in Autumn 2006, but were more likely to have entered HE but subsequently left, and were the age group that was least likely to have completed the linear progress of applying to enter HE, entering HE, and completing a year there. Only 5 per cent of this age group had changed course, compared to 7 per cent of both those who were 18 and under and those who were 21 to 25 when they entered higher education, and 8 per cent of those who were 19 to 20. However, only 71 per cent of applicants who were aged 26 and over ultimately completed a year in HE, compared to 76 per cent of applicants aged 21-25, 77 per cent of applicants aged 18 and under, and 82 per cent of applicants aged 19-20. Davies and Elias (2003), Yorke (1998), Ozga and Sukhnandan (1998) and Yorke, Ozga and Sukhnandan (1997) have suggested that factors that are unrelated to students' experience of higher education have more influence on older students than they do on younger ones, so the lower retention rate among older students may not reflect greater dissatisfaction with HE among this age group; rather, more competing pressures on them.

As Table 9.1 shows, ethnic group appears to be significant, but despite there being some differences between the ethnic groups, there appears to be no relationship between whether students changed courses or left HE. If an ethnic group has a high proportion of students changing course it will not necessarily also have a high proportion of students leaving HE, nor will it necessarily have a low proportion.

Table 9.1: Current situation of applicants who entered higher education in Autumn 2006 by ethnic group

Ethnic origin [†]	Registered on course started Autumn 2006 (%)	Registered as ft student on different course (%)	Entered HE but not currently a full-time HE student (%)
Asian - Indian	92.7	5.5	1.8
Black - Caribbean	90.2	8.1	1.7
White	89.7	6.9	3.3
Asian - Other	89.6	8.4	2.0
Black - African	89.5	6.3	4.1
Asian - Chinese	88.9	10.0	1.1
Asian - Pakistani	88.5	7.9	3.6
Asian - Bangladeshi	85.6	11.6	2.8

[†] Only the largest ethnic groups are shown

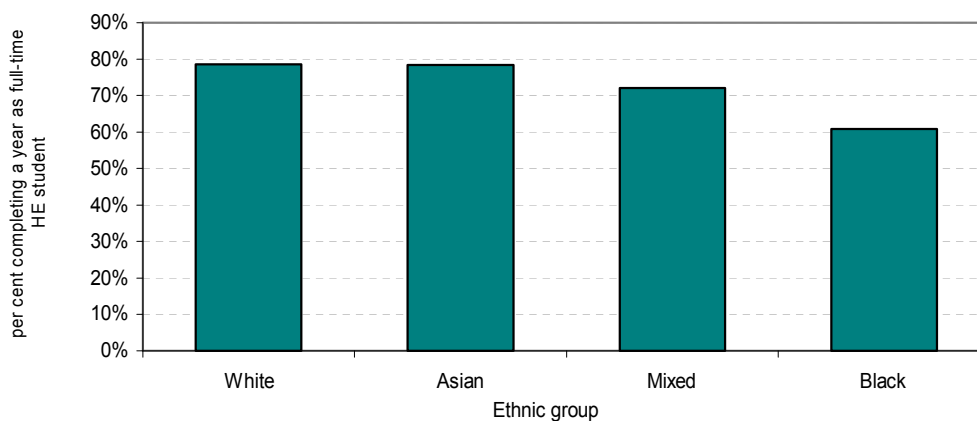
Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered higher education in Autumn 2006, weighted*

It is not the case that if an ethnic group has a high proportion of students changing course then it will necessarily also have a high proportion of students leaving HE, nor that it will necessarily have a low proportion.

Among the larger ethnic groups, members of the group least likely to remain on the same course were those of Bangladeshi origin. This is largely caused by the high number of Asian Bangladeshi students who have changed course, rather than those who have left HE completely, with the 12 per cent of these having changed course. Asian Chinese students were also among the most likely to have changed course, but they were also the group that was least likely to have entered higher education but left. The most striking finding is the

relatively small proportion of respondents from some minority ethnic groups who applied to enter HE and ended up completing a year. Overall, black students had a much lower proportion of respondents completing a year in HE than any other broad ethnic group, as Figure 9.3 shows.

Figure 9.3: Percentage of applicants going on to complete a year in higher education by broad ethnic group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants, weighted

Although the black Caribbean group had a similar proportion of applicants completing a year to most of the other larger ethnic groups, just 55 per cent of black African applicants who responded to the Stage 2 survey had completed a year as full-time HE students. Although they were the large ethnic group with the highest proportion of applicants leaving HE, the low progression after application figure in this case is largely caused by the number of respondents of black African origin who had deferred entry to HE, either with or without a confirmed place. To some extent, this reflects the relatively large proportion of black African respondents who are citizens of countries other than the UK and who found it difficult to get funding or a visa to enter the UK. However, when these respondents are excluded and only UK citizens are included, the black African group still have the smallest proportion of applicants ultimately completing a year in HE, with 70 per cent doing so.

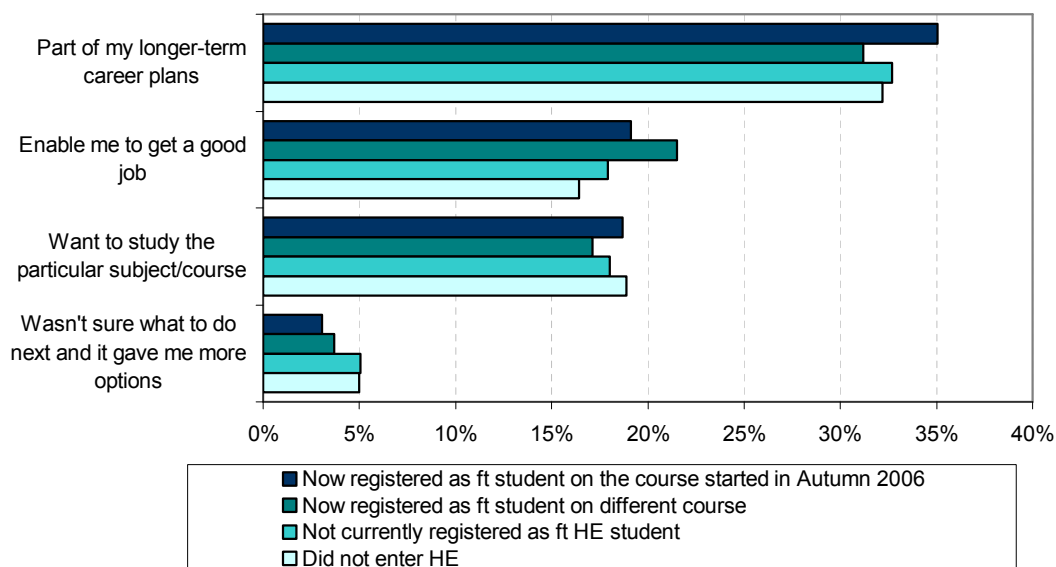
The higher the tariff points required for entry to a particular HEI, the lower the likelihood that a student will have left HE. Students who had initially been registered at a university in the highest tariff group were least likely to have left higher education altogether, with only 2 per cent having done so. Students who initially registered at general HE colleges were most likely, with 8 per cent entering HE but not currently being registered as full-time HE students, although students at these colleges are also more likely to have been studying on short courses that will have finished. The exceptions to this were students who originally registered at specialist HE colleges, who were the second least likely group to have left HE, but this group is very diverse.

The picture looking at students who have changed course is less clear. The types of HEI that had the highest proportion of students changing course were the high and low tariff universities, where 8 per cent of those who started at the HEI in 2006 were currently registered on a different course to the one they started then. Students who started at specialist and general HE colleges were the least likely to have changed course, with only 4 per cent doing so, although they may have more limited options for changing, students at

highest tariff universities at 6 per cent, and students at medium tariff universities, where 7 per cent had changed courses.

Using the data from Stage 1, it is possible to compare the reasons applicants gave for choosing to enter HE and the attitudes they expressed towards it in the summer before they entered HE with their outcomes one year on. Figures 9.4 and 9.5 illustrate where there were differences in attitude that can be seen to correlate with different outcomes.

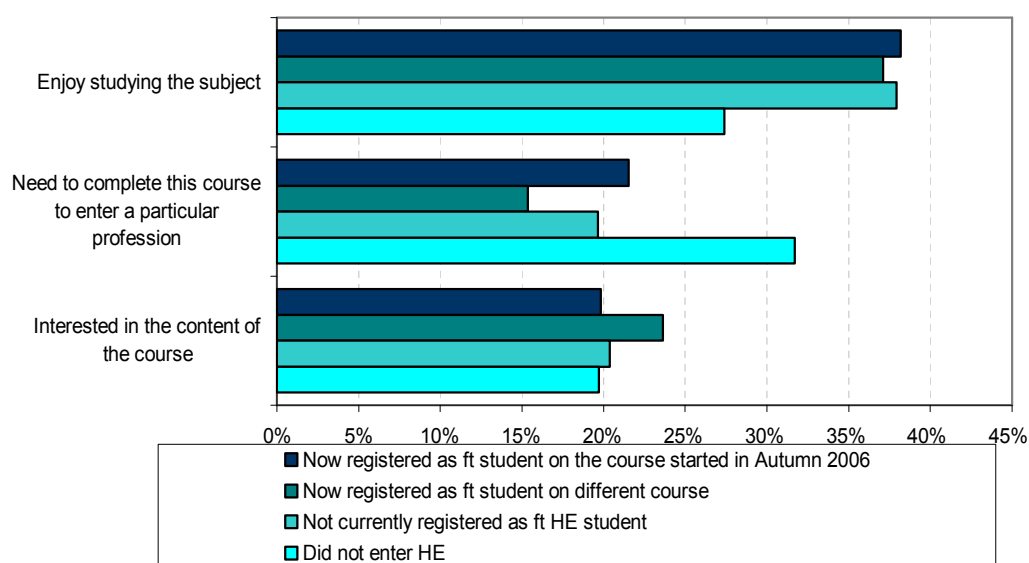
Figure 9.4: Selected main reasons for applying to enter higher education by subsequent higher education career



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants completing Stage 1 and 2 except those who took gap years, weighted

Students who were still on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 were the group most likely to say that they chose to enter HE because it was part of their long-term career plans. Thirty five per cent of those who were still registered on the same course chose that as their main reason for entering HE. Students who would ultimately end up changing course were least likely to have chosen that as their main reason, with only 31 per cent doing so. They were, however, most likely to say that they had chosen to enter HE so that they could get a good job. This suggests that those students who would ultimately change course perhaps had less clearly defined ideas about what they wanted to do long-term, discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter. Wanting to study a particular subject or course was least frequently given as the main reason for entering HE by students who would go on to change their course, suggesting that they had less strong feelings about their course, and perhaps that they were somewhat undecided about the course they wanted to study. Applicants who had entered HE but were not currently registered as full-time HE students, and applicants who did not enter HE at all were more likely than the other groups to say that they were not sure what to do next and it gave them more options, suggesting that they were not especially committed to higher education. Only 87 per cent of those who said that they were not sure what to do next and who did still go on to enter HE were still on the same course one year later, compared to 91 per cent of those who said that they chose their course because it was part of their long-term career plans.

Figure 9.5: Selected main reasons for choosing course by subsequent higher education career



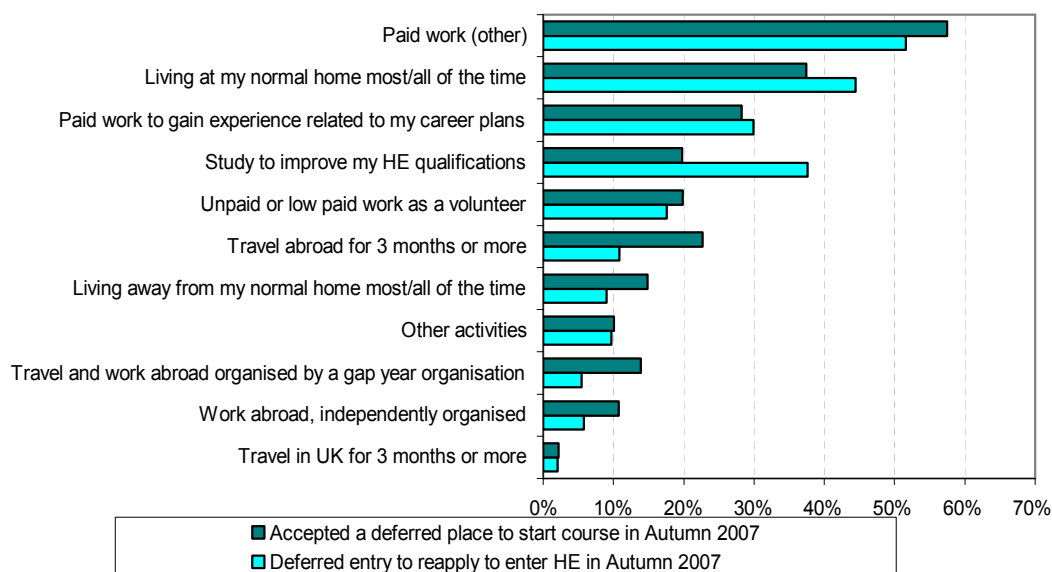
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants completing Stage 1 and 2 except those who took gap years, weighted

Applicants who would ultimately not enter higher education were less likely than other respondents to say that their main reason for choosing their course was that they enjoyed the subject. This may reflect a lack of commitment to the course, but it seems to primarily reflect the high proportion who chose needing to complete the course to enter a particular profession as their main reason. Within this group, there were a large number of people applying for courses that were clearly related to a particular profession and where entry was competitive, for example medicine and allied subjects, who did not achieve places on the course they wanted. In many cases, particularly mature students wanting to study subjects such as midwifery and nursing, these were the only courses they were interested in studying and they did not plan to apply to study something else. Students who remained on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 were also more likely to say that their main reason for choosing their course was that they needed to complete it to enter a particular profession. It may be this requirement that has kept them on the same course. Applicants who ultimately changed course were the group that was most likely to say that they chose their course because they were interested in the course's content. 8 per cent of applicants who entered HE and who said this was their main reason for choosing their course was interest in its content had changed their course, compared to 5 per cent who said that their main reason for choosing their course was that they needed it to enter a particular profession or occupation. It may be that those students who chose their course because it seemed interesting were badly informed and lacking in information about what the course would really be like, or it may be that the course simply turned out to be less interesting than they had imagined.

Applicants who took a gap year

Fourteen per cent of respondents took a gap year and did not enter full-time higher education in 2006 but had plans to enter in 2007. Figure 9.6 shows the activities these applicants did between Autumn 2006 and Autumn 2007.

Figure 9.6: Activities between Autumn 2006 and Autumn 2007 of applicants who deferred entry to higher education



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, All applicants deferring entry to higher education in 2006 but expecting to enter HE in 2007, weighted*

As can be seen, there were significant differences between those who had already accepted an HE place and those who planned to reapply for 2007 entry. Those who were planning to reapply in 2007 appear to have been engaged primarily in activities similar to those they would have been engaged in prior to applying in 2006. They were much more likely to have been spending the year studying for qualifications and to be living at their normal home most or all of the time, using the 2006-7 academic year to improve their chances of acceptance at their preferred HEI. They were less likely to have spent time travelling or working abroad, activities traditionally associated with gap years.

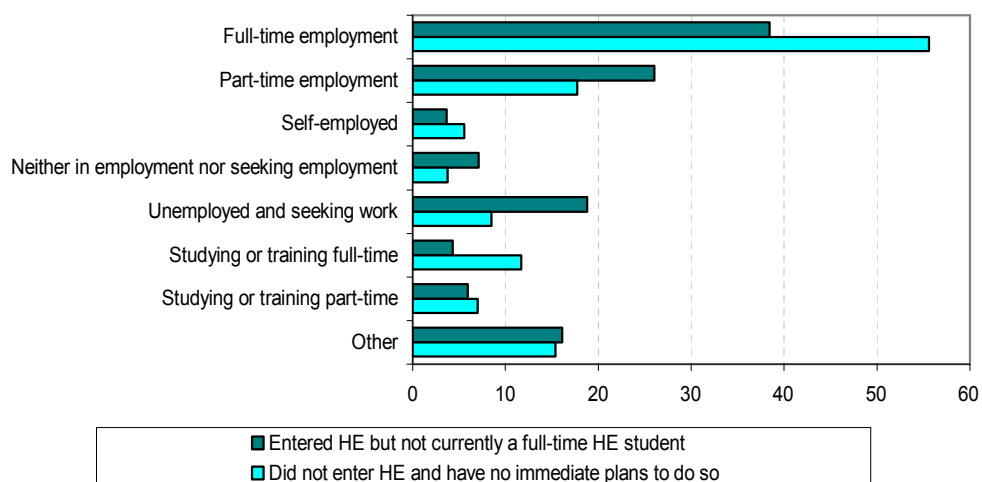
Applicants who were not currently in full-time higher education

As Figure 9.1 indicated, the applicants who were not currently in full-time HE at the time of the survey were composed of two groups: first applicants who had applied to enter HE but who did not ultimately do so; and second applicants who had entered full-time HE but who had left.

