

Inequality, life chances and education: a UCU policy on widening participation

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INTRODUCTION

This paper explores widening participation in the United Kingdom, specifically, why it is important and how it can be improved. The paper will highlight the social and economic evidence for the importance of widening participation and show how the pursuit of widening participation could help to reduce inequality in the UK. It will then provide an overview of the data on participation by key group and show how application and acceptance patterns vary across low, medium and high tariff institutions. Examples of widening participation initiatives and their impacts will then be presented along with an exploration of the ways in which greater participation in higher education can be achieved progressively across the life stages. The final part of this paper will put forward a number of policy proposals that form the beginnings of a holistic UCU policy on widening participation.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY WIDENING PARTICIPATION?

Widening participation is the term given to denote efforts to address the under-representation of some social groups in higher education. It has been widely pursued by successive governments. There are two elements of efforts to broaden the social representation of students in higher education. First, widening participation, which means increasing the total number of people who progress to higher education, in particular those from underrepresented backgrounds. Second, fair access which refers to who gets accepted on those courses – typically at the most selective universities – which typically have the best outcomes for students.

Among 18-year-olds alone, the review on social mobility and child poverty has estimated this to represent a widening participation gap of around 100,000 students. Further education colleges in particular have strong records in this field. 22.9% cent of young full-time entrants registered at further education colleges were from neighbourhoods with low rates of participation in higher education. This is more

For an individual, the average net earnings premium associated with obtaining an undergraduate degree, over a working lifetime, is £115,000.

than double the 10.5 per cent rate for all such entrants registered at English higher education institutions. It is important to note that whilst widening participation is often referred to as a higher education issue, for UCU it is also important in increasing access below degree level also and this insight drives UCU policy also.

The following groups have been traditionally targeted for widening participation activity due to underrepresentation:

- young people from low-income backgrounds
- young people from low-participation neighbourhoods
- young people whose parents did not go to university
- young people in or leaving care
- young people living with a disability
- young people from an ethnic minority
- those returning to learning as mature students.

WHY IS WIDENING PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT?

Individual benefits

There are significant health benefits associated with higher education including a greater propensity to report good levels of well-being and access preventative care and lower incidences of obesity, and depression and a lower likelihood of smoking. Graduates are more likely to be employed, earn higher wages and report better job satisfaction, and for those from low-income backgrounds higher education opens up access to higher earning and higher status jobs. For an individual, the average net earnings premium associated with obtaining an undergraduate degree, over a working lifetime, is £115,000.¹

Wider social benefits

Higher education participation has positive knock on effects in terms of civic participation and for the functioning of political society. It has been found to have a higher marginal effect on volunteering, civic participation, voting, political interest, party membership, interpersonal trust and make individuals more likely to have a positive valuation of immigration.

