

Office for  
Students



# **Annex D: Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics**

**Parental higher education**

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**This annex should be read alongside the report ‘Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics’ (OfS 2020.30)**

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# Summary

Any questions or feedback related to this publication can be sent to William Rimmington at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk). This includes further detail of the results of applying our data quality framework, including specific disclosure rates and inconsistency scores.

1. The Office for Students (OfS) annually publishes experimental data on the numbers and proportions of students entering higher education by parental higher education as part of our equality and diversity statistics.<sup>1</sup> However this is the first time we have published outcomes by this characteristic.
2. Around 45 per cent of full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate entrants have a parent with a higher education qualification (45.1 per cent in 2018-19). Roughly the same proportion of entrants' parents do not have a higher education qualification (44.7 per cent in 2018-19). Each year around 7 per cent of entrants report that they do not know whether their parents have a higher education qualification (7.2 per cent in 2018-19) and 3 per cent choose not to answer.<sup>2</sup>
3. For 2017-18 entrants, the continuation rate of students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification was 3.1 percentage points lower than the continuation rates of students whose parents do.
4. Qualifiers in 2018-19 whose parents do not have a higher education qualification had a rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree that was 5.7 percentage points lower than students whose parents do.
5. For qualifiers in 2016-17 the rate of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level was 2.6 percentage points lower for students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification compared with students whose parents do.
6. The statistics included in this report are raw continuation, attainment and progression rates and we have not used weighting or statistical modelling in their calculation to account for other student characteristics that can impact the rates of students with these characteristics.
7. The rates and differences in rates are rounded to one decimal place. Some of these characteristics apply to small populations and we have not performed significance or sensitivity analysis on the raw rates included here. Small differences in rates may not represent statistically significant differences in outcomes for students with those characteristics. Also note the differences in rates were calculated using unrounded rates. Thus the value of the differences can be 0.1 percentage point higher or lower than the difference between the rounded rates included in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/).

<sup>2</sup> These values can be found on our equality and diversity webpages which can be accessed using the link above (footnote 1).

## Differences in continuation

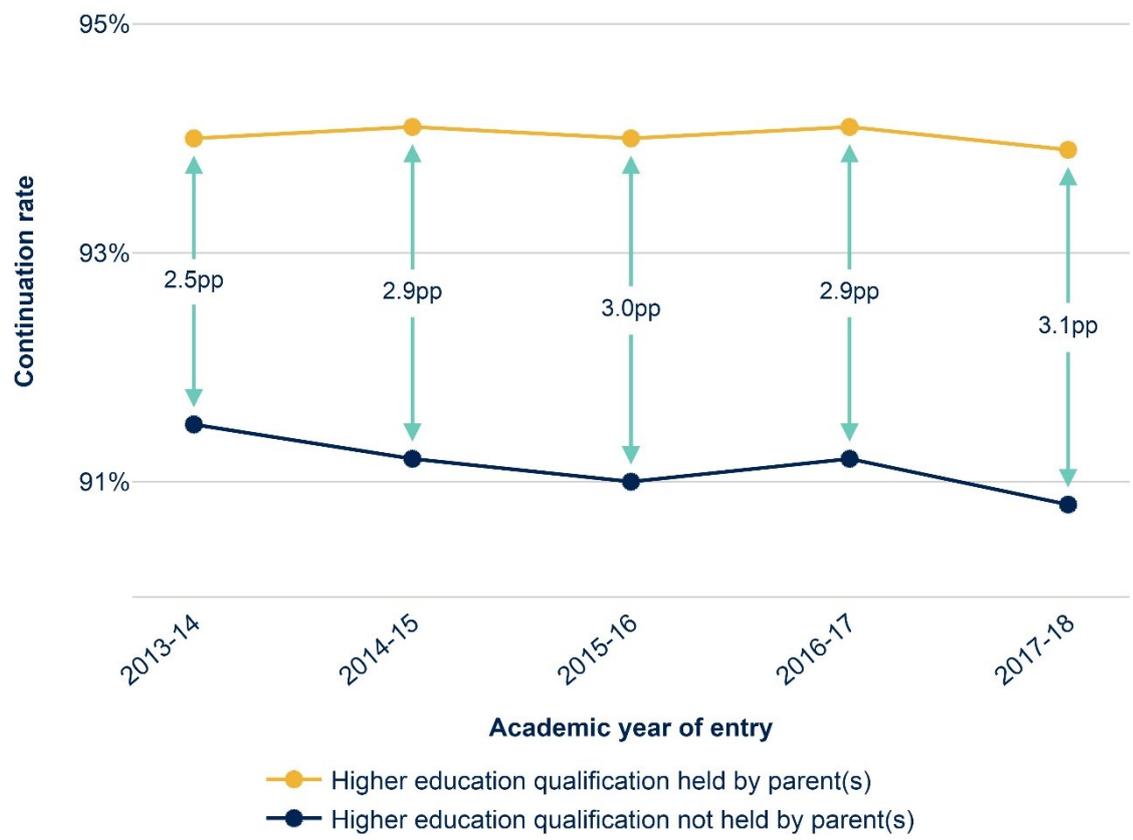
8. Continuation rates are lower for students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification compared with students whose parents do (see Figure D1). There is roughly a 3 percentage point difference between the continuation rates of students whose parents do and do not have a higher education qualification. For full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate entrants in 2017-18, the continuation rate of students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification was 3.1 percentage points lower than the continuation rate of students whose parents have a higher education qualification.
9. Continuation rates are a measure of the proportion of entrants who either qualified, transferred to another higher education provider or continued their studies. All other students are deemed non-continuers. For full-time students this measure is based on student activity one year and 14 days after their commencement date. The population and measure of continuation in higher education are based on our access and participation data algorithms.<sup>3</sup>
10. These statistics apply to UK-domiciled, full-time, undergraduate or apprenticeship students who applied via the UCAS and attended higher education providers in England that report data to the HESA student record. In these continuation calculations around 50,000 students a year are excluded from the access and participation population because they did not have a HESA student record.<sup>4</sup>
11. The continuation rates of students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification have been dropping; 2013-14 entrants had a continuation rate of 91.5 per cent, whereas in 2017-18 entrants had a continuation rate of 90.8 per cent.
12. By comparison, the continuation rates of students whose parents have a higher education qualification was relatively stable in this time, at 94.0 per cent for 2013-14 entrants and 93.9 per cent for 2017-18 entrants.
13. The gap in continuation has increased by 0.6 percentage points since 2013-14.