As has been mentioned, both widening-access and non-completion are key concerns for policy-makers. While there has been growing demand for HE places, gains in attracting students from under-represented groups have been smaller, and HESA's (2009) figures show that for some groups, such as young students from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds, the proportion starting degrees has actually fallen since last year. Additionally, HESA found that there has been a small increase in the non-completion rate among 2006/7 HE entrants. These are important findings for policy-makers and HEIs as they aim to meet targets set for increasing the proportions of young people in HE by 2010.

Applicants who were not in full-time HE were asked what they were doing instead. Figure 9.7 shows their responses.

Figure 9.7: Activities of applicants who were not currently in higher education



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants not currently registered as full-time higher education students, weighted

Applicants who had not entered higher education at all were much more likely to be in full-time employment than applicants who had entered HE but left. Fifty six per cent were in full-time employment, compared to 38 per cent of applicants who had entered HE but who were not currently registered as full-time HE students. This may be because students who had left HE had entered the job market relatively recently, an assumption supported by the relatively large proportion of applicants from this group who described themselves as unemployed and seeking work. However, as will be seen later, applicants who did not enter higher education were also more likely to say that they were not currently in HE because they preferred to get a job and these will be a particularly interesting comparator group as the longitudinal programme proceeds.

Table 9.2 shows the most commonly mentioned jobs respondents said they were employed in at the time of the survey. The different types of work undertaken by those who entered HE but who were not currently registered and those who had not entered HE were similar, with retail, administrative or secretarial work and waiting or bar work being the most common among both groups, although they are more dominant among those who entered HE and left. This is possibly because respondents in this group are more likely to have taken temporary employment, which is relatively common in these industries, with the aim of returning to higher education, or to have entered the workforce recently.

Table 9.2: Occupation or industry of employed respondents who were not in higher education at the time of the survey

	% of those who entered HE	% of those who did not enter HE
Retail, including telesales	27.3	15.4
Admin or Secretarial work	15.0	12.5
Waiting or Bar work	10.8	5.7
Accounting, Banking, Insurance, inc trainees and bank tellers	4.3	5.0
Computing, including web designer	3.3	3.9
Childcare and Play work	2.4	2.4
Carers	2.1	2.3
Cleaning	1.6	0.7
Factory or Warehouse work	1.6	0.7
Teachers & Teaching Assistants, inc own account workers	1.5	4.1
Advertising or Marketing	1.1	1.0
Engineering, excluding computers, inc trainees	0.1	2.4
Other	30	44

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all employed applicants not registered as full-time higher education students at the time of the survey, unweighted. Multiple responses possible.

The biggest difference between the two groups is the level at which they are employed, as Table 9.3 shows.

Table 9.3: Type of occupation of employed respondents who were not in higher education at the time of the survey

	Managerial & Professional (%)	Intermediate (%)	Routine & Manual (%)
Entered HE but not currently a full-time student	18.8	42.1	37.5
Did not enter HE and have no plans to do so	37.4	43.3	18.5

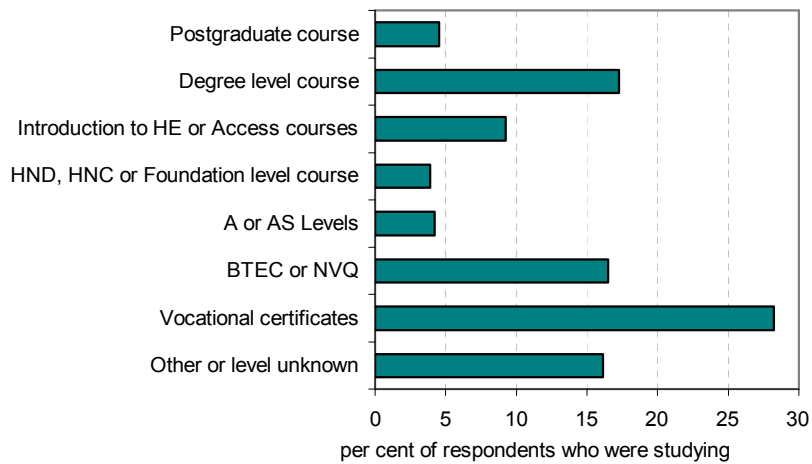
Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all employed applicants not currently registered as full-time higher education students, weighted

The applicants who did not enter HE at all were more likely to be employed in intermediate and managerial and professional occupations in a particular industry, for example, working as managers in the retail industry, rather than as sales assistants, than those who had entered HE but who were not currently registered as full-time HE students.

Again, this can partly be explained by the likelihood that the respondents who did not enter HE had been working in their jobs for longer, either because they decided to remain in their job rather than entering HE, or because they started working in their current job earlier because they took no time out to enter higher education. It may also be the case that these respondents are more interested in building a career, because they are less likely to expect to leave the job market to enter higher education in the immediate future.

There is also some evidence that the applicants who did not enter higher education were still interested in studying. They were more likely than those who left higher education to say that they were studying or training full-time outside the HE sector, and not being able to enter HE because they did not get the grades they needed for the course they wanted was a relatively frequently given reason for not having entered HE, with 19 per cent doing so. Figure 9.8 shows the types of course that respondents who were not in full-time education were studying.

Figure 9.8: Types of course studied by respondents not in full-time higher education

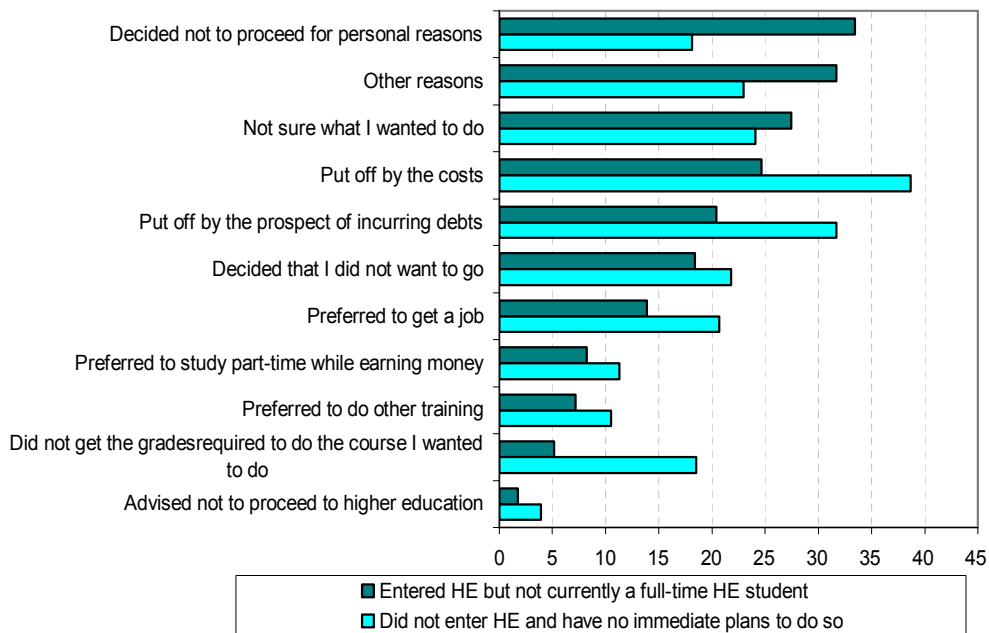


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants not currently registered as full-time higher education students who were studying, weighted

The BTEC and NVQ courses were generally in creative arts subjects, while the majority of the vocational certificates were in IT and accountancy.

There have been many attempts to explain why people do not enter HE and also why people enter HE but subsequently drop out. Figure 9.9 shows the reasons given by Futuretrack respondents for not currently being in full-time HE.

Figure 9.9: Reasons for not entering or not continuing in higher education



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants not currently registered as full-time higher education students, weighted

People entering HE and subsequently dropping out has been a particular concern for the UK government. Tarleton (2003) quotes a representative of the Department for Education and Skills, who stated:

'Non-completion is a waste of talent and resources and we expect higher education institutions to see what action they can take to help students. The government expects all institutions to "bear down" on non-completion and in particular to work with those institutions with higher completion rates'

The reasons people drop out have been given a lot of attention in the literature, with authors situating the examining the characteristics of the students who do not complete their courses, as well as the characteristics of the HEIs that have high and low non-completion rates. Previously, there was a tendency to focus much more on the characteristics of the students who have left before completing their courses, in particular the types of students who benefited from widening-access policies, which Wright (1996) has suggested amounted to placing 'blame' on particular groups of students who are regarded as poorly prepared, unmotivated, and lacking in the ability to succeed academically.

As the issue of widening access has become more important, there has been a shift in emphasis to looking at the HEIs themselves, particularly given the disparity in non-completion rates between different HEIs. Margaret Hodge, who was the Secretary of State for Higher Education, said in 2003 that the high non-completion rate at certain institutions was unacceptable and that these HEIs were "*setting students up to fail*" (Select Committee on Education and Skills, 2003), while John Denham, the then Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, said in relation to the latest HESA data on retention rates at different types of HEI:

'The wide differences here concern me. No doubt there will be a number of factors to explain why certain institutions have particularly low retention rates. However, it seems likely that the quality of teaching and the student experience will be an important component'

(Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2009)

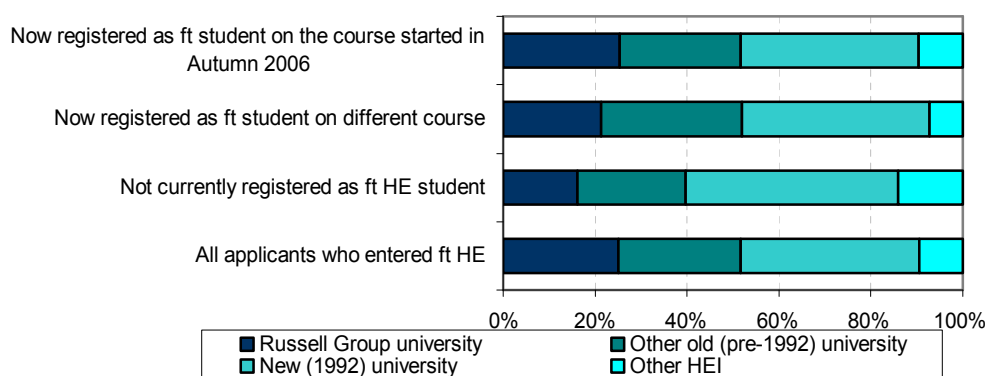
The proportions of students in the Futuretrack survey who were accepted at different types of HEI and who went on to complete a year were quite similar, with 86 per cent of students who were accepted at other old universities, and 87 per cent of those who were accepted at the other types of HEI completing a year. The other HEIs had the largest proportion of students who entered HE but were not registered at the time of the survey, with 4 per cent, followed by the post-92 universities with almost 3.5 per cent, the other old universities with just over 2.5 per cent and the Russell Group universities with almost 2 per cent.²²

Figure 9.10 shows the different career paths of students who originally entered different types of HEI. As can be seen, students who entered Russell Group universities make up a quarter of all students who entered HE, but just 16 per cent of those who entered HE but who were not registered as full-time students at the time of the survey. Conversely, students who initially entered post-92 universities constitute 40 per cent of all those who entered HE, but 46 per cent of those who entered HE but subsequently left. Students who originally enrolled at other HEIs are also over-represented among the respondents who entered HE but who were not

²² These figures are based on data on which HEI the respondent originally entered, which was collected in Stage 1 of the Futuretrack survey. Consequently, the old formulation of Russell Group, Other old university, New university and Other HEI is used, rather than the new classification of HEIs based on access

currently full-time HE students, although it is likely that a larger proportion of this group will have completed the course they were on.

Figure 9.10: Comparison of the composition of students with different routes through higher education by the type of HEI where they originally enrolled



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered higher education, weighted

Eighty two per cent of applicants who entered full-time higher education but were not registered as full-time higher education students at the time of the Stage 2 survey were originally registered on degree courses lasting at least three years. Eighteen per cent of applicants who entered higher education in 2006 who were not currently in higher education were registered on shorter courses, including Foundation years and HNDs, and many of these applicants will have completed their course. However, the majority of applicants who were not in higher education at the time of the survey would have left higher education without completing their course.

Several authors have identified the reasons for the disparity between HEIs, both between different types of HEI and HEIs that appear to be otherwise similar. Blythman *et al.* (2002) found that HEIs have not established suitable policies and support services students need, and Christie *et al.* (2004:617) suggest that this is because mechanisms to support students developed in a largely ad hoc way at many HEIs, with few systematic attempts being made to identify the reasons why students at a particular HEI have chosen to withdraw. Authors such as Thompson (2000) note that this lack of support is likely to particularly be an issue for non-traditional students who lack the social contacts, skills, and networks that many traditional students have, and who consequently are likely to find the transition to HE more problematic.

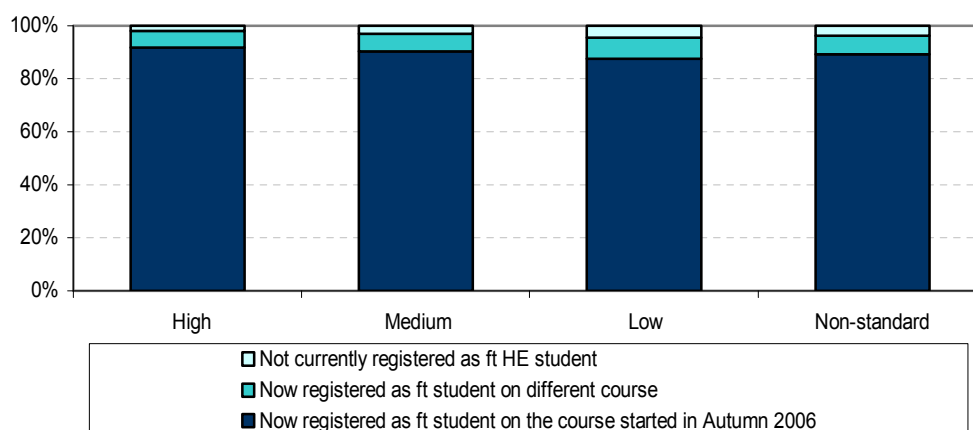
The National Audit Office (2007) found that four factors could explain over 70 per cent of the difference between institutions in the proportion of full-time students continuing to a second year in higher education. They found that continuation was higher at HEIs which:

- Recruited higher proportions of students from neighbourhoods with higher rates of participation in HE;
- Admitted students with higher pre-entry qualifications;
- Had a smaller proportion of their intake aged 21 or over;
- Had a relatively high proportion of students studying Education, Medicine and Dentistry, subjects allied to Medicine and Creative Arts (NAO, 2007:19)

Although we do not have data on neighbourhoods, it is possible to look at the other three criteria in relation to the Futuretrack cohort.

As Figure 9.11 shows, students in the Futuretrack cohort with high pre-entry qualifications were the most likely to still be in HE, and also the most likely to still be on the same course, while students with low pre-entry qualifications were the least likely to still be in HE and the most likely to have changed course.