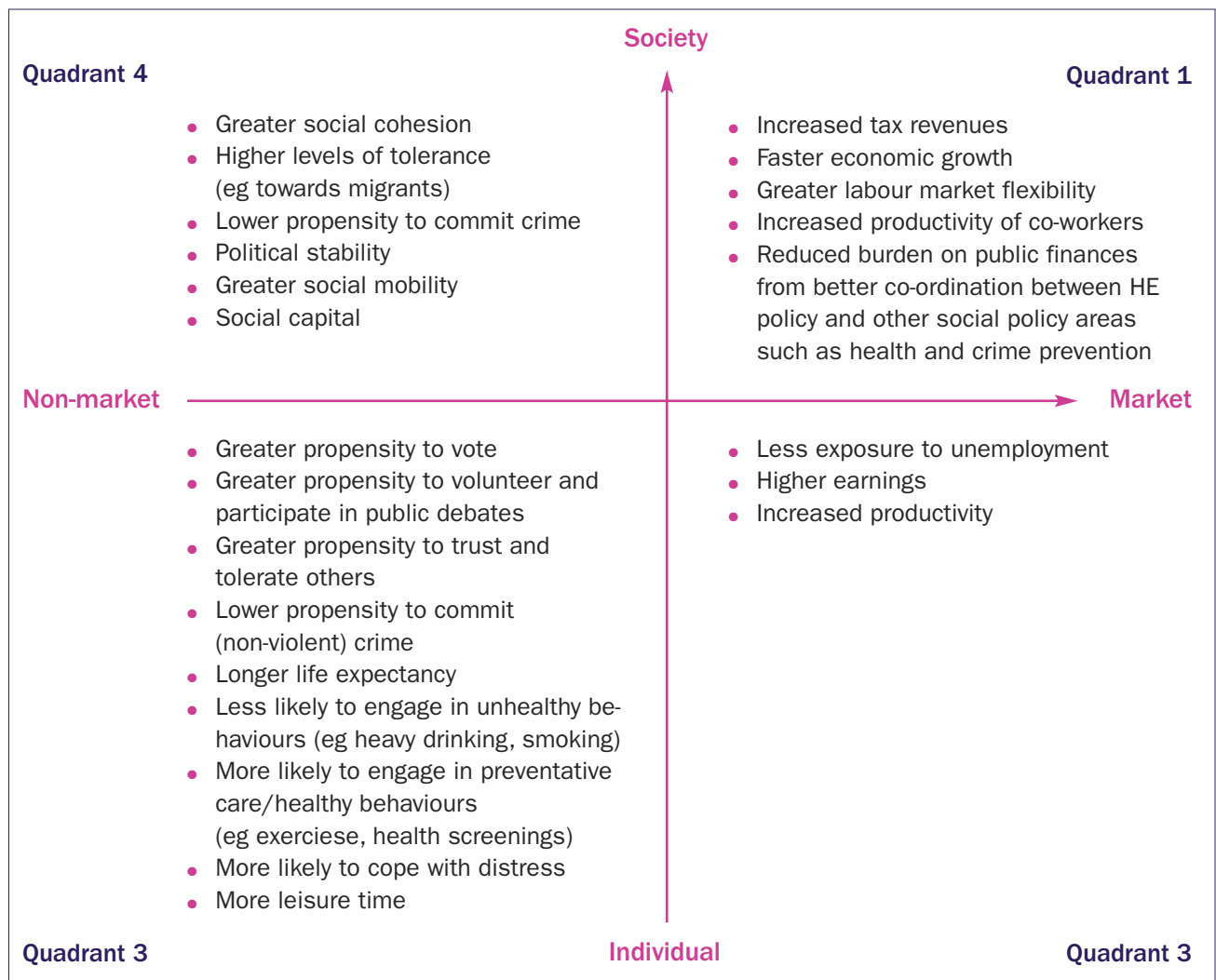
Benefits to the wider economy

Students aged 19 and over in further education generate an additional £75 billion for the economy over their lifetimes. For the single cohort of 342,500 UK domiciled full and part-time undergraduates who entered English higher education institutions in 2010/11, the total value of these entrants' qualifications to the Exchequer stands at approximately £28.4 billion over their working lives in today's money terms.² Econometric analysis by BIS has shown that a 1% increase in the share of the workforce with a university degree raises the level of long run productivity by 0.2-0.5%.

The figure below categorises the benefits of higher education according to a quadrant of individual and societal, non-market and market benefits. The strong link between participation in education and these wider benefits of higher education are the driving force for the pursuit of widening participation.

¹Million Plus, (2013), What's the value of a UK degree? p6

²Ibid p7

Figure 1: A bi-dimensional categorisation of the wider benefits of higher education³

PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND INEQUALITY

Income inequality rose significantly in the 1980s in the United Kingdom and has remained persistently high since then. In the United Kingdom there is a strong correlation between individual and parental earnings meaning that there is low intergenerational mobility. Despite society becoming wealthier, the UK has not become fairer. Social class as measured by household income is still the largest determinant of educational achievement, qualifications, access to higher education, the professions, lifelong learning and ultimately, life chances. Since intergenerational mobility is closely related to educational achievement it is an important measure of assessing the intergenerational social mobility of a country.