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<sup>3</sup> See our document 'Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Regulatory indicators, methodology and rebuild descriptions' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).

<sup>4</sup> See the data file associated with this release, available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/), for the numbers of students who have been excluded from the access and participation population based on the population restrictions outlined.

**Figure D1: The differences in continuation rate by parental higher education for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate students**



The data used to create this chart can be found in the data file associated with this publication.<sup>5</sup> Details of the student population can be found later in this annex.

<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

## Differences in degree outcomes

14. Students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification have a lower rate of achieving a first or upper second class degree than students whose parents do (see Figure D2). For qualifiers in 2018-19, the attainment rate of students whose parents do not have higher education qualification was 5.7 percentage points lower than that of students whose parents have a higher education qualification.
15. Attainment rates are a measure of the proportion of students awarded Level 6+ undergraduate degree qualifications (first degree or undergraduate with postgraduate components) who received a first or upper second (2:1). The population and measure of attainment are based on our access and participation data algorithms.<sup>6</sup>
16. These statistics apply to UK-domiciled, full-time students who qualified with a first degree or undergraduate with postgraduate components qualification. These students applied via UCAS and attended higher education providers in England that report data to the HESA student record. In these attainment calculations around 13,000 students a year are excluded from the access and participation population because they did not have a HESA student record.<sup>7</sup> This value differs from the 50,000 value in paragraph 10 as these attainment statistics are calculated for a different population from the continuation statistics.<sup>8</sup>
17. Attainment rates have increased compared with 2015-16 regardless of parental higher education, but this increase stopped between 2017-18 and 2018-19, in line with the sector-level trend.<sup>9</sup> However it should be noted that this data on parental education was determined to be useable for 2013-14 entrants onwards. The data for qualifiers for 2015-16 therefore does not include students who completed their qualification in four years. Given that undergraduate with postgraduate component qualifications typically take four years to complete and have a much higher attainment rate than first degrees<sup>10</sup>, at least some of increase in attainment between 2015-16 and 2016-17 will be the results of these additional students being included in the population. The rates for 2016-17 qualifiers and later are therefore more representative of this student population.
18. For qualifiers in 2018-19, 83.1 per cent of students whose parents have a higher education qualification received a first or upper second class degree. In the same year, 77.3 per cent of students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification achieved the same.
19. This difference in attainment rates has increased by 0.3 percentage points since 2015-16.

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<sup>6</sup> See footnote 3.