Figure 9.11: Current situation of applicants who entered higher education in Autumn 2006 by pre-entry qualifications



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered higher education in 2006/7, weighted

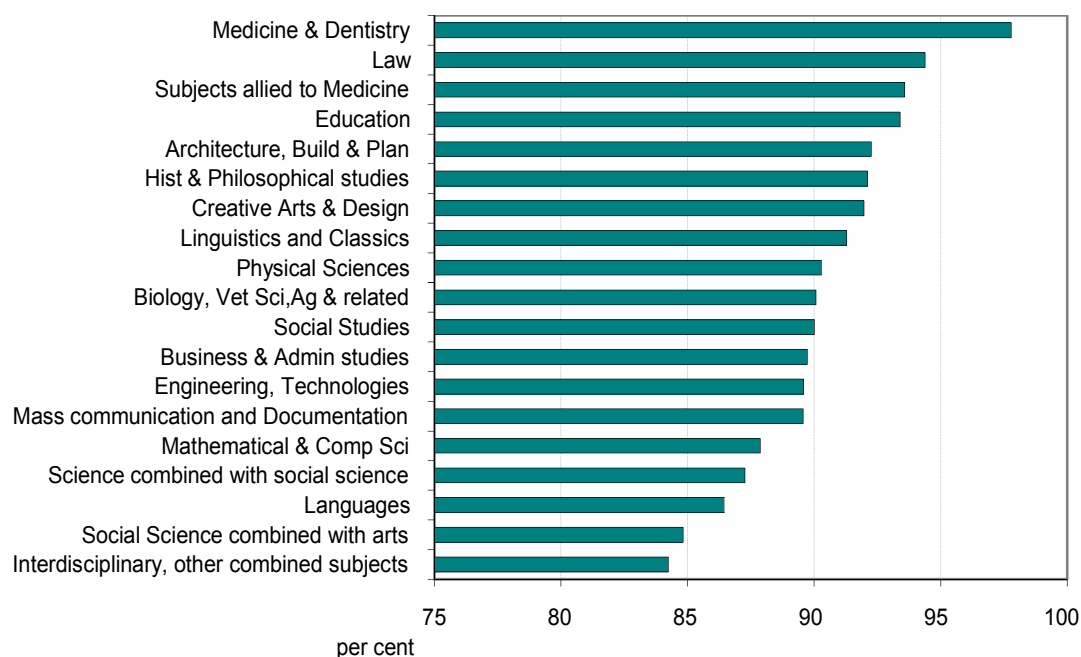
It is less likely that students with low pre-entry qualifications will be on their first choice of course, which may explain their relative lack of commitment to it. Additionally, applicants with low entry qualifications are less likely to be attending their first choice HEI, and to be attending HEIs which have a high non-completion rate. Overall, just 74 per cent of applicants with low entry qualifications completed the linear progression from applying to enter full-time HE to completing a year, compared to 80 per cent of those with medium pre-entry qualifications and 81 per cent of applicants with high qualifications on entry.

As has been previously mentioned, while the age of respondents when they applied to enter HE did appear to have some impact on whether they subsequently changed course or left HE altogether, this was most evident in the over-26 age group, with the 21 to 25 group having a similar profile to the younger age groups. Those aged over 26 were the least likely to have changed course, but also the least likely to have completed the linear process of applying to enter full-time HE, entering HE and going on to complete a year. However, mature students were not particularly more likely to leave full-time HE after embarking on their course. Although they had a non-completion rate that was higher than average, the difference was not large, with 4 per cent of those aged over 26 and of those aged 21-25 entered full-time HE but were not currently registered as a full-time HE student, compared to 3 per cent of those aged 18 and under and 19 to 21.

As with the NAO (2007:20) study, students in the Futuretrack cohort who were studying Medicine and Dentistry were the most likely to still be on the same course they started in Autumn 2006, and Subjects allied to Medicine and Education also had high retention rates, although Creative Arts and Design did not have particularly high retention rates. Figure 9.12

shows the proportion of students embarking on each subject area who started, but did not complete, a year in HE.

Figure 9.12: Proportion of students still registered on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 by subject group



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered higher education in 2006/7, weighted

When looking at only the students who had entered HE but left, the picture is similar. Medicine and Dentistry have the lowest proportions leaving HE completely, with only 1.6 per cent doing so. The subject groups with the highest proportions of students starting but not completing a year in HE were Science Combined with Social Science, and Mass Communication and Documentation, which both had around 6 per cent of people who started courses leaving HE without completing a year.

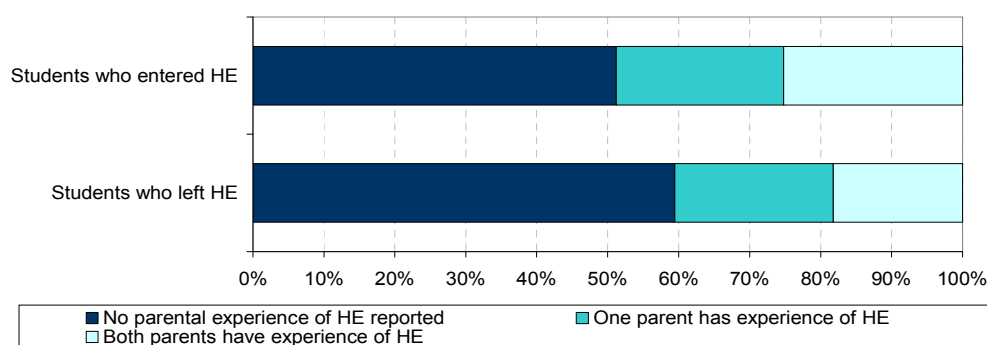
Other authors, such as Smith and Naylor (2001), Forsyth and Furlong (2003), Christie *et al.* (2004) and Quinn *et al.* (2005) have found that social class is an important predictor in determining the likelihood that a student will not complete their course. In all cases, they found that students from a working class background were the most likely to withdraw, and Christie *et al.* (2004:618-9) found that this was true across the spectrum of entry requirements. Quinn *et al.* (2005:4) attribute this to both a lack of cultural and economic capital and the cumulative effects of previous educational disadvantage in schools.

However, looking at the Futuretrack cohort, the picture is less clear. While respondents from routine and manual backgrounds are the most likely to have started full-time HE but subsequently left, there is not a very large difference between the groups, with around 4 per cent of respondents from routine and manual backgrounds who entered HE having left, compared to around 3.5 per cent of those from intermediate occupational backgrounds, and 3 per cent of those from higher managerial and professional backgrounds. This does mean, however, that although respondents from a routine or manual background constitute a quarter of the total Futuretrack sample, they make up over 30 per cent of those who started full-time HE and subsequently dropped out, while respondents from professional and managerial backgrounds constitute 54 per cent of the total sample, but only 45 per cent of respondents

who entered full-time HE but who are not currently registered as full-time HE students. The proportion of applicants who would go on to complete a year in full-time HE is also very similar. Seventy seven per cent of respondents from routine and manual backgrounds completed a year in HE, as did 77 per cent of respondents from managerial and professional backgrounds and 76 per cent from intermediate occupational backgrounds.

Other measures of advantage indicate that it is not social class *per se* that has an impact among the Futuretrack cohort, but other advantages that are often associated with it – the cultural capital and educational advantage alluded to by Quinn *et al.* (2005:4). For example, Figure 9.13 compares the composition of all students and students who entered full-time HE but subsequently left, by whether they had reported that their parents had experience of HE. As can be seen, student who reported parental experience of HE make up a larger proportion of those who left HE than they do of the respondent population as a whole. Conversely, students who had both parents with experience of HE were much less likely to leave HE than their proportion within the cohort as a whole would suggest.

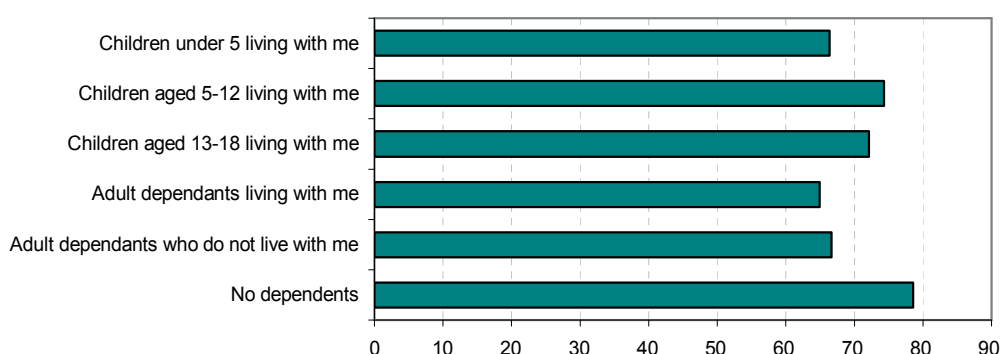
Figure 9.13: Comparison of the composition of students who entered higher education and those who left by whether their parents had experience of higher education



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered HE, weighted

There were groups of non-traditional students who had higher non-completion rates than those seen among traditional students. Futuretrack respondents with dependents were more likely than those without both to not enter full-time HE after applying and to leave having entered, although they were slightly less likely to have changed courses. For applicants with dependents, the biggest attrition was between application and entering HE, as they were much more likely than those without dependents to defer entry with plans to reapply again the following year and to decide not to proceed into HE at all. Figure 9.14 shows the proportion of the different groups of applicants who would go on to complete a year in full-time HE.

Figure 9.14: Proportion of applicants who went on to complete a year in higher education by whether they had dependents



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants, weighted

Once they did make it into HE, although around 5 per cent leave which is higher than the figure of 3 per cent of those without dependents, the difference is less marked.

In contrast, disabled students were slightly more likely than non-disabled students to complete a year in full-time HE after applying, although they were almost twice as likely than non-disabled students to start HE but not complete the year, and they were also more likely to not currently be registered as full-time HE students despite entering HE and to have changed their course.

Bowl (2003) has suggested that a feeling of not fitting in and consequently thinking that university was not for them, was common across different groups of non-traditional students, particularly at traditional universities where they found themselves to be in the minority. This, together with financial concerns and a dislike of particular teaching methods were the main reasons why non-traditional students had withdrawn. In contrast, work by Rickinson and Rutherford (1995 and 1996) on withdrawal of students from an old university with a mainly traditional school leaver intake, found that issues specifically related to the course students had been on were the most frequently given reasons for withdrawing, with emotional preparedness, particularly living away from home, being an additional issue. The findings from the Futuretrack survey suggest that these are issues, but that external factors, such as family commitments and illness, also play a role for certain groups of non-traditional students.

In addition to the previously mentioned surveys by Bowl (2003) and Rickinson and Rutherford (1995 and 1996), various authors have attempted to identify why students leave their courses without completing them. Yorke, Ozga and Sukhmandan (1997) examined the reasons students gave for deciding to leave HE, and found that the most frequent were:

- Incompatibility between the students and the HEI;
- Lack of preparation for the higher education experience;
- Lack of commitment to the course;
- Financial hardship;
- Poor academic progress

Among the Futuretrack cohort, as Figure 9.9 showed, cost was the biggest deterrent to people entering higher education, with being put off by the cost being mentioned by 39 per cent of the applicants who did not enter HE, and being put off by the prospect of incurring

debts being mentioned by 32 per cent. Being put off by costs was relatively less frequently mentioned by applicants who had entered HE but left, but it is still mentioned by a large enough proportion to suggest that not being able to afford to remain in higher education may have been a factor in students leaving.

'Due to financial difficulties (mortgage & bills increasing enormously) I had no option but to suspend my studies in the hope that I may be able to return at a later date'

[Female, 26 and over, currently employed part-time in a routine occupation]

Finance is a particular issue for the Futuretrack cohort, who are paying higher tuition fees than previous entrants after the introduction of top-up fees in 2006. Even before the tuition fee rises, authors such as Callender and Kemp (2000) found that 10 per cent of students had considered withdrawing for financial reasons. As with the other reasons for withdrawal, it has been suggested that working class students are more likely to be affected by financial concerns and more likely to withdraw for financial reasons, although it is possible that having started their course, the large amount of money that would be wasted by dropping out will have encouraged some students to remain in HE, particularly if they are from the socio-economic backgrounds that are more often associated with lower incomes.

Among those who had left higher education but planned to return to study a different course or at a different institution, the issue of their course being good value for money was often raised. In some cases, this was related to the number of contact hours they had on their course, and in other cases respondents mentioned their unwillingness to continue studying, and paying to do so, when they were not sure what they wanted to do long-term and whether the course would ultimately be useful to them.

'Didn't feel the 8 hours teaching a week was worth the 3 grand a year I was paying. Was bored most the time!'

[Female, 19-20, currently employed full-time in a semi-routine occupation]

'The course was boring and I only had 5 hours lectures a week. It wasn't worth £3000 a year'

[Female, 18 and under, currently employed part-time in a routine occupation]

'The University course I applied to do and completed two thirds of the first year was a shambles. Appalling teaching, methodology, tutoring, etc. Disappointing. Too expensive to continue a bad course'

[Female, 26 and over, currently self-employed]

As the previous quotes suggest, while cost was an issue, the course not living up to the respondent's expectations is also an important factor in the decision to withdraw. Musselbrook and Dean (2003) quoted in Harvey *et al.* (2006) found that this poor match between students' expectations of the course and the reality was one of the most commonly mentioned reasons for students leaving HE, and they suggest, again, that this is a particular issue for working-class students who feel they received insufficient help in choosing their course. Harrison (2006) also found that the course not being as the respondent expected, which they often attributed to having chosen the wrong course, was the most commonly given reason among the students surveyed at a Post-92 HEI.

The 'other reasons' category is relatively large for both groups and, in the case of applicants who did not enter HE, diverse. Quinn *et al.* (2005:32-3) found that for many students, there was not one clear reason why they left higher education, they simply 'drifted away'. As in the case of Thomas *et al.*'s (1996) earlier survey, for many of the respondents in the Futuretrack survey, there was not a single reason why they had left higher education, but a combination of factors had led to them ultimately deciding to withdraw and reapply somewhere else.

'Couldn't stand my course. Didn't like the university. Didn't like the town'

[Female, 18 and under, currently employed part-time in a routine occupation]

'I was not happy with the way I was being taught, I did not enjoy my course, I did not particularly like my university, I suffered from depression'

[Female, 18 and under, currently unemployed and seeking work]

'My university was shambolic, course was awful, fellow students idiots'

[Female, 18 and under, neither employed nor seeking work]

For applicants who did not enter higher education, illness and family commitments were the most common other reasons given.

'Although I began my degree course, and enjoyed it immensely, I found that juggling a full time course with a young family very difficult. It is still my aim to study for my degree, but at the moment my 4 year old son's needs are my priority'

[Female, 26 and over, currently working part-time in a semi-routine occupation]

The other reasons given by the applicants who entered higher education but left were less diverse, with most of them focussing on dissatisfaction with their course and/or institution, in particular, applicants mentioned that things had not been as they expected. These students had left higher education rather than changing course, and the majority of them planned to re-enter HE in the future.

'I did proceed, I did one term at a university and didn't enjoy the course so I dropped out, and have reapplied for September when I will be starting a new course at a new university'

[Female, 18 and under, currently employed part-time in a semi-routine occupation]

This was also the case for the group of respondents who had failed part of their course and those who had become home-sick and planned to reapply to HEIs nearer to their home.

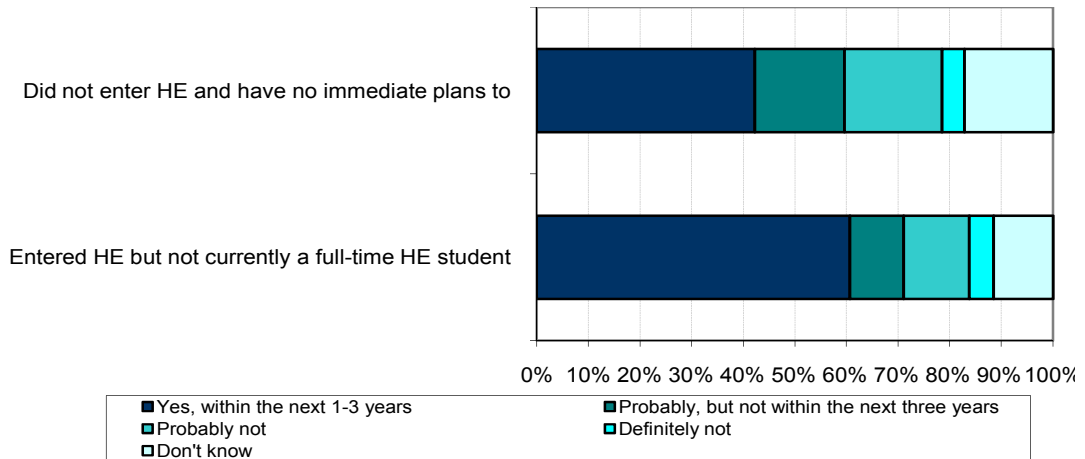
'Did not like the course, got home sick, was accepted onto a course starting 2007 at home'

[Female, 21-25, currently employed full-time in a semi-routine occupation]

Baird (2002) found that most students who withdrew from their courses would eventually continue with their third-level education in some form. HESA (2008) found that around one in five students who withdrew early returned to study in the following year, and in his small-scale study, Harrison (2006:385) found that as many as two thirds of respondents who had left HE planned to return the following year. As Figure 9.15 shows, plans to enter or re-enter higher education were common among both groups, with those who had entered higher education

but who were not currently registered as full-time students being more likely to be planning to become full-time higher education students within the next one to three years.