Social mobility is about breaking the transmission of disadvantage from one generation to the next so that every person has the opportunity to get on in life, regardless of their background, circumstance or social class. Obstacles in moving up (and down) the social ladder inhibit economic growth and furthermore, the UK's global and

³BIS, (2013), Things we know and don't know about the Wider Benefits of Higher Education: A review of the recent literature, p22

Research by the Sutton Trust has shown that improving levels of social mobility for future generations in the UK would boost the economy by up to £140 billion a year

comparative performance. If social mobility is stalled, disadvantage is becomes further embedded in society. The growing imbalance in access to higher education has driven this decline in intergenerational mobility. Enabling the widest possible cohort of talent access to higher education can be said to support societal aims of equality, fairness and social justice.

In a society which is seeking to increase social mobility, the process of widening participation can support the development of a socially mobile society. Whilst increasing overall levels of education may not in itself lead to increasing levels of overall social mobility, it can influence social mobility by conferring an advantage to an individual based on their level of qualification relative to others. As a result, equality of access to education and closing the attainment gap are important in increasing social mobility. They can be described as mechanisms for influencing social mobility.

Research by the Sutton Trust has shown that improving levels of social mobility for future generations in the UK would boost the economy by up to £140 billion a year by 2050 in today's prices – or an additional 4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over and above any other growth.

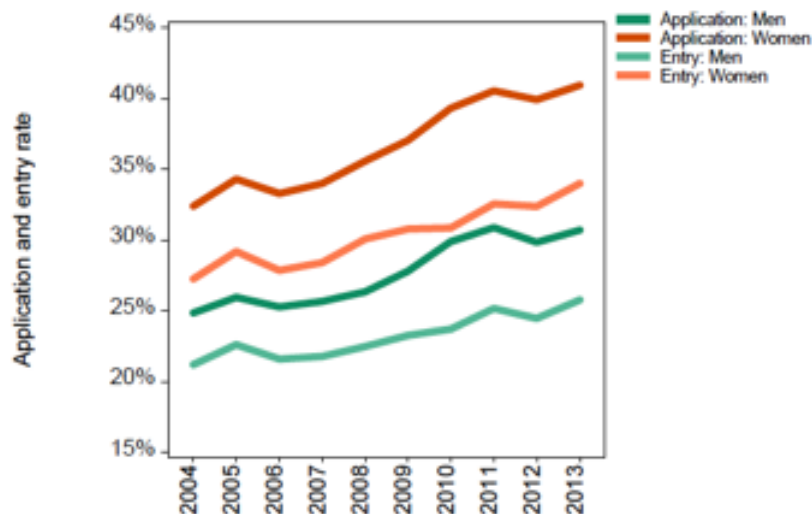
Overall the UK's economy would see cumulative gains of up to £1.3 trillion in GDP over the next 40 years.⁴

AN OVERVIEW OF THE DATA ON PARTICIPATION BY KEY GROUP

Trends by gender

Over the last 20 years, university has become an increasingly female preserve. The application rate for men is far behind the acceptance rate for men, and women are a third more likely to apply for HE than men. At present, more women enter higher education than men apply to higher education.

Figure 2: UK domiciled 18 year olds, application and entry rates by sex⁵



⁴The Sutton Trust (2010), The Mobility Manifesto, p13

⁵UCAS, (2013), 2013 Application Cycle: end of cycle report, p80

It is of particular concern that the trend of lower male applications has a close relationship with disadvantage. The percentage of men applying to HE reduces as the extent of disadvantage increases (as measured by POLAR2 quintile) so that the more disadvantaged young men are, the less likely they are to apply to higher education. The reverse is the case for females. If these trends are not reversed, the gap between males and female application will be higher than the gap between application rates for lower and higher socioeconomic groups within about a decade.