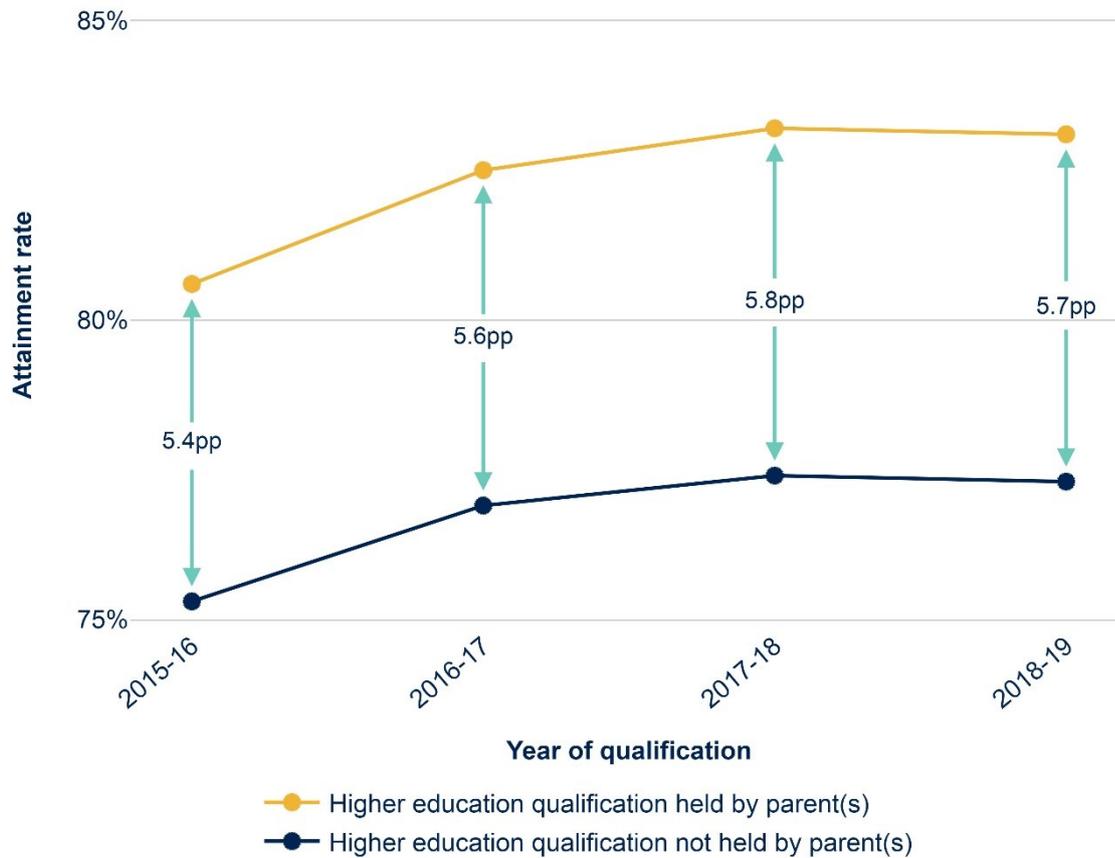
<sup>7</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>8</sup> For further detail of the different populations see footnote 3.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/grade-inflation-for-first-class-degrees-stalls/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/grade-inflation-for-first-class-degrees-stalls/).

<sup>10</sup> See our access and participation data dashboard at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

**Figure D2: The differences in rates of achieving a first or upper second class degree by parental higher education for full-time, UK-domiciled, first degree and undergraduate with postgraduate components students**



The data used to create this chart can be found in the data file associated with this publication.<sup>11</sup> Details of the student population can be found later in this annex. The data for 2015-16 consists of a reduced population and is less robust than subsequent years; see paragraph 17 for more details.