Figure 9.15: How far respondents had plans to enter or re-enter higher education of those who had not entered higher education in Autumn 2006 and those who had entered but were no longer full-time students



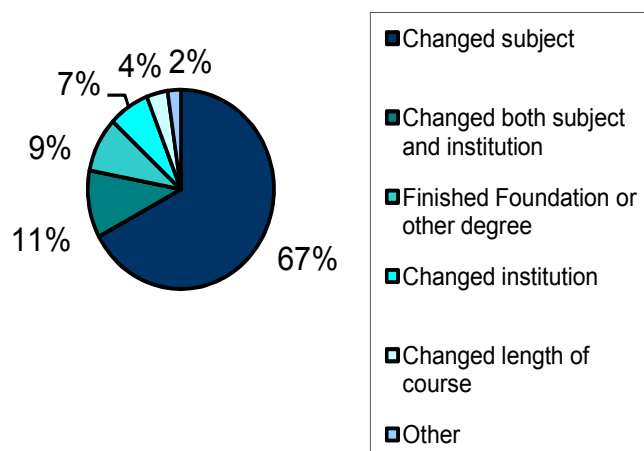
Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants not currently registered as full-time higher education students, weighted

Baird (2002) also found that two thirds of those who had withdrawn from their course were satisfied with their decision to withdraw.

Students who changed courses

Of the students who had changed courses, 78 per cent had completed a year in higher education as a full-time student, and 22 per cent had started but not completed a year.

Figure 9.16: Type of change students had made to their course



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all students who had changed course since 2006 but were still registered as full-time higher education students. Excluding cases where nature of change is unknown, weighted

Students had undertaken various changes to their course. As Figure 9.16 shows, the most common change involved a simple change of subject, with 67 per cent of those who changed courses having done this. Most frequently, changes of this nature involved a change to a similar subject, for example, chemistry to biochemistry, or the adding or dropping of additional subjects, for example changing from French to French and Dutch and vice versa. Eleven per cent of those who had changed courses had changed both their course and institution, and 7 per cent had changed their institution but were studying the same subject. These institutional changes tended to be motivated either by dissatisfaction with the course or institution or by a desire to move closer to home. In total, 18 per cent were currently studying at a different HEI to the one they originally enrolled at, which is much higher than the 3 per cent of 2005/6 entrants that HESA (2008) found had transferred to other HEIs.

Nine per cent of those who changed course had finished their existing course, most commonly a Foundation degree, and proceeded onto another course, usually one that was regarded as a direct follow-on from their previous course. Four per cent were studying the same subject, but had changed the length of their course, either by opting in or out of years abroad or in industry, or by deciding to switch between three year Bachelors courses and four year Master courses. Finally, 2 per cent of those who changed course fell into the 'other' category. This category was almost entirely composed of people who were still studying the same subject at the same institution but who were repeating a year due to illness or other personal circumstances, or because they had failed part of the year.

Table 9.4: Proportions of students accepted to study different subjects by their current situation

	Registered on course started in Autumn 2006 (%)	Registered as ft student on different course (%)	Not currently registered as ft HE student (%)
Medicine & Dentistry	97.8	0.7	1.6
Law	94.4	3.7	2.0
Subjects allied to Medicine	93.6	3.4	3.0
Education	93.4	2.9	3.7
Architecture, Building & Planning	92.3	5.4	2.3
Historical & Philosophical studies	92.1	5.2	2.7
Creative Arts and Design	92.0	4.7	3.4
Linguistics and Classics	91.3	6.0	2.7
Physical Sciences	90.3	7.2	2.5
Biology, Vet Science, Agriculture & related	90.1	7.0	2.9
Social Studies	90.0	7.2	2.8
Business and Admin studies	89.7	7.6	2.7
Engineering, Technologies	89.6	8.0	2.4
Mass communication & Documentation	89.6	5.4	5.0
Mathematical and Computer Science	87.9	8.9	3.3
Science with Social Science	87.3	8.5	4.2
Languages	86.5	10.9	2.6
Social Science with Arts	84.8	12.4	2.8
Interdisciplinary, other combined subjects	84.2	12.9	2.8

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered HE in 2006, weighted

Table 9.4 shows the proportion of students who originally entered HE to study particular subjects who had changed their course by the time of the Stage 2 survey. Applicants who had originally started studying medicine and dentistry were the least likely to have changed

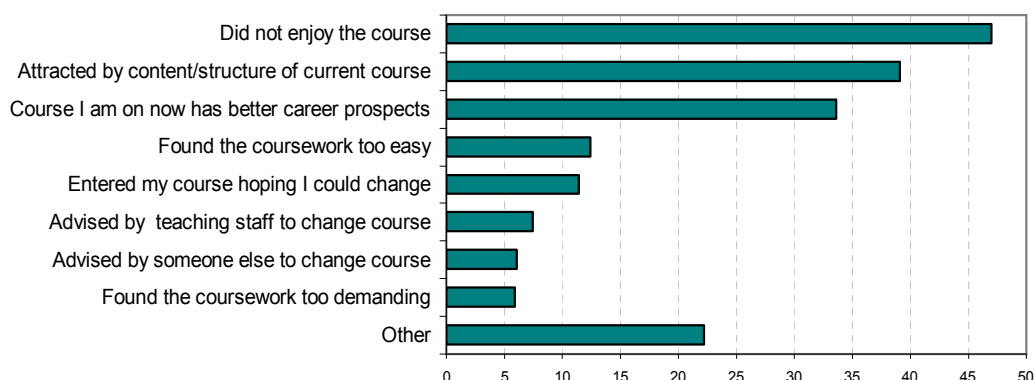
course, with less than one per cent having done so, and an additional 2 per cent having entered higher education but left. Other subjects that have a clear vocational focus, such as law, subjects allied to medicine, education and architecture building and planning, also had high proportions of students remaining on the course they had entered in 2006. In part, this will reflect the lack of options students on these courses have to add or drop subjects, as in the case of the French and Dutch example given above, or to change the length of their course by opting in or out of years in industry. However, students with a clear idea of the career they want to pursue and who need to complete a particular course to enter that particular career are overall more likely to remain on the course they originally started in Autumn 2006, which would also explain the retention rate on these vocational courses.

Similarly, students who were accepted onto courses where there was a lot of scope for adding subjects or years of study, particularly the combined subjects and languages had lower retention rates and among the highest proportions of students who were now registered on a different course. There is less difference between the subjects when looking at the proportions who were not currently registered as HE students. As has been mentioned, a very small proportion of those studying medicine and dentistry were not currently registered, while at the opposite end of the scale, students originally studying mass communication and documentation and the small group studying science combined with social science were the most likely to no longer be registered as full-time higher education students.

As can be seen in Figure 9.17 the most frequently selected reasons for changing course were fairly straightforward ones – students did not like their current course (47 per cent) and they had found a different course that they preferred (39 per cent). Their new course having better career prospects was also commonly chosen as a reason (34 per cent).

More than twice as many students said that they wanted to change course because they found the coursework too easy compared to those who said they found it too demanding (12 per cent, compared to 6 per cent). This issue of students being more likely to change course if they consider their course too easy was also evident when looking at students' assessment of the standard of work on their course. Twenty per cent of students who changed course said that they felt the standard of work was lower than expected, compared to only 14 per cent of students who had not changed courses.

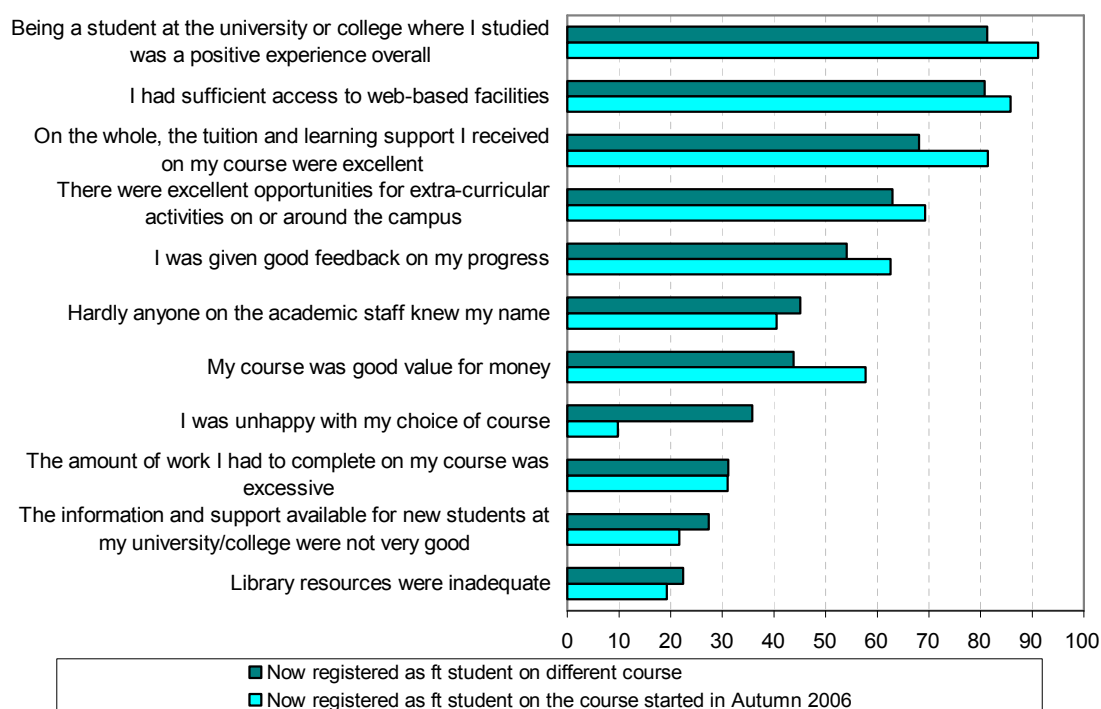
Figure 9.17: Reasons for changing course



Source: *Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who entered HE in 2006 and changed courses, weighted*

Students were asked how far they agreed with various statements about higher education. Figure 9.18 shows the proportions who agreed or strongly agreed, comparing students who changed courses and those who did not. As can be seen, students who had changed courses were more likely to agree or strongly agree with negative statements, and less likely to agree or strongly agree with positive statements in all cases. The largest differences between the responses of students who changed courses and those who did not can be seen in the statements about tuition and learning support, value for money, and, as would be expected, happiness with choice of course.

Figure 9.18: Agreement with various statements about higher education by whether students had changed course



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all students currently who started courses in 2006 and who are currently on full-time HE courses, weighted

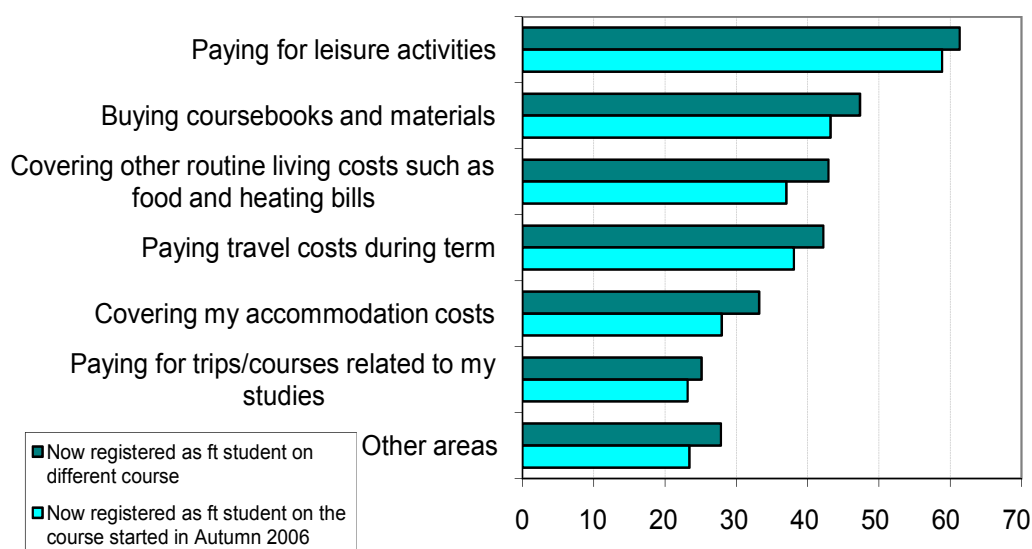
Looking at the extent to which students agreed with different statements by the proportion who changed courses, it is possible to identify some responses that correlate clearly with likelihood of having changed course. Students were asked to rate their agreement on a scale of 1 to 7, where '1' meant strongly agree and '7' meant strongly disagree. In most cases, as agreement with the statement declines, likelihood of changing courses increases in a fairly uniform fashion, and the difference in likelihood of changing course between those who rated their experience as a '1' and those who rated their experience as a '7' is around 5-10 per cent. However, in some cases, strong disagreement in particular is correlated with a much greater likelihood of having changed course, and the difference between those who rated their experience as '1' and those who rated it as '7' is much greater, suggesting that these are very important areas in determining whether someone changes course. For example, 6 per cent of those who strongly agreed that 'being a student at the university or college where I studied was a positive experience overall' had changed course, compared to 23 per cent of those who strongly disagreed. Similarly 6 per cent of students who strongly agreed that 'on the whole, the tuition and learning support I received on my course were excellent' had changed course, compared to 22 per cent of those who strongly disagreed. As would be

expected, the difference between those who rated their happiness with their course as a '1' and those who rated it as '7' was large, with 4 per cent of those who strongly disagreed that they were unhappy with their choice of course having changed course, compared to 34 per cent of those who strongly agreed that they had been unhappy with their choice of course.

Conversely, there are some statements about higher education that show no correlation with likelihood of changing courses. In these cases, strong disagreement or strong agreement appears to have little relationship with whether someone will have changed courses. These statements include: 'The amount of work I had to complete on my course was excessive' (6 per cent of those who strongly agreed had changed course, compared to 8 per cent of those who strongly disagreed); 'Hardly anyone on the academic staff knew my name' (9 per cent of those who strongly agreed had changed courses, compared to 6 per cent who strongly disagreed); 'The information and support available for new students at my university / college were not very good' (10 per cent of those strongly agreeing changed courses, compared to 6 per cent of those strongly disagreeing); 'Library resources were inadequate' (7 per cent of those who strongly agreed, and 7 per cent of those who strongly disagreed), 'I had sufficient access to web-based facilities' (7 per cent of those who strongly agreed compared to 9 per cent of those who strongly disagreed). In the latter three cases, the group with the most negative views were not the most likely to have changed course.

Although money concerns were not on the list of options students could choose to explain why they changed their course, when comparing responses to questions about whether students had been worried about paying for various activities, students who had changed course were more likely in each case to say that they had been worried some or all the time about paying for the various activities, as Figure 9.19 shows. In all cases, students who said that they were not at all worried about paying for the various activities were the least likely to have changed courses, and those who said they worried all the time were the most likely, although the difference between the most and least worried groups did not exceed three per cent for any activity. Students who worked more than 30 hours per week were also more likely than other groups to change courses.

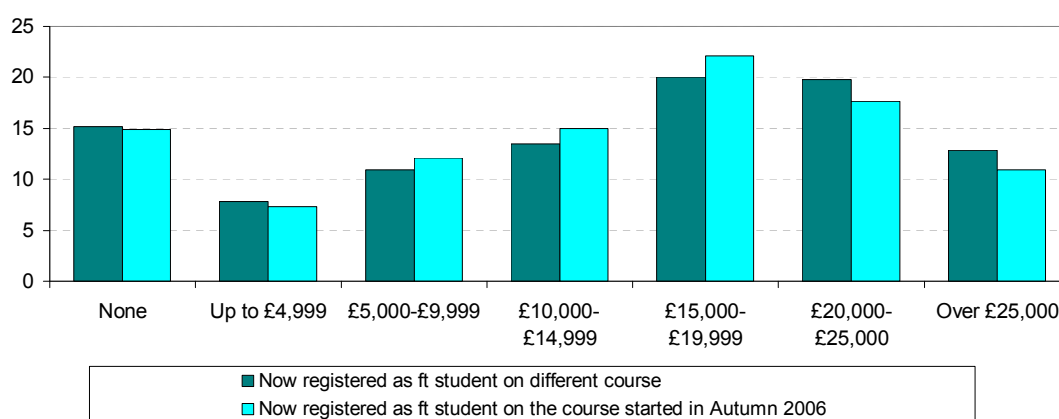
Figure 9.19: Students who worried all or some of the time about paying for various activities by whether they had changed course



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all students currently who started courses in 2006 and who are currently on full-time HE courses, weighted

There was also a small difference between the two groups when they were asked if they thought they had managed their money well in the previous year, with 65 per cent of students who changed courses agreeing that they had managed their money well, compared to 70 per cent of students who had not changed courses. However, this may reflect a feeling among students who were beginning their studies again that they had wasted a year that they had paid for, which may also account for the slightly larger proportion of students who had changed courses who agreed that they were worried about the prospect of having to repay loans and debts when they had completed their course (60 per cent of students who changed course, compared to 57 per cent of students who had not). As Figure 9.20 shows, students who had changed courses anticipated higher levels of debt than those who had not.