Figure 3: English 18 year old state school applicants at March 24 deadline 2006-2013 (mean average over period)⁶

POLAR2 Quintile	Mean proportion men 2006-2013	Mean proportion women 2006-2013
1	42%	58%
2	43%	57%
3	43%	57%
4	44%	56%
5	46%	54%

A comparison of the ethnic group of English 18 year olds who fall into POLAR quintile 1, by male and female shows that the most disadvantaged male applicants are black (39%), mixed (39%) and White (40%) ethnic groups.

Figure 4: Ethnic group of English 18 year old state school applicants from POLAR2 quintile 1 at March 24 deadline 2006-2013 (mean average over period)⁷

Ethnic Group	Mean proportion men 2006-2013	Mean proportion women 2006-2013
Any other ethnic group	44%	56%
Asian	43%	57%
Black	39%	61%
Chinese	47%	53%
Mixed	39%	61%
White	40%	60%

At present there is little understanding of why this trend is taking hold. UCAS has noted that there is some effect between STEM and non-STEM subjects, so that men

⁶UCAS submission to Select Committee Inquiry into under-achievement in education by white working class children, p5

⁷Ibid

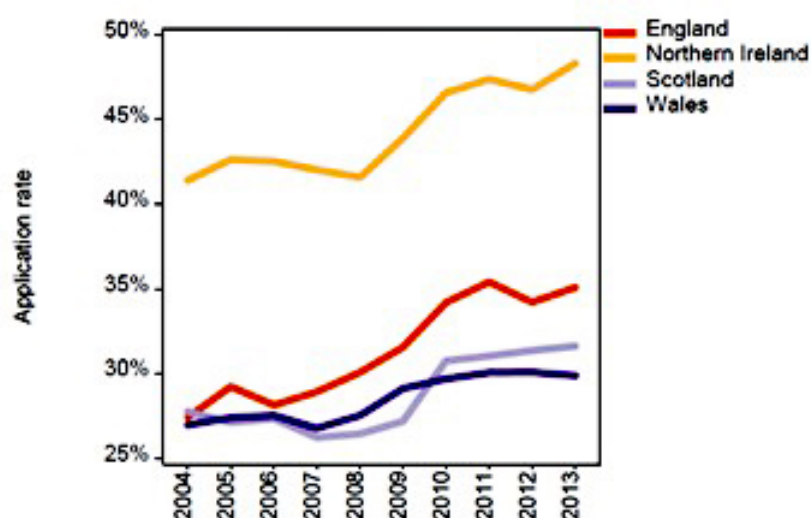
are twice as likely to apply for STEM subjects as females, and STEM accounts for approximately a third of all higher education. However, achievement may be a key factor in this pattern of participation. Educational data does show that starting from primary school through to secondary school, girls are consistently outperforming boys across the range of Key Stage tests. There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that the reduced availability of evening classes which have traditionally been a key route for men in particular to re-engage with education is impacting upon male participation overall.

Trends by country

The application rate for 18-year-olds is much higher than for any other age group and is therefore an important indicator of annual changes in demand for higher education. Young application rates vary significantly across the devolved administrations⁸:

- In England the 18-year-old application rate increased by 0.9 percentage points to 35.1%. This increase is similar to the typical increases seen between 2006 and 2011, but the application rate remains 2 percentage points below where it would be if there had been a similarly typical increase of 1 percentage point in 2012 as well. The 2013 rate is near the highest recorded value in recent cycles.
- In Northern Ireland the application rate increased by 1.6 percentage points in 2013 to 48.3%, the highest recorded in the period and the highest application rate of the individual countries.
- In Scotland, application rates continue the recent trend of increasing slightly (0.3 percentage points per year) to 31.6 per cent, also the highest recorded in the period.
- In Wales, the application rate decreased slightly (by 0.2 percentage points) to 9.9 %, but this is within the range of expected year to year variability given the relatively small population and is still near to the highest value recorded (30.1 % in 2012).