<sup>11</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

## Differences in employment outcomes

20. Students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification have lower rates of progression into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level compared with students whose parents do (See Figure D3). For qualifiers in 2016-17, the progression rate was 2.6 percentage points lower for students whose parents do not have higher education qualification compared with students whose parents do.
21. These statistics apply to UK-domiciled, full-time students who qualified with an undergraduate qualification or apprenticeship. These students applied via UCAS and attended higher education providers in England that report data to the HESA student record. In these progression calculations around 20,000 students a year are excluded from the access and participation population because they did not have a HESA student record.<sup>12</sup> This value differs from the values in paragraphs 10 and 16 as these progression statistics are calculated for a different population from the continuation and attainment statistics.<sup>13</sup> The population and measure of progression are based on our access and participation data algorithms.<sup>14</sup>
22. Progression rates are based on the proportion of leavers who say they are in highly skilled employment or studying at a higher level (or both) approximately six months after leaving. These outcomes are based on student responses to the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey. The mapping of DLHE responses for progression rates is detailed elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> The DLHE survey has been discontinued so progression data is only available up to those students who qualified in 2016-17. Additionally, as detailed in paragraph 17, the data for 2015-16 only includes students who completed their undergraduate studies in three years or less so is less representative of the student population than the data for 2016-17.
23. This data is only available for undergraduate entrants in 2015-16 and 2016-17. The size of the gap is not consistent across these two years, having reduced from 3.6 percentage points in 2015-16 to 2.6 percentage points in 2016-17. However, in addition to the differences in population detailed above (undergraduate with postgraduate components qualification have a higher progression rate than all other undergraduate qualifications), the difference between 2015-16 and 2016-17 also coincides with the sector-level increase in progression rates.<sup>16</sup> It should not therefore be assumed that this gap is rapidly closing – more data is required to determine the extent to which progression rates are lower for students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification and whether this is reducing.

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<sup>12</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>13</sup> For further detail of the different populations see footnote 3.

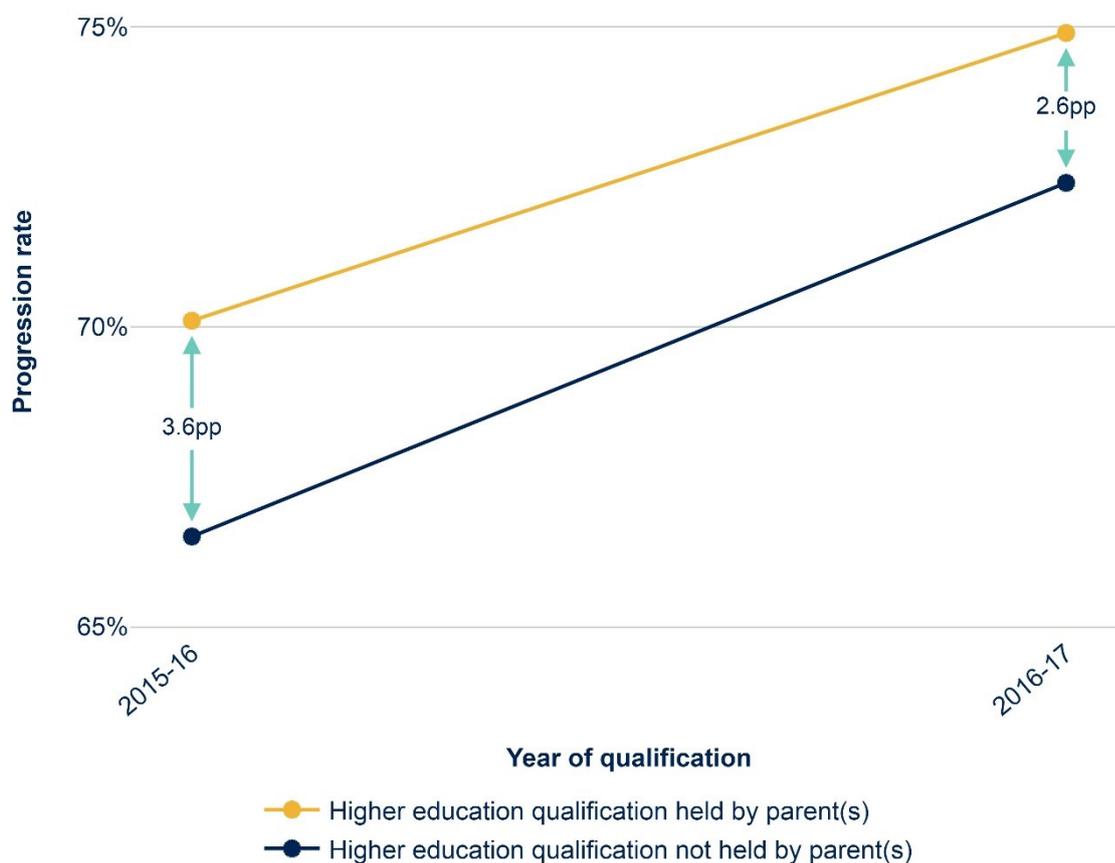
<sup>14</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>15</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>16</sup> See our access and participation data dashboard at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

24. In 2016-17 the progression rate of students whose parents do not have a higher education qualification was 72.4 per cent compared with 74.9 per cent for students whose parents have a higher education qualification.