Figure 9.20: Anticipated debt on completion of course by whether students had changed course

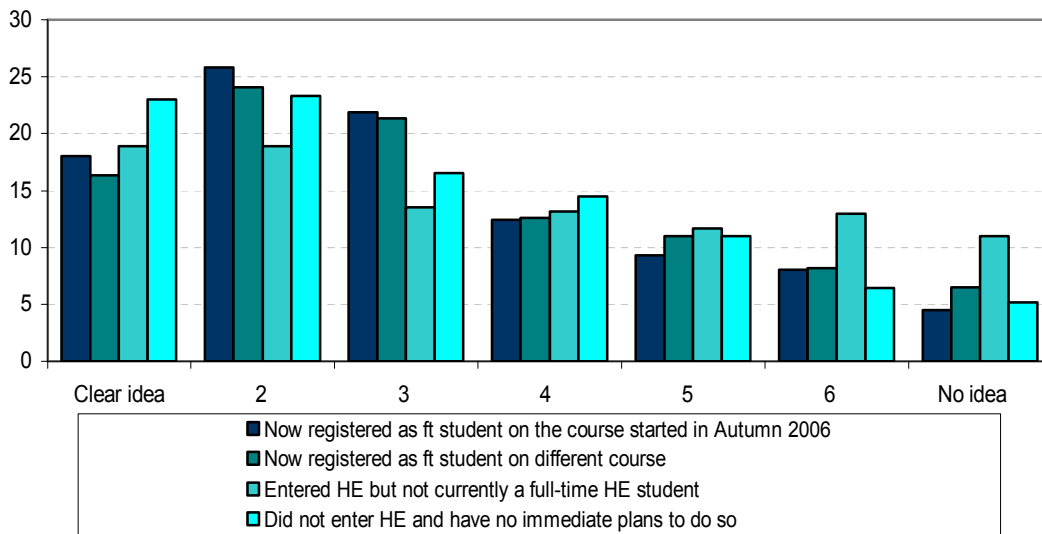


Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all students currently who started courses in 2006 and who are currently on full-time HE courses, weighted

Long-term career planning and different career routes

All respondents were asked to rate their long-term career planning on a scale of 1 to 7, where '1' meant 'in terms of long-term career planning I have a clear idea about what I want to do' and '7' meant 'I have no idea what I want to do'. Their responses are shown in Figure 9.21.

Figure 9.21: Careers clarity of applicants taking different career routes



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants who started courses in 2006, and applicants who did not enter HE and have no immediate plans to do so, weighted

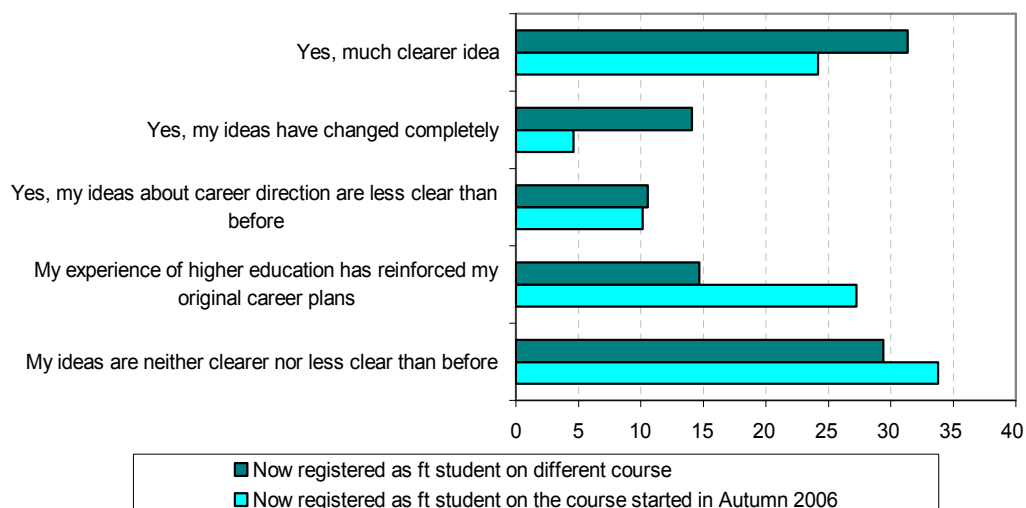
Applicants who did not enter higher education and had no immediate plans to do so were the most likely to say that they had a clear idea about their long-term career plans. Twenty three per cent chose this option, compared to 19 per cent of applicants who had entered HE but were not currently full-time HE students, 18 per cent of students who were still registered on the course they started in Autumn 2006, and 16 per cent of students who were registered on a different course to the one they started in 2006. Many of the respondents who did not enter HE and had no plans to do so will have been working for at least a year and may see themselves continuing in the same job. Additionally, as was discussed earlier, these students tend to be older and to have been in employment prior to their application to enter HE. Many of them have therefore already progressed in their career and the decision not to enter HE may have been prompted by a decision to remain on that career track. Within this group, there were also respondents, particularly those who did not gain a place on their preferred course, who felt that certain career avenues had closed to them, so their career ideas were clear simply because they lacked choice.

Applicants who entered higher education in 2006 but who are not currently full-time HE students were the most likely to say that they had no idea about what they wanted to do long-term. Eleven per cent said that they had no idea what they wanted to do long-term, compared to 7 per cent of applicants who were registered on a different course to the one they started in 2006, 5 per cent of applicants who had not entered full-time HE and had no immediate plans to do so, and just 5 per cent of applicants who had remained on the same course they started in Autumn 2006. As was mentioned above, many of the respondents who had left HE completed a year in HE and so had left only a short time before they completed the Stage 2 survey, so it is likely that some will still be considering their options or focussed on decisions about their short-term choices related to whether they return to HE or seek employment.

Among the students who are currently in full-time higher education, those who have not changed course appear to have slightly clearer ideas than those who have not. However, as Figure 9.22 shows, students who were registered on a different full-time higher education course than the one they started in Autumn 2006 were much more likely (31 per cent

compared to 24 per cent of students who had not changed course) to say that they had a clearer idea about their career direction than when they entered higher education.

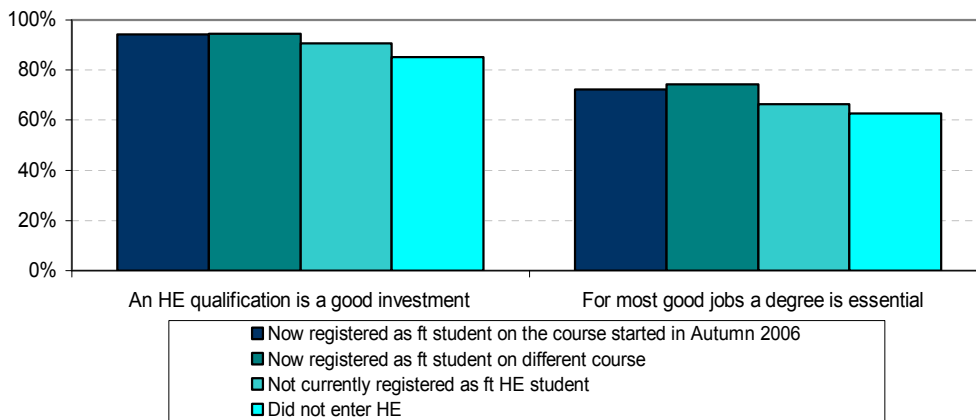
Figure 9.22: Changes to career ideas since entering higher education by whether students had changed course



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all current students, weighted

Comparing applicants' attitudes towards higher education in the summer before they started higher education and one year on, it is possible to identify some career-related attitudes that are related to whether an applicant will still be in higher education. Applicants who did not enter higher education were the least likely to strongly agree or agree that higher education is a good investment, but applicants who entered higher education but who were not currently registered as full-time higher education students were also less likely to agree or strongly agree, suggesting that a higher proportion already had concerns about the benefits of entering higher education compared to the costs they would incur. Similarly, applicants who were not in higher education at the time of the Stage 2 survey were less likely to agree or strongly agree that 'for most good jobs a degree is essential'. The desire for a good job can be a motivating factor for getting a degree, and, as was discussed above, it is one of the main reasons why people chose to enter higher education. Consequently, it might be expected that not believing it to necessarily be true that for most good jobs a degree is essential would have an impact on whether someone entered higher education and completed their course once they had entered.

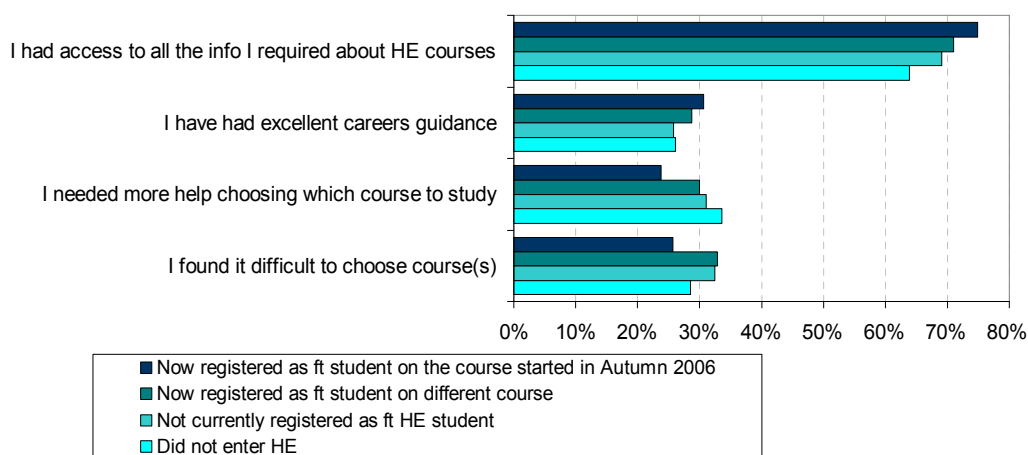
Figure 9.23: Agreement with selected statements about higher education by subsequent higher education career



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants completing Stage 1 and 2 except those who took gap years, weighted

The importance of careers advice is illustrated in Figure 9.24 which compares applicants' assessments of the advice they received about entering higher education and choosing their courses with the outcome of their choices one year on. A higher proportion of applicants who were still in higher education, either on the same course they started or a different one, strongly agreed or agreed that they had access to all the information they required about HE courses and that they had excellent careers guidance, and a smaller proportion agreed or strongly agreed that they needed more help in choosing which course to study. Applicants who changed course or left HE altogether were more likely than those who stayed in HE on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 to say before they had started their courses that they needed more help in choosing their course, and that they had found it difficult to choose their course.

Figure 9.24: Proportion of applicants with different higher education careers agreeing or strongly agreeing with particular statements about the advice they received prior to entering higher education



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, all applicants completing Stage 1 and 2 except those who took gap years, weighted

Summary

- Over three quarters of Stage 2 respondents had completed a year in higher education, and almost 90 per cent of respondents who entered higher education in Autumn 2006 were still on the same course they had started then.
- Students who had a clear career plan and who had chosen to enter HE because it was part of their long-term career plans were more likely to still be in HE and still on the same course than those who entered HE to get a good job more generally.
- Fourteen per cent of applicants took a gap year with plans to enter HE in 2007. Gap years took two forms: the traditional gap year that involved working and travelling, and second a deferred year where students spent some or all of the year studying with the aim of reapplying to a different HEI or for a different subject the following year.
- The majority of applicants who did not enter HE, or who entered HE but left, were in employment. Those who did not enter HE at all were more likely to be working full-time, and in higher level jobs. The most common jobs of applicants who were not currently in HE were retail work, working in a bar and secretarial and admin work.
- While socio-economic background had a small effect on educational outcomes, associated factors, such as having parents who had completed higher education appeared to be more important.
- Cost was a deterrent, and a large proportion of students who had not entered HE at all cited this as their reason. Students who entered HE but then left were most likely to say that they had personal reasons or that they had been disappointed with their experience of HE, but most were planning to reapply in the near future for courses or institutions they thought they would prefer.
- Students studying vocational subjects such as medicine, law, education and architecture were least likely to have changed course. The most common reason students gave for changing their course was that they did not enjoy it, followed by finding a different course that they thought they would prefer.
- Students who had been accepted for one of their chosen courses in the main UCAS scheme were less likely to have changed course or failed to complete the course they began to study than those who had applied through clearing or accepted a 'UCAS extra' place.
- As would be expected, students who had not changed course were more positive about their experience of HE, and they were also less likely to be worried about finances and to anticipate lower levels of debt than students who had changed course.
- It was clear that adequate information to make decisions about higher education careers plays a role in retention. Students who had changed courses and those who had entered HE but left, as well as those applicants who applied to enter HE but did not end up doing so perceived that they did not have enough information in making their original choices. They were less likely than students who had remained on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 to say they had all the information they

required about HE courses, and more likely to say that they needed more help deciding which course to study.

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CHAPTER 10

Key themes and emerging issues

Introduction

In the preceding chapters we described the analyses that we have undertaken on issues we explored in ‘the Stage 2 survey’ when we re-contacted the applicants who applied to enter higher education in 2006. We covered the experience of HE from the perspectives of the participants, building on the information gathered in 2006 that had clearly shown the wide range of motivations, prior knowledge and plans about HE and career options. In returning to students who had completed the Stage 1 questionnaire more than a year earlier, we have gained further insight into the diversity of the full-time undergraduate population and the various experiences and trajectories of students taking different paths within full-time HE. In the previous chapter we also presented information provided by the minority of applicants who had applied but did not proceed to HE, or started out and, for some reason, did not complete the year or changed course during that year. Summaries of the findings have been provided at the end of each chapter. Here we consider the implications for all those who make decisions about HE at some level: those who set the policies and legislation that determine how far the State will support it as a public service and as competitive global industry; those who design, provide and maintain the standards of learning opportunities and assessment of achievement in HE; and those who apply for and invest in full-time higher education for themselves and their families.

As was discussed in Chapter 1, the 2005-6 UCAS applicant cohort was applying to enter full-time HE at a time when the structure of UK HE and the basis on which it is funded were subject to change; a key point in the evolution of HE from *elite* to a mass provision²³, when ‘top-up’ fees were introduced for the first time. In considering the cumulative findings of the Stages 1 and 2 surveys, we are almost half-way through this longitudinal investigation. Neither the sponsors of the research, the research team or those embarking on HE foresaw that this cohort would be entering the graduate labour market during a recession and its aftermath, although they were aware of the increasing importance of skills, knowledge and qualifications.

Over three quarters of Stage 2 respondents had completed a year in higher education at the time of the Stage 2 survey, and almost 90 per cent of respondents who had entered higher education in Autumn 2006 remained on the course they had started. At this stage of the analysis, the main focus has been on those who entered full-time HE and their experience of the first year of study in the light of the choices they made and the courses they accessed. Most of the Stage 2 data will be of increasing value in analysis of the development of careers and perceptions over the full length of courses, and the extent to which career plans and options considered change in the light of HE experience, skills and knowledge acquired, and assessment of available opportunities. For example, we found in Chapter 5 that the majority of undergraduates envisaged going on to some form of postgraduate study or training after completing their courses, but the interesting questions will be how far these plans are realised, which students opt for which courses, and why they do so, in the light of the graduate labour market opportunities they encounter or anticipate. Although students’ reports and evaluation of their HE experiences in the first year of study did not reveal a great deal of evidence of career development or the impact of higher education on longer term career choices and opportunities in the short term, it has enabled us to build up evidence about the

²³ See Purcell 2007 for a full discussion of the changes in UK HE between the early 1960s and 2007.

impact of HE experience on career development. This report has provided important insights into the impact of key variables on the career pathways followed by students who entered HE with different educational and cultural capital, and on the very different ranges of experience they encountered and were able to take advantage of. It will further enable us to assess the cumulative impact of these key variables and to address the core educational and policy themes of relevance to stakeholders.