Figure 5: Application rates of 18 year olds by country⁹



⁸UCAS, (2013), Demand for full-time undergraduate higher education (2013 cycle, March deadline), p7

⁹Ibid, p7

Trends by age

Application rates for older age groups are more difficult to interpret because a significant, but also changing proportion of the population will have already applied and been accepted to higher education at a younger age. Application rates vary so that in England for example, 18 year olds have an application rate that is around 10 times greater than 20 year olds, a hundred times greater than 24-29 year olds and a thousand times greater than 40-60 year olds. In Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the pattern of application rates is more variable across age groups.

Trends by part-time study

There has been a significant decline in part-time entrants at both undergraduate (and also postgraduate level). Since 2010-11 part time undergraduate entrants have fallen by 105,000 (40%). This drop in England was particularly marked between 2011-12 and 2012-13 when the new fees system was introduced.

Figure 6: People beginning a part-time higher education course in England¹⁰

	2009-9	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Undergraduate part-time entrants	267,000	267,000	259,000	230,000	154,000

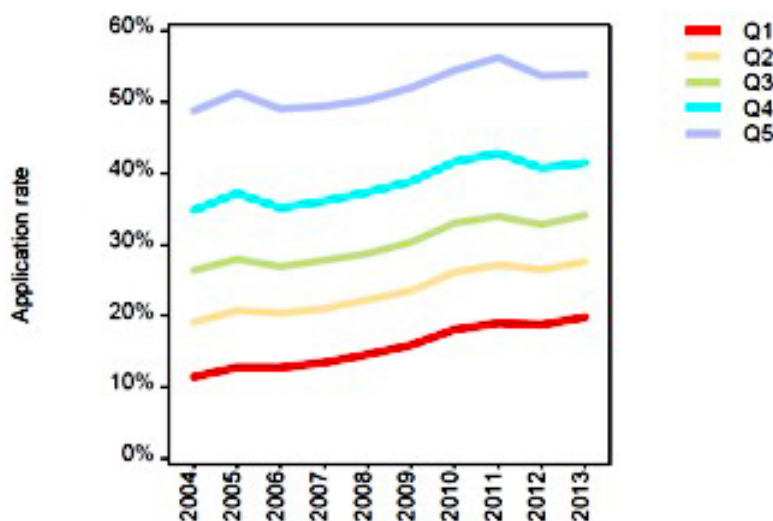
Trends by disadvantage

The chances of young people entering HE varies according to where they live. Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) classification comprises five quintile groups of areas ordered from '1' (those wards with the lowest participation) to '5' (those wards with the highest participation), each representing 20 per cent of UK young cohort. POLAR2 data makes use of more recent information on HE entrants, and extended the scope of the classification to include part-time study and a range of other HE qualification aims.

The following graph shows the application rates for English 18 year olds by POLAR2. Application rates for 18 year olds in England from all backgrounds have increased since 2004. The application rate of young people living in the most disadvantaged areas has increased by over 70% (proportionally) between 2004 and 2013. This compares to an increase of 10% proportionally in the most advantaged areas. In 2013, 18 year olds living in the most advantaged areas were 2.7 times more likely to apply for higher education than those living in the most disadvantaged areas. There has been relatively larger growth in demand from those living in disadvantaged areas. In 2004, those living in the most advantaged areas were 4.3 times more likely to apply than those living in the most disadvantaged areas.