**Figure D3: The differences in students progressing into highly skilled employment or further study at a higher level by parental higher education for full-time, UK-domiciled, undergraduate students**



The data used to create this chart can be found in the data file associated with this publication.<sup>17</sup> Details of the student population can be found later in this annex. The data for 2015-16 consists of a reduced population and is less robust than the data for 2016-17; see paragraph 22 for more details.

<sup>17</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

## Quality framework and student populations

25. A summary of applying our data quality framework<sup>18</sup> to the data on parental higher education can be found in Table D1. Based on the criteria of the framework the parental higher education data is useable for entrants from 2013-14 onwards. While data was reasonably well reported in earlier year in regards to quantity, there are some concerns regarding the quality of this data in terms of consistency of reporting.

**Table D1: Summary of applying data quality framework to parental higher education data**

Framework criteria	Summary
Data source	HESA student record (PARED)
Year data collection started	2007-08
Summary of data field	Whether one or more of the student's parents have a higher education qualification
Student population data available for	UK-domiciled undergraduate students
<b>Part I – Data availability</b>	
I.A – documentation	Well documented
I.B – disclosure rate	From 2013-14 data is available for >80% of eligible students
I.C – provider response	In recent years reported by all eligible providers
<b>Part II – Data quality</b>	
II.A – identified data issues	Some issues in first year of collection caused by a misunderstanding related to response categories but no obvious issues in subsequent years
II.B – reporting consistency	Inconsistency scores well below 2 since 2013-14
II.C – comparisons with public	In 2017, 42 per cent of the UK population (aged 21 to 64) had a higher education qualification. <sup>19</sup> This is very similar to the proportion of entrants whose parents had a higher education qualification that year. <sup>20</sup>
<b>Outcome</b>	Data considered useable for 2013-14 entrants onwards.

26. Parental higher education data is collected by HESA. Collection details, including question asked and responses can be found on the HESA website.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See Annex A associated with this report.

<sup>19</sup> See Office for National Statistics (ONS) report 'Graduates in the UK labour market: 2017' at [www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduateintheuklabourmarket/2017](http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduateintheuklabourmarket/2017).

<sup>20</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity/).

<sup>21</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/pared](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/pared).

27. When applying the framework the following responses were set to 'Unknown': 'No response given', 'Don't know' and 'Information refused'. These responses do not provide information for this investigation into differences in outcomes. This also accounts for providers using these categories incorrectly when they should have used 'Unknown'.
28. This data is primarily collected as part of UCAS applications. Providers should also collect this data for eligible students who did not use UCAS. For the sake of consistency, the population was limited to only those students with a UCAS Application Scheme Code (UCASAPPID).<sup>22</sup> As we do not know how the data for students who did not use a UCAS scheme was collected, this maximizes the consistency of how the data was collected.
29. Continuation, attainment and progression populations were based on those included in our access and participation data dashboard. Details of these populations can be found in the document 'Technical algorithms for institutional performance measures: Regulatory indicators, methodology and rebuild descriptions'.<sup>23</sup> Where restrictions exist in the collection of this data, beyond those associated with the access and participation populations, then these were also applied. For example, parental education data is collected for only certain undergraduate courses. This data is collected for students from the Isle of Mann and the Channel islands; however, for consistency with the OfS definition of UK-domiciled, these students are not included in our calculations.
30. The quality framework is used to help determine an academic year of entrance for which this data is deemed to be acceptable quality. The outcome populations are therefore limited to those students who began their studies on or after the academic year chosen. This ensures that we only use parental higher education data that was collected in years that passed the framework.
31. The first two years of qualifier data related to parental higher education are not presented as these results relate to a small number of students who completed their studies in one or two years – it is not until the third year of data that more robust statistics can be produced. For parental higher education the data is deemed usable for 2013-14 entrants onwards so the qualifier outcomes are included from 2015-16 onwards. The qualifier population was not limited by the time it took to achieve the qualification. As detailed in paragraph 17, the data for 2015-16 does not include students who completed their undergraduate studies in four years, so the attainment data for 2016-17 and later can be considered to be more representative of the undergraduate population.
32. As this data is rarely used there have been concerns regarding its quality and the rigour with which it was collected. However, our data quality framework has determined that it is useable. In using this data, other than limiting the data to the appropriate populations detailed above, we have not excluded data from these analyses as this could have introduced bias; here we report the data as it is available. Data reported by a provider that could be perceived as abnormal has therefore not been removed.

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<sup>22</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ucasappid](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ucasappid).

<sup>23</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).



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