The over-arching issues and themes identified were:

- the diversity of the HE population and the HE process, and the importance of taking this into account in evaluating policies, performance and outcomes;
- the interaction and pervasiveness of the key demographic, socio-economic and educational attributes in determining or influencing early career trajectories;
- the impact of policy-driven shifts in the management and funding of HE on the choices made by students and the ways in which these affect the nature of their cumulative HE experience - most specifically, the type of HEI at which they have been studying and whether they have moved to another location or remained in their home region and continued to stay in their prior households or communities;
- the unintended effects of changes in student funding and attitudes to debt on participation and behaviour while students, particularly with reference to participation in paid work while studying, as well as on the decisions made by applicants not currently in full-time study; and
- the need to map HE so that inequalities in access to information about it can be reduced and the quality and outcomes of widely different kinds of undergraduate HE packages can be evaluated to produce better evidence on which to base future HE policies and provision and, maybe most importantly, to allow individuals to make better-informed decisions about the implications of HE choices at all stages of the process.

Higher education as a process, not an outcome

Policy-makers promise, and the evidence suggests that parents and HE applicants assume, that HE will provide access to career opportunities and the likelihood of higher earnings than would be achievable without HE qualifications, or at least a measure of advantage in obtaining employment in a context where industrial and occupational restructuring has led to fewer opportunities for secure full-time employment for those with lower level skills and qualifications. At Stage 1 we found differences in access to career information and guidance for applicants, according to the following dimensions, as well as differences in the profiles of students opting for different types of courses, types of HEI and subjects of study:

- *Socio-economic background;*
- *Gender;*
- *Ethnic background;*
- *Age;*
- *Educational achievement prior to HE entry;*
- *Type of prior education;*
- *Region of domicile.*

However, Brown (2006, 2008:4) in discussing the diversity of the HE population and the range of courses that undergraduate HE provision includes, cites Martin Trow's observation that higher education is 'a process masquerading as an outcome'. The advantages and

disadvantages introduced at the outset by the facts that some 'consumers' of the process are better-informed than others to make appropriate HE choices in terms of their abilities and interests, and others are restricted in the range of options that they are able to choose from, or challenged by the choices that they have made. Particular HE courses and the range of opportunities that they give access to are also 'products' that students are encouraged to select as 'consumers' – as a glance at any HEI prospectus reveals – and the league tables published by a range of organisations and media players encourage HE applicants to make their choices of university course and HEI in terms of the outcomes they might expect. In general, we have seen throughout this report that different types of courses, and different types of HEI, offer a wide range of educational and broader cultural experiences, and make varying demands on the time of participating students.

This report adds to the evidence of continued unequal access to and participation in HE by members of socially-disadvantaged groups – particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and some minority ethnic groups, and by gender (Purcell *et al.* 2008, Connor *et al.* 2004). Despite considerable encouragement by the government and HEIs, including a variety of financial incentives and other policy and practical mechanisms directed towards potential students and HEIs, progress on encouraging these categories of students to 'aim higher' and HEIs to work harder to recruit students from these groups has been slow. The recent cross-party report on social mobility and access to opportunity (Cabinet Office 2009), in examining access to and performance in HE, presents clear evidence that there are many obstacles to the achievement of greater equality of opportunity and recognises the dynamics that contribute to the replication and reinforcement of established inequalities.

However, it is important to understand this diversity, because failure to do so leads to misinterpretation of outcomes and indeed difficulty in identifying and assessing trends. It is true, over the whole of redefined and expanded HE, that '*The university as the preserve of the 18-21 year old full-time, undergraduate is now a thing of the past: such students currently represent only one-third of the total student population*' (Cabinet Office *ibid*: 37), but the picture that this presents is essentially misleading when it is extrapolated to make generalisations about HE standards and outcomes. Full-time HE, despite widening of access and expansion of options, remains very much the preserve of 18-21 year old students and a substantial proportion of those who are older when they enter full-time undergraduate are under 25; full-time undergraduate HE remains predominantly the preserve of young people. Trends in the proportions of accepted UCAS applicants by age between 2003 and 2008 bear this out, as Table 10.1 shows:

Table 10.1 Recent trends in the age profile of accepted UK full-time applicants*

Age on entry to HE (accepted applicants)	Distribution by age (%) according to year of HE full-time entry					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
17 and under	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.2	2.1
18 years old	45.7	45.4	46.4	47.1	44.9	43.6
19 years old	21.0	21.7	21.1	20.4	22.5	21.9
20 years old	8.4	8.3	8.3	8.2	8.6	9.2
21 years old	4.8	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.7	5.0
22 to 24 years old	7.0	7.0	6.9	6.7	6.8	7.0
25 to 29 years old	4.4	4.3	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.8
30 to 39 years old	4.3	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.7	4.1
40 years old and over	2.1	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.4
Total accepted (=100%)	374,307	377,544	405,369	390,890	413,430	456,627

*undergraduate and sub-degree level courses.

Source: derived from UCAS statistical online data accessed at

http://www.ucas.co.uk/about_us/stats_online/data_tables/abuseagedata/

The limited extent to which the undergraduate population profile has changed is interesting in light of the overall expansion in numbers. While the numbers of part-time students at all levels of HE from sub-degree to postgraduate have grown substantially and form an increasingly high proportion of the HE population, part-time undergraduate students, in particular, are concentrated in a narrow range of HEIs, as are those in the older mature student age groups (UUK, 2008:21-22). In terms of the new access tariff HEI classification we present in this report, undergraduate part-time numbers constitute a significantly lower proportion in the higher access HEIs than the lower access ones – ranging from 4 per cent at one of the highest access HEIs to well over half at lower access ones, excluding the Open University and Birkbeck College at the University of London where full-time study is almost non-existent (HESA online data, 2009).

The importance of the type of HEI attended and whether or not students continued to live at home during term

Near the beginning of this report (pp.7-10) we introduced and explained the Access Tariff HEI classification (Purcell, Atfield and Elias, 2009). Our analyses throughout the report using this classification have shown unequivocally that access to the most selective universities is associated with prior educational achievement, socio-economic background, age at entry, ethnicity and region of domicile.

This raises interesting questions for policy-makers with reference to the design of proposed initiatives to increase social mobility, widen access to HE and ‘unleashing of aspiration’ (Cabinet Office, 2009). For example, the type of HEI accessed varied according to students’ countries and regions of domicile, as did the type of accommodation they lived in during term and their likelihood of remaining in their prior family homes while students. Although the majority of Futuretrack Stage 2 respondents lived in traditional student halls of residence during their first year in higher education, a significant number lived in other types of accommodation, in particular a large proportion had continued to live ‘at home’, and this varied by type of HEI. While it was older students who were most likely to be living in their own home, a significant proportion of even the youngest age group did so. Students from particular ethnic groups were particularly likely to be living at home, regardless of their age, with Bangladeshi and Pakistani students being the most likely to have lived at home in their

first year. Students living in their own homes were less likely to rate their accommodation as adequate, good or very good in terms of convenience generally and in particular, convenience for their classes. Students who lived in their own homes often travelled long distances to attend their HEI and this meant that they were less able to take part in extra-curricular activities within their peers. Students living in their own homes, were also the least likely to agree that there were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around their HEI campus.

We described the identity and attitudinal questions we had asked in the Stage 2 survey in order to investigate the impact of less easily measurable elements of these variables - the subjective experience and interpretation of their importance - on opportunities perceived and taken, constraints and perceptions of what is possible; and again, there was some evidence in analysing choices already made that these were significant. For example, it is clear that the fact of having lived in Northern Ireland prior to study is related to the likelihood of studying at an NI HEI and to remaining in pre-HE households, but the identity variables also enable us to add into the equation the extent to extent to which the subjective importance of region, nationality and religion may have contributed to decisions. The greatest value of these identity variables is likely to be at the Stages 3 and 4 analyses in relation to decisions about early career development and the parameters within which options are considered.

The quality of the HE experience

The information presented in Chapter 2 indicates that there is no simple relationship between students' reports and evaluations of their first year teaching and learning experiences and the types of HEI or courses they studied. Most students reported overall satisfaction with the resources, quality of educational provision and academic supervision to which they had had access. Higher tariff HEIs did not uniformly receive higher ratings over the teaching and learning evaluations. For example, students at the highest tariff universities and general HE colleges were more likely than those at other types of HEI to say that the standard of work and their workload was higher than they had expected. There did, however, appear to be positive relationships between the reported quality of library resources and evaluation of the help and support available to new students and the higher tariff end of the spectrum, and, as the section that follows illustrates, in relation to other support and career guidance.

Students with disabilities or long-term illnesses were less likely than students with no disability to be attending highest and high tariff universities. They were less likely overall to rate their experience of HE positively. This was true when they were asked to assess the quality of their teaching and learning experience, opportunities for extra-curricular activities, accommodation and financial situation.

There was some evidence of shortcomings in the support available to those who required special help, not only for those with disabilities, but also students who came from non-traditional backgrounds. There is also evidence of a lack of preparation amongst students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic minorities, who were more likely to report that standard of work required of them was higher than they had expected. However, as was also discussed, there had clearly been fairly widespread lack of information and understanding about what to expect in the progression from school to HE among those progressing straight from school. Students have different expectations of HE and requirements from it that in many cases are determined by responsibilities, commitments and preferences unrelated to the substance of their studies. However, what was apparent at this stage is that inequalities in preparedness for HE that we had identified at Stage 1, particularly

with reference to information on which choices had been made and available options accepted, were mainly being reinforced rather than reduced by first year experiences. Those who had entered HE with clear career objectives were sometimes less clear about the detail of how they might develop their careers, having encountered a wider range of options, and those who had progressed to HE as 'the normal thing to do' without a great deal of thought about future employment were most likely to say their views on their future careers were no clearer. The fact is, despite the efforts made by HEIs to encourage students to consider options and explore sources of information and guidance from the outset of their HEI studies, the majority had made little effort to investigate the resources available to them. It was the 'non-traditional' students who were most likely to have sought out careers advice or information, although there was evidence in many HEIs of proactive sessions for first year students to inform them of resources, and over a quarter of respondents in HE overall had attended at least one of these events, which may lead to increased action on the part of the students as their student careers progress.

The impact of changes in student funding and anticipation of debt

As we noted earlier, this cohort of students participating in HE faces a radically different funding regime than any of its predecessors. The findings presented in Chapter 2 give some indication of the ways in which this impacts upon their learning experiences and, potentially, the outcome of their participation in HE. We examined the sources of student funding, showing that the most common sources were statutory financial support maintenance loans, statutory financial support tuition loans personal savings and earnings from vacation work, followed by non-repayable contributions from family or partners. These varied in expected ways: for example, those under 18 were most likely to have taken advantage of statutory maintenance and tuition loans and a higher percentage of students from the 26 and over age group were receiving grants, bursaries and hardship funding, benefited less from non-repayable contributions from families or partners, but more had personal funds or income from other investments.

Those most likely to report that they undertook paid work during term as a source of income were in the older age groups – 21-25 and 26 and over at the time they applied for HE in 2006. The latter, however, were least likely to report income from paid employment during vacations – possibly reflecting their greater likelihood of having responsibilities related to dependent children.

Only 15 per cent of students did not anticipate having debts at all at the end of their studies. EU and other overseas students and students from Chinese backgrounds were least likely to anticipate substantial debts, and the proportions of all other minority ethnic groups anticipating debts of over £15,000 was lower than the 53 per cent of white students for all but those from black Caribbean backgrounds, of whom 63 per cent did. However, there are some intriguing findings that require further investigation, with those from a Pakistani Asian background least likely to anticipate debts over £25,000, compared to the highest group in this category, 17 per cent of Asian Indians. Those from the higher socio-economic backgrounds reported lower tendencies to worry about debt repayment than those in the lower ones, but although there is a significant association between these variables, the differences were not found to be substantial, with less than half of all groups reporting worry about the prospect of debts.

Paid and unpaid work during study

As expected, student participation in paid work was found to be extensive. It was clear from the Futuretrack Stage 1 responses that the most frequently-cited reason for undertaking paid work was financial, to help cover basic or more discretionary costs and expenditure during study. Employment during term was more often undertaken by students who stated that they did it to cover essential study and subsistence costs, whereas vacation work was undertaken by a larger number of students and less often to cover fundamental needs, and unpaid and voluntary work was undertaken for a wider range of reasons. Reasons for undertaking paid term-time work varied by subject, as did the propensity to do it, mainly related to differences in the socio-economic backgrounds of students who had opted for different subjects, but clearly also related to the financial and time requirements of the course and the degree to which courses were vocational or not.

Patterns of paid working varied among the different UK countries, ranging from over half of Scottish-domiciled students doing paid work during term, followed by NI domiciled students, of who precisely half did, and English and Welsh domiciled students who were more likely to work only during vacations and to have no paid employment at all in their first year. Male students were more likely than female students to say that they had not undertaken any paid work during their first year in HE, although those who had been employed worked longer hours during term than the female students who had been employed. The average number of hours worked per week during term by those students who had undertaken some paid employment was just over nine, but this varied considerably by discipline, socio-demographic background, ethnicity and subject studied. There was a clear gradient in the relationship between average tariff access of HEIs, likelihood of undertaking employment during term, and weekly hours of paid work, with those from general HE colleges most likely to work, and to work the longest hours, at one extreme and those from the highest access score HEIs least likely to work and, where they did, have the lowest average weekly hours.

The most common ways in which students had accessed paid work was via existing relationships with employers, by directly approaching employers or via their HEI temporary agency, careers advisory service or 'job-shop'. It was clear that both employers and students alike consider paid work to providing opportunities to develop skills and gain experience that will be useful when the graduate enters the labour force, as well as providing students with some experience which might help clarify what kind of employment might be most appropriate for them.

Plans prior to study turned out to have been unreliable indicators of whether or not students had undertaken paid work in their first year. Only half of those respondents who said at Stage 1 that they planned to do paid work during term actually did so, but 40 per cent of those who said they planned to only work in vacations ultimately worked during term. Of those who said that they planned to do no paid work at all during their time in HE, 30 per cent ended up working during term-time and a further 20 per cent during vacations. Students working during term-time and working long hours were more likely to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds, minority ethnic groups and disadvantaged educational backgrounds. They also worked for longer hours on average. This raises questions about whether these students have access to the same HE experience as students from other groups who are less likely to work, particularly as working during term-time and working long hours were found to be associated with being less involved in extra-curricular activities and less overall satisfaction with their courses.

Voluntary or unpaid work, including placements that were part of courses, was done by a minority of students during their first year: 30 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men. Women were more than twice as likely as men to have done a work placement lasting more than a week during term (whether as part of their course or undertaken for other reasons) and also more likely to have done such a placement outside term, and in contrast to the paid work patterns, were more likely to have spent more hours on voluntary or unpaid work. Two of the most commonly given reasons for doing voluntary or other unpaid work were related to personal development – learning new skills and gaining experience for a future career. Other reasons were a desire to help someone or contribute to the social or academic community (and such reasons were more often given by mature students with established roles and relationships in the community), but social reasons – to meet people, and to have fun in relation to their interests – were also mentioned by a substantial minority.

Other routes and pathways

We saw that most of the 2006 applicants had gone on to HE and continued in the course they started out in. However, a minority took different routes, either not entering HE at all, deferring entry, leaving their courses without completing the first year or changing course in their first year. It is instructive to compare these groups at this stage of the longitudinal investigation, because while they constitute invaluable reference groups for the longer term comparative investigation of the impact of HE options and early career development, they also provide cumulative evidence of the importance of career-related information to applicants. It was clear that adequate information to make decisions about higher education careers is related to the likelihood of having made what the applicant considered to be an appropriate choice. Students who had changed courses and those who had entered HE but left, as well as those applicants who applied to enter HE but did not end up doing so, were less likely than students who had remained on the same course they started in Autumn 2006 to say they had all the information they required about HE courses, and more likely to say that they had needed more help deciding which course to study. Students who had a clear career plan and who had chosen to enter HE because it was part of their long-term career plans were more likely to still be in HE one year later and on the same course, compared to those who entered HE to get a good job more generally, but without a clear sense of direction. While socio-economic background had a small effect on educational outcomes, associated factors such as having parents who had completed higher education also appeared to be important.