¹⁰HESES/HEIFES surveys in HEFCE, (2013), Higher Education in England, Impact of the 2012 reforms, p13

Figure 7: Application rates for English 18 year olds by POLAR2¹¹

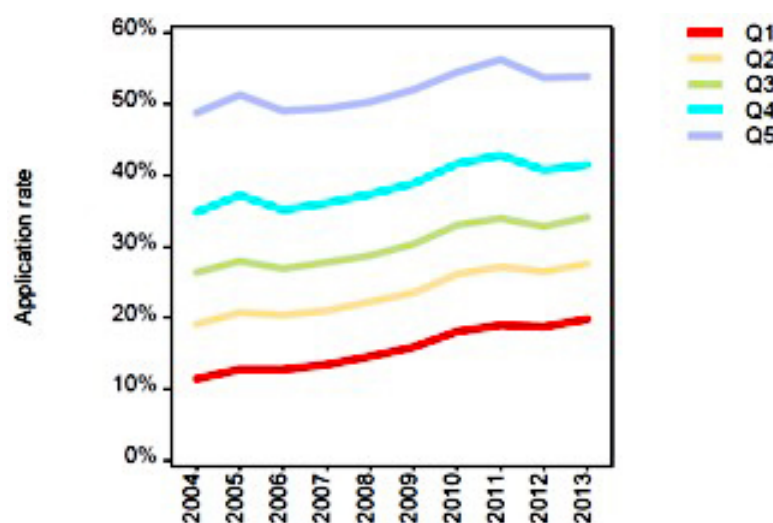


Trends by ethnicity

The application rate of pupils from all ethnic groups increased over the period of 2006-2013. All ethnic groups also show the national pattern of a decrease against trend in application rates in 2012 followed by a return to increases in 2013 at approximately the trend rate.

Across the period the Chinese ethnic group have consistently higher application rates, more than 50% on this measure, compared with the other groups. The Asian ethnic group have an application rate of around 40% on this measure in 2013. The black, mixed, white and other ethnic groups have application rates in a relatively narrow range in 2013 between 29% (white) and 34% (black). The largest increase in application rates across the period, and the largest increase in 2013, is observed for the black ethnic group, for these pupils there has been a 70% proportional increase in the application rate from 20% in 2006 to 34% in 2013.

Figure 8: Application rates for English 18 year olds by ethnic group (state schools)¹²



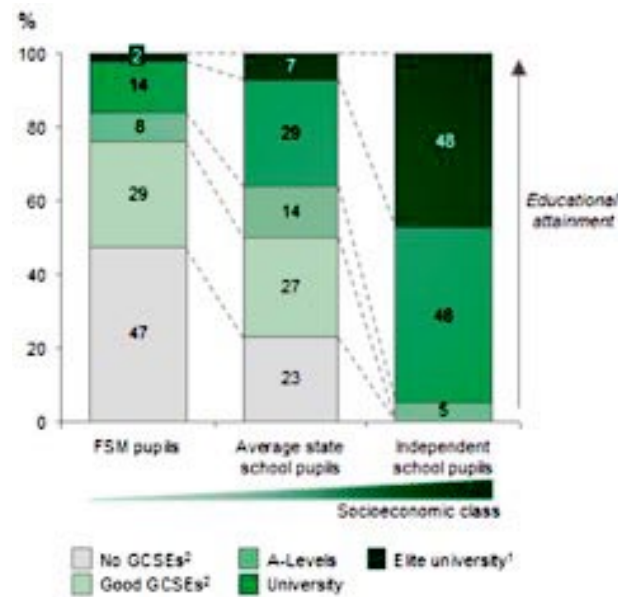
¹¹UCAS, (2013), Demand for full-time undergraduate higher education (2013 cycle, March deadline),p15

¹²Ibid, p19

Trends by school type

The following figure is a stark representation of the relationship between economic disadvantage and achievement. 23% of all state school pupils do not achieve five good GCSEs (or the level 2 equivalent by age 19), while the figure for those entitled to free school meals (the poorest 14% of children) is 47%. And while 7% of state school pupils go to an elite university, only 2% of those on free school meals do the same whilst the corresponding figure for pupils at independent schools is 48%. 96% of those young people educated in independent schools progress to university, but just 16% of those eligible free school meals and one third of students overall do the same.

Figure 9: Achievement levels by pupil background and school type¹³



1 Defined as Russell Group or equivalents

2 Good GCSEs defined as 5 Grades A-C. No GCSEs if this was not attained

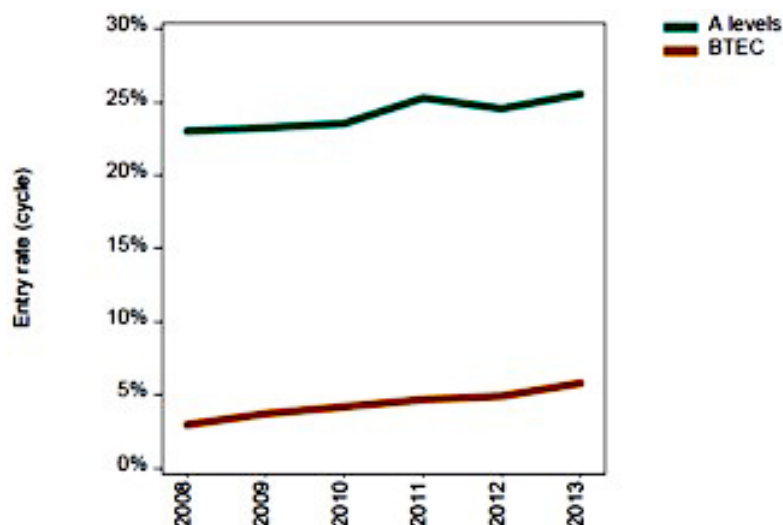
Source: BCG Analysis, UCAS, Sutton Trust, DCSF, ONS

Trends by qualification held by applicants

Entry to higher education is often determined by the type and strength of the qualifications held by an applicant. In 2013, 25.5% of the 18-year-old population in England entered holding at least one A level in 2013, the highest proportion recorded. A-levels are the most held qualification for this age group, followed by BTECS. 5.8% of the 18-year-old population entered holding BTECs, almost twice the rate in 2008. Around half of that increase was for applicants who hold BTECS together with A-levels.

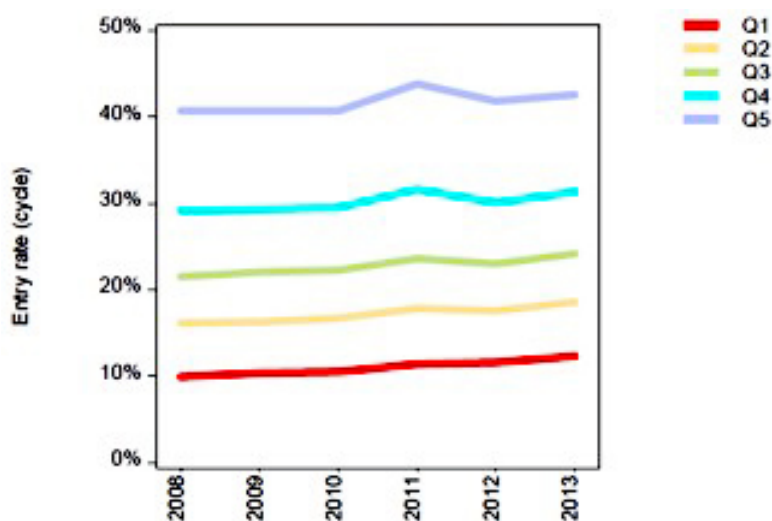
¹³The Sutton Trust (2010), The Mobility Manifesto, p13

Figure 10: English 18 year old entry rate by type of qualification held ¹⁴



The entry rate for those holding A-levels increased for all backgrounds in 2013 but remained highly differentiated by background. Just 12.3% of applicants living in areas with the lowest higher education participation (Q1) held A-levels and were accepted to higher education. Over 40% of those living in areas with greater participation in higher education (Q4 and Q5) held A-levels.

Figure 11: English 18 year old entry rates by POLAR2 group (accepted applicants holding an A level) ¹⁵