Students studying vocational subjects such as medicine, law, education and architecture were least likely to have changed course. Students who had been accepted for one of their chosen courses in the main UCAS scheme were less likely to have changed course or failed to complete the course they began to study compared with those who had applied through clearing or accepted 'UCAS extra' places, which suggests that decisions taken in haste or as compromises are more likely to be subject to revision. The next stage of this study will provide us with the opportunity to investigate the longer-term implications of this apparent instability. Of those who remained in HE but changed course, the two most common reasons given were that they did not enjoy the original course, followed by having found a different course that they thought they would prefer: again, a reflection of gaps in prior information about options available.

Fourteen per cent of applicants had taken a gap year with plans to enter HE in 2007. There were two clear categories of gap year; a planned gap year to work and travel prior to HE entry, and a deferred year taken in the light of examination results or changes of mind where

students most often had spent some or all of the year studying with the aim of reapplying to a different HEI or for a different subject the following year.

The majority of applicants who did not enter HE, or who entered HE but left, were in employment. Those who did not enter HE were more likely to be working full-time, and in higher level jobs, than people who had entered and not completed the year. The most common jobs of applicants who were not currently in HE as a whole were in relatively low skilled, low waged areas of employment: retail work, working in a bar and secretarial and routine administrative work.

Cost and concern about debts were reported to have been a deterrent by a large proportion of the students who had not entered HE at all. Students who entered HE but then left were most likely to say that they had personal reasons or that they had been disappointed with their experience of HE, but most were planning to reapply in the near future for courses or institutions they thought they would prefer. As might be expected, students who had not changed course were more positive about their experience of HE, and they were also less likely to be worried about finances and to anticipate lower levels of debt than students who had changed course.

The impact of HE participation on equality of opportunity

At Stage 1 we saw that students from socially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds more often had encountered obstacles to HE entry and more often reported having had less access to information and guidance than they required in making their choices of course. Stage 2 has raised questions about the extent to which such students may have carried these initial disadvantages through into the first year of their HE experience, and how far this experience was widening or confirming their options. The real assessment of impact on career development and labour market opportunities will not be apparent until after the Stage 4 survey, but the evidence is accruing at each stage. The impact of the kind of HEI attended was found in the Stage 2 survey to vary considerably among the educationally and socially disadvantaged entrants, the range of extra-curricular activities perceived and accessed, the propensity of students to remain in their pre-HE households and communities while they studied. The extent to which students at particular HEIs or on particular courses were encouraged or discouraged from doing paid work during term, able to access suitable work when they required it for career development or financial reasons, and able to take advantage of the wider social and cultural advantages that HE can provide, all contributed to the quality of HE experience accessed by different groups and their evaluations of it. We saw in Chapter 3 that the type of accommodation students were living was related to access to, and making use of, extra-curricular activities.

The generally high levels of satisfaction with educational experiences reported so far by the Futuretrack cohort, despite raising some interesting questions about the range of quality in some areas, suggests that the positive attitudes with which most entered HE have not diminished. But will their optimistic views that completion of their courses will lead to better opportunities than they might otherwise have been able to access be realised? In a comprehensive and provocative compilation of evidence examining the relationship between socio-economic inequalities, national economic prosperity and development and the measures of differences in quality of life published earlier this year (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009) cited a range of evidence on the role of education as a key variable in their analyses. They concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between the quality and dispersal of educational provision at all levels, including HE, and socio-economic outcomes, summing up their findings as,

'Across the developed world, and across the political spectrum, everybody agrees about the importance of education. It's good for society, which needs the contribution and the economic productivity – not to mention the taxes – of a skilled workforce, and it's good for individuals. People with more education earn more, and are more satisfied with their work and leisure time, are less likely to be unemployed, more likely to be healthy, less likely to be criminals, more likely to volunteer their time and vote in elections.' (ibid:103)

While most would agree with this statement, it does not reflect the fact that not all those who participate in HE stand to gain these benefits in equal measure. By following a cohort of recent applicants to HE through their courses and into their early careers, the Futuretrack project aims to shed more light on the processes of gaining high-level skills and knowledge so that the relationships between contextual and individual reasons for differences in outcomes and experiences can be clarified. While diversity, choice are desirable and the pursuit of greater equality of opportunity are good things, the relationship between these three can sometimes lead to conflicts of interest and benefit some groups more than others, changing the obstacles and challenges rather than eliminating them. We are progressively developing better instruments and analytic processes to measure and monitor the interaction of variables that affect the dynamics of human capability development and social change.

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APPENDIX 1: TECHNICAL APPENDIX

The structure of Futuretrack data: response rates, bias and data weighting procedures

Futuretrack is a multi-stage survey of applicants who made an application for a full-time place in a UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) at the undergraduate level in 2006. The original population sampling frame was created and managed by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) in June 2006.

UCAS recorded a total of 506,304 applicants for an undergraduate place in a UK HEI in 2006. Given that some of these applications were made after the first survey, the survey population for Stage 1 consisted of 427,786 applicants. UCAS subsequently supplied anonymised data for all 506,304 applicants, providing details of subjects applied for, institutions applied to, accepted subject and institution, personal information including age, gender, social background and ethnic origin, educational information (type of school attended and tariff points), and whether the applicant was a home applicant or from overseas.

The Futuretrack datasets

Futuretrack 2006 Stage 1 main survey data

121,368 UCAS applicants took part in the first stage (2006) of the Futuretrack survey, 82.7% of whom were recorded by UCAS as having accepted a full-time place to commence in 2006. For 5% of the respondents information on whether or not they had been accepted by an HEI is missing.

Futuretrack 2006 Stage 1 short survey data

In addition to the Stage 1 main survey, a supplementary survey of non-responding HE non-participants (known as 'Stage 1 short survey') was developed. 7,591 UCAS applicants took part in the short survey, most of whom (84.9%) were recorded by UCAS as not having been accepted for study in 2006 (15% unknown).

Futuretrack 2006 Stage 2 data

In May 2007 respondents of Stage 1 who had indicated a willingness to participate in future rounds of data collection and who had provided an email address were re-contacted and invited to complete the Stage 2 questionnaire. A total of 49,555 respondents replied to this questionnaire. They were either Stage 1 main survey or the short survey participants, or completely new entrants to the study. The new entrants were recruited via HE institutions and the project websites from amongst 2006 UCAS applicants.

The preparation of Stage 2 data

Stage 2 data and the two datasets from Stage 1 were used to create a combined longitudinal dataset, but some preliminary work was necessary to prepare Stage 2 data prior to the merging of data.

As indicated above, the Stage 2 data consists of three types: main survey participants' responses, short survey participants' responses and 'generic' data (respondents who were predominantly new to the study in Stage 2). All such responses were merged into a single Stage 2 dataset.

The second task was to find and remove as many duplicates as possible. The survey invitation methodology did not allow duplicate responses, but the generic part of the survey could not check whether the participant's response was already in the data. To remove multiple entries a search for duplicates was performed. The email addresses, telephone numbers and respondents' names were used for this purpose, and checks were made that the duplicates were genuine. Altogether 2,322 duplicate cases were found. Further work led to the removal of 71 duplicate responses. Postgraduates' replies (21) and blank replies (28) were also removed from the data. The final number of Stage 2 responses is 49,555.

Creating a composite longitudinal dataset

Figure T.1 shows schematically the parts of the composite dataset with the number of respondents in each part, opposed to the UCAS administrative dataset.

Figure T.1: Outline of the composite dataset

All UCAS applicants (506,304)	Stage 1 main survey (121,368 respondents)	Stage 1 and 2 (41,794 respondents)
	Stage 1 short survey (7,591 respondents)	Short survey and Stage 2 (2,264 respondents)
		Stage 2 only (5,497 respondents)

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

Table T.1 shows the distribution of respondents according to the UCAS record of whether or not they had accepted a full-time place at a UK HEI in 2006. This information is only available for those respondents who filled in either Stage 1 or the short questionnaire, and for whom the UCAS administrative data could be linked. Consequently, 6,017 Stage 1 respondents and 1,135 short survey respondents for whom UCAS data could not be obtained and 5,497 respondents who filled in only Stage 2 questionnaire are excluded from the table.

Table T.1: Questionnaire respondents by HE acceptance

	Stage 1 + Stage 2	Stage 1 only	Short + Stage 2	Short only	Total
Accepted	35,048	65,333	2	6	100,389
Not accepted	4,566	10,404	2,064	4,384	21,418
Total	39,614	75,737	2,066	4,390	121,807

Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

Of those who filled in the Stage 1 main questionnaire 12.3% were recorded as 'not accepted' by UCAS. The proportion of non-accepted applicants who participated in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 remained about the same (11.5%). The short questionnaire, on the other hand, was almost totally answered by applicants who were recorded as 'not accepted' by UCAS in 2006.

Bias and weights

Bias in Stage 1 and the weighting of Stage 1 data

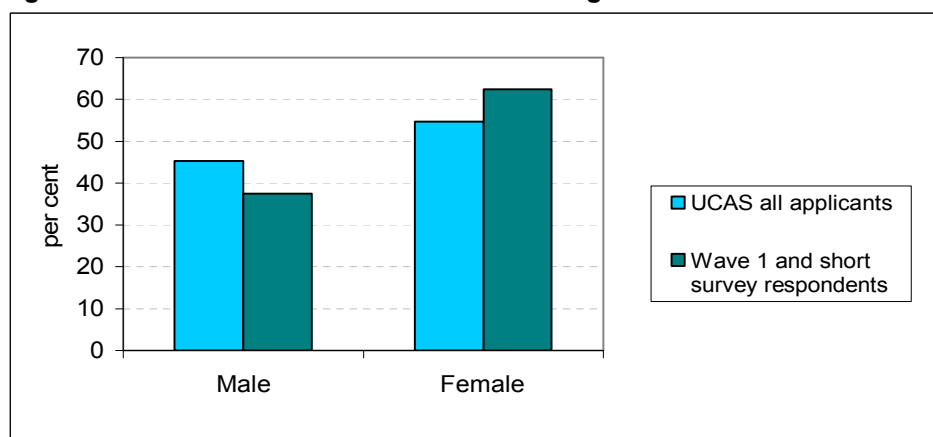
In Stage 1 of the study, the response bias was investigated using a variety of characteristics of the respondents, i.e. gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, region of domicile and tariff points. The main conclusions were

- women had greater tendency to respond than men
- more mature respondents were somewhat less likely to respond than younger ones
- no significant bias by ethnicity was found
- only a small response bias in favour of the higher social groups was evident
- no significant regional response bias was found
- some evidence emerged of response bias by subject of courses to which respondents were accepted, with medicine and dentistry, subjects allied to medicine and biological sciences slightly over-represented, and business and administrative studies under-represented
- there was greater tendency for applicants with high tariff points to respond

A multivariate analysis of response was performed which revealed that gender and tariff points were the two single most important factors which have a significant and systematic influence on the probability of responding to the on-line survey.

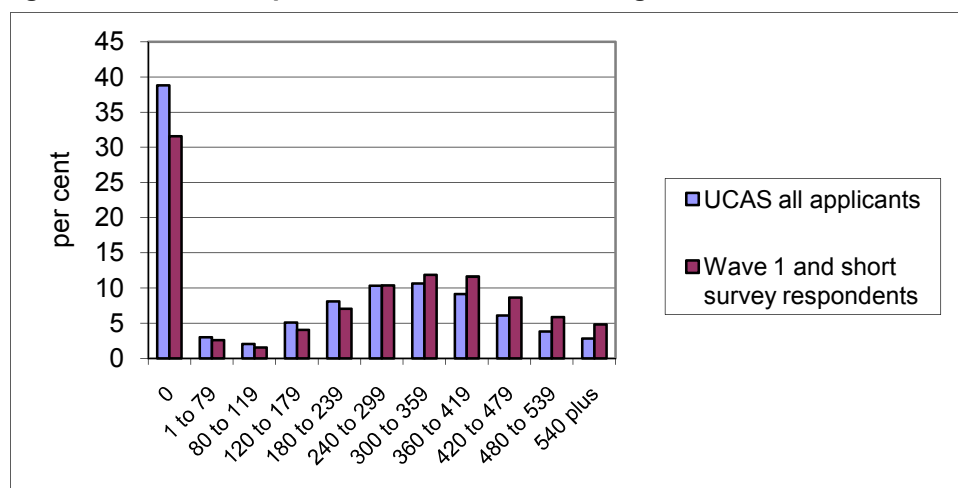
Figures T.2 and T.3 show the gender distribution and tariff point distribution of the Stage 1 main and short survey respondents compared with total UCAS applicant population.

Figure T.2: Gender bias in Futuretrack Stage 1



Source: UCAS administrative data of all 2006 HE applicants and Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

Figure T.3: Tariff point bias in Futuretrack Stage 1



Source: UCAS administrative data of all 2006 HE applicants and Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

A population weighting scheme was applied to each Stage 1 response, dependent upon the tariff point band and the gender of the respondent. In some cases UCAS data was not available for the respondent. For them, as the gender was obtained via the questionnaire for most of the respondents, a gender-only based weight was applied. Weights were computed from the UCAS applicant population data. The weights that were calculated and applied in Stage 1 are shown in Table T.2.

Table T.2: Weights applied in Stage 1

Tariff points	Male	Female
0	6.204	4.487
1 to 79	6.007	4.045
80 to 119	6.849	4.605
120 to 179	6.411	4.463
180 to 239	5.756	4.188
240 to 299	5.088	3.642
300 to 359	4.548	3.356
360 to 419	3.930	2.948
420 to 479	3.471	2.671
480 to 539	3.090	2.508
540 plus	2.696	2.261
Total	5.043	3.664

The Stage 1 weighting scheme was revised in Stage 2. There were three reasons for this. First, when weights were calculated in Stage 1, UCAS administrative data was not yet merged with the actual Stage 1 responses. After the merging was complete, greater accuracy in calculating weights could be obtained. Second, more gender information was available and a better coverage was therefore possible. Thirdly, those cases where UCAS data was missing were incorporated in the gender-tariff point distributions for weight calculations, instead of applying a mere gender-based weight. The revised weights are shown in Table T.3.

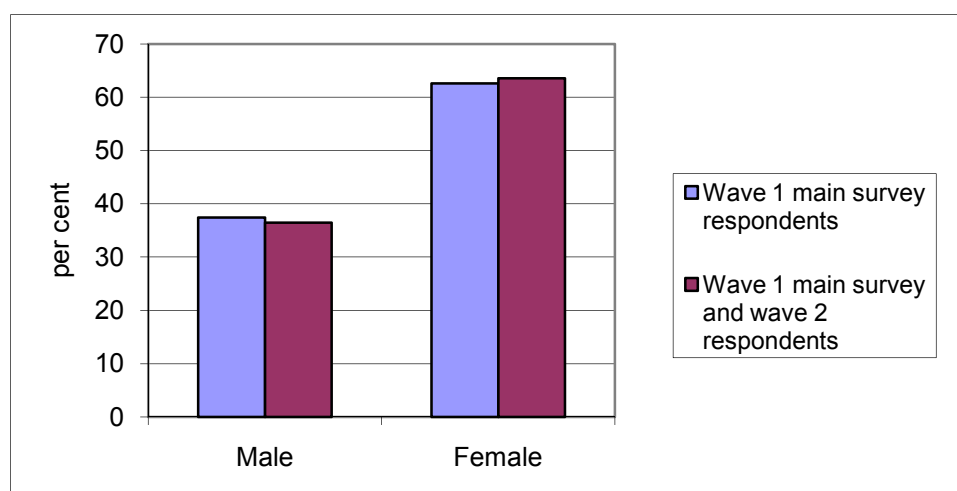
Table T.3: Revised weights for Stage 1, applied in Stage 2

Tariff points	Male	Female
0	5.821	4.250
1 to 79	5.641	3.831
80 to 119	6.432	4.359
120 to 179	6.017	4.226
180 to 239	5.406	3.968
240 to 299	4.777	3.450
300 to 359	4.269	3.179
360 to 419	3.690	2.793
420 to 479	3.260	2.531
480 to 539	2.901	2.375
540 plus	2.532	2.140
Total	4.735	3.471

Bias in Stage 2 and the weighting of Stage 2 data

The interesting issue in Stage 2 was whether the bias had increased. To find this out, Stage 2 respondents' gender distribution and tariff point distribution were compared to those of Stage 1 respondents. The comparisons were made separately for Stage 1 main survey and Stage 1 short survey. The results are shown in Figures T.4, T.5, T.6 and T.7.

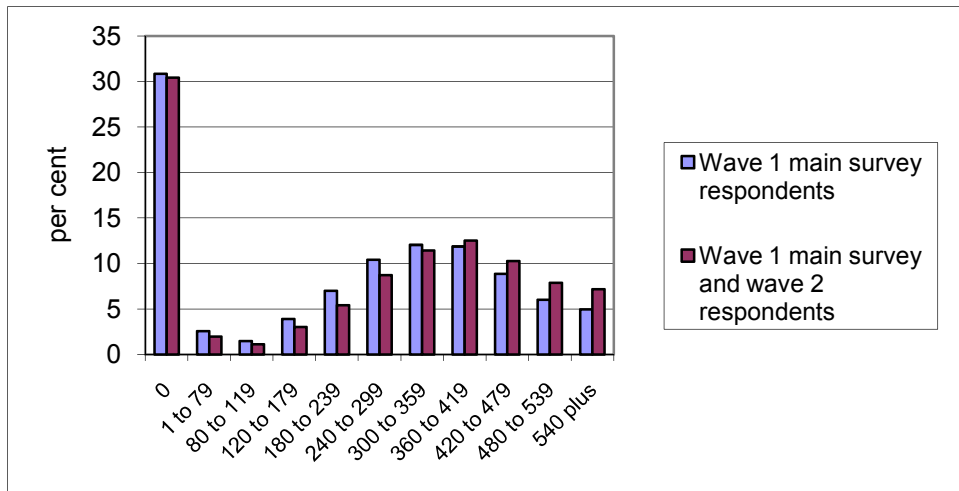
Figure T.4: Gender bias amongst main survey participants



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

Figure T.4 shows that the gender bias has increased very slightly among the main survey participants so that the impact of female respondents is marginally greater in Stage 2 responses.

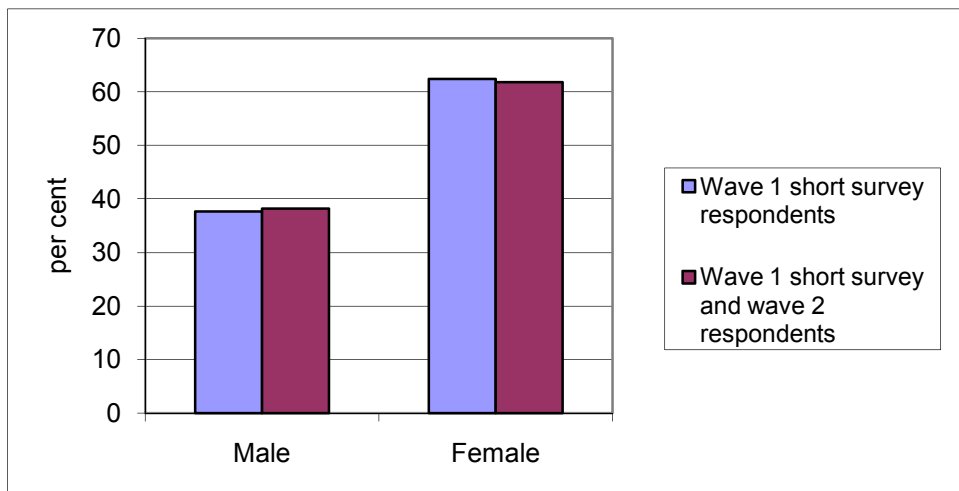
Figure T.5: Tariff point bias amongst main survey participants



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

It is clear from Figure T.5 that the tariff point bias has increased, indicating that respondents with higher tariff points were more likely to respond to the Stage 2 on-line survey.

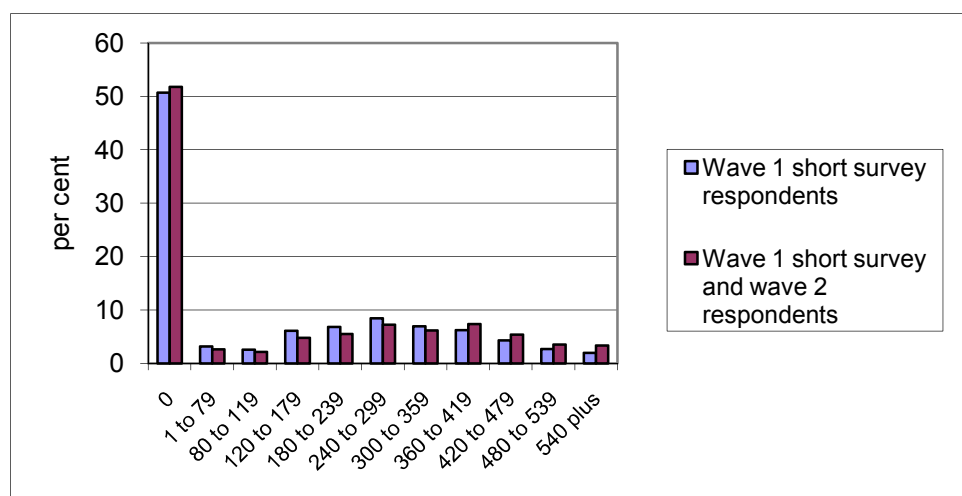
Figure T.6: Gender bias amongst short survey participants



Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

Figure T.6 indicates that the gender bias has changed very slightly among the short survey participants so that the proportion of male respondents has grown marginally in Stage 2 responses.

Figure T.7: Tariff point bias amongst short survey participants



Source: Futuretrack 2006: Combined Stages 1&2 dataset, data not weighted

As with the main survey participants, the tariff point bias has increased among the short survey participants, but to a lesser amount, shown by Figure T.7.

The changes in bias between Stage 1 and Stage 2 were incorporated in the composite dataset by applying factors which scaled Stage 2 responses to conform to the Stage 1 distribution patterns. If UCAS data was missing, gender-only based factors were applied. The calculated factors are shown in Tables T.4 and T.5.

Table T.4: Factors for Stage 2, main survey participants

	Male	Female
0	3.132	2.855
1 to 79	3.968	3.677
80 to 119	3.934	3.681
120 to 179	4.004	3.600
180 to 239	4.011	3.625
240 to 299	3.522	3.461
300 to 359	3.103	3.033
360 to 419	2.783	2.750
420 to 479	2.497	2.519
480 to 539	2.239	2.212
540 plus	1.996	2.034
Total	2.992	2.866

Table T.5: Factors for Stage 2, short survey participants

	Male	Female
0	3.148	3.007
1 to 79	3.545	3.938
80 to 119	4.357	3.355
120 to 179	4.364	3.833
180 to 239	3.617	4.030
240 to 299	3.456	3.742
300 to 359	3.146	3.750
360 to 419	2.612	2.625
420 to 479	2.286	2.694
480 to 539	2.057	2.658
540 plus	1.600	2.088
Total	3.077	3.154

The weights for Stage 2 data were obtained by multiplying the factors by the revised Stage 1 weights. The weights could be calculated for only those respondents who had replied in Stage 1, which meant that this weighting method could not be applied to Stage 2 new entrant group.

For the Stage 2 new entrant group gender balance weights were applied. The proportion of females and males in this group was 63.4% and 36.6% respectively, whereas the female-male distribution of UCAS total population data was 54.7% - 45.3%. The new entrant group were given weights to scale the gender distribution to that of UCAS data without changing the number of cases. Consequently, a weight of 1.238 was applied to all new entrant males and a weight of 0.863 was applied to new entrant females.

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APPENDIX 2: TABLES

Table A2.1: Regression results: hours spent in lessons and hours spent on study

	Hours spent weekly in lessons, tutorials, practical work		Hours spent weekly on coursework or study	
	Unstandardized Coefficient B		Unstandardized Coefficient B	
(Constant)	14.500***	15.290***	12.943***	11.039***
18 and under	-0.101	-0.106	-0.877***	-0.829***
19-20	Reference group		Reference group	
21-25	0.846***	0.422***	2.031***	2.107***
26 and over	1.533***	0.558***	5.139***	5.426***
Male	0.559***	0.017	-0.713***	-0.894***
Asian	1.153***	.398**	-0.169	-0.294
White	Reference group		Reference group	
Black	0.403*	0.397*	-0.314	-0.119
Mixed Race	-0.131	-0.170	0.166	-0.036
Managerial and professional occupations	0.106	0.030	0.204	-0.022
Intermediate occupations	Reference group		Reference group	
Routine and manual occupations	0.074	0.129	0.095	0.210
UK	Reference group		Reference group	
EU	1.253***	1.132***	1.489***	1.546***
Overseas	1.222***	1.023***	1.668***	1.542***
Studying from home	0.138	0.053	-0.774***	-0.465***
Worked during term-time	-0.480***	-0.122	-0.678***	-0.471***
Medicine & Dentistry		6.358***		4.572***
Subjects allied to Medicine		5.662***		.270
Biology, Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture and related		Reference group		Reference group
Physical Sciences		2.651***		0.164
Mathematical & Comp Sci		1.157***		2.314***
Engineering, Technologies		5.331***		1.728***
Architecture, Build & Plan		0.713**		8.310***
Social Studies		-3.013***		0.662**
Law		-2.854***		4.765***
Business & Admin studies		-2.047***		.045
Mass communication and Documentation		-2.384***		-0.261
Linguistics and Classics		-5.581***		2.340***
Languages		-2.468***		2.918***
Hist and Philosophical studies		-6.282***		2.804***
Creative Arts & Design		-0.289		4.048***
Education		-0.116		0.778*
Interdisciplinary Subjects		-1.752***		1.169***
Highest tariff university		0.302**		1.245***
High tariff university		-0.737***		-0.594***
Medium tariff university		-0.995***		-0.220
Lowest tariff university		Reference group		Reference group
General HE college		1.026***		-.193***
Specialist HE college		1.507***		1.965***
df	15	36	15	36
Adjusted R2	0.014	0.226	0.041	0.083
F	37.736	313.097	110.360	97.274

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, accepted applicants. *** $\alpha \leq 0.001$, ** $\alpha \leq 0.01$, * $\alpha \leq 0.05$.
not shown: Unknown ethnicity, unknown socio-economic background

Appendix 2: Table A2.2: Regression results: Total workload

	Total Workload	
	Unstandardized Coefficient B	
(Constant)	27.443***	26.329***
18 and under	-0.977***	-0.936***
19-20	Reference group	
21-25	2.876***	2.528***
26 and over	6.673***	5.984***
Male	-0.153	-0.877***
Asian	0.985***	0.104
White	Reference group	
Black	0.089	0.278
Mixed Race	0.036	-0.206
Managerial and professional occupations	0.310	-0.009
Intermediate occupations	Reference group	
Routine and manual occupations	0.168	0.339
UK	Reference group	
EU	2.742***	2.677***
Overseas	2.890***	2.566***
Studying from home	-.636***	-0.411**
Worked during term-time	-1.158***	-0.593***
Medicine & Dentistry		10.930***
Subjects allied to Medicine		5.932***
Physical Sciences		2.815***
Biology		Reference group
Mathematical & Comp Sci		3.471***
Engineering, Technologies		7.059***
Architecture, Build & Plan		9.023***
Social Studies		-2.352***
Law		1.911***
Business & Admin studies		-2.003***
Mass communication and Documentation		-2.646***
Linguistics and Classics		-3.241
Languages		0.450***
Hist & Philosophical studies		-3.478***
Creative Arts & Design		3.759
Education		0.662***
Interdisciplinary Subjects		-0.583***
Highest tariff university		1.547***
High tariff university		-1.331***
Medium tariff university		-1.214***
Lowest tariff university		Reference group
General HE college		0.833
Specialist HE college		3.471***
df	15	36
Adjusted R2	0.043	0.144
F	115.743	181.186

Source: Futuretrack 2006: combined Stages 1&2 dataset, accepted applicants. *** $\alpha \leq 0.001$, ** $\alpha \leq 0.01$, * $\alpha \leq 0.05$.
not shown: Unknown ethnicity, unknown socio-economic background

Appendix 2: Table 4.1 Factors affecting whether the student did any paid work during term time or vacations

	Factors affecting whether the student worked for more than 16 hours per week during the term	Factors affecting whether the student did any paid work during term time or vacations
	Coefficient	
(Constant)	-3.297***	-1.874***
18 and under	Reference group	
19-20	0.297***	0.1000***
21-25	1.085***	0.580***
26 and over	1.050***	0.203***
Female	-0.151***	0.194***
Highest tariff university	Reference group	
High Tariff University	0.507***	0.436***
Medium Tariff University	0.755***	0.688***
Lower Tariff University	0.974***	0.774***
General HE College	1.211***	1.142***
Specialist HE College	0.637***	0.767***
Overseas	0.832**	0.426**
Higher managerial and professional	Reference group	
Lower managerial and professional	0.0841	0.0773**
Intermediate occupations	0.123	0.128***
Small employers and own account workers	0.173*	0.184***
Lower supervisory and technical	0.243***	0.327***
Semi-routine occupations	0.321***	0.243***
Routine occupations	0.433***	0.333***
Being a student was a positive experience	-0.332***	-0.120***
Had excessive work for my course	0.152**	-0.119***
My course was good value for money	-0.0227	-0.127***
The work required was of high standards	0.0443	0.0212
Had a clear idea about what i wanted to do	0.156***	0.175***
Medicine and dentistry	Reference group	
Subjects allied to medicine	0.802***	0.395***
Biology, vet sci, ag & related	1.183***	0.629***
Physical sciences	0.943***	0.300***
Mathematical & comp sci	1.296***	0.492***
Engineering, technologies	1.205***	0.568***
Architecture, build & plan	0.756***	0.430***
Social studies	1.333***	0.649***
Law	1.327***	0.562***
Business & admin studies	1.677***	0.887***
Mass communication and documentation	1.484***	0.853***
Linguistics and classics	1.157***	0.596***
Languages	1.044***	0.632***
Hist & philosophical studies	1.051***	0.452***
Creative arts & design	1.112***	0.552***
Education	0.874***	0.743***
Science combined with social science	1.422***	0.689***
Social science combined with arts	1.655***	0.942***
Interdisciplinary, other combined subjects	1.329***	0.418***
Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

**Appendix 2: Table A5.1 Logistic Regression:
Awareness of Careers Services (unaware = 0, aware = 1)**

Characteristic	Coefficient
18 and under	.031
19-20	Reference Group
21-25	.216***
26 and over	.232***
Male	.285***
Asian	.068
Black	.452***
Mixed Race	.034
White	Reference Group
Other, unknown ethnicity	-.021
Specialist vocational subjects	-.223***
Occupationally–orientated routes	Reference Group
Discipline-based academic subjects	.116**
Subjects not known	.179
Highest tariff university	.705***
High tariff university	.697***
Medium tariff university	.122**
Lower tariff university	Reference Group
General HE college	-.619***
Specialist HE college	-.563***
Overseas HEI	-.436***
UK students	Reference Group
European student	.646***
Other overseas student	.654***
Constant	1.017***

Source: Futuretrack 2006 combined dataset: registered full-time students. Significance of the coefficients is marked as follows:

*** $\alpha \leq 0.001$, ** $\alpha \leq 0.01$, * $\alpha \leq 0.05$.

**Appendix 2: Table A5.2: Logistic Regression:
Clear idea changes (1 = respondents with clear idea ('1') during application process and not clear idea ('2' to '7') after the first year, 0 = all other respondents).**

Characteristic	Coefficient
18 and under	-.075
19-20	Reference Group
21-25	.340***
26 and over	.778***
Male	-.164***
Asian	.104
Black	.204**
Mixed Race	-.009
White	Reference Group
Other, unknown ethnicity	.033
Specialist vocational subjects	.902***
Occupationally–orientated routes	Reference Group
Discipline-based academic subjects	-.280***
Subjects not known	.153
Highest tariff university	-.212***
High tariff university	.006
Medium tariff university	.107
Lower tariff university	Reference Group
General HE college	-.216
Specialist HE college	.365**
Overseas HEI	.171
Self-confidence (excellent or very good)	.375***
Visited career service website	-.147**
Completed compulsory module to develop employment-related skills	.137
Obtained careers advice from an employer or work organisation representative	.165***
Used the Careers Service	-.074
Constant	-2.162***

Source: Futuretrack 2006 combined dataset: registered full-time students. Significance of the coefficients is marked as follows: *** $\alpha \leq 0.001$, ** $\alpha \leq 0.01$, * $\alpha \leq 0.05$

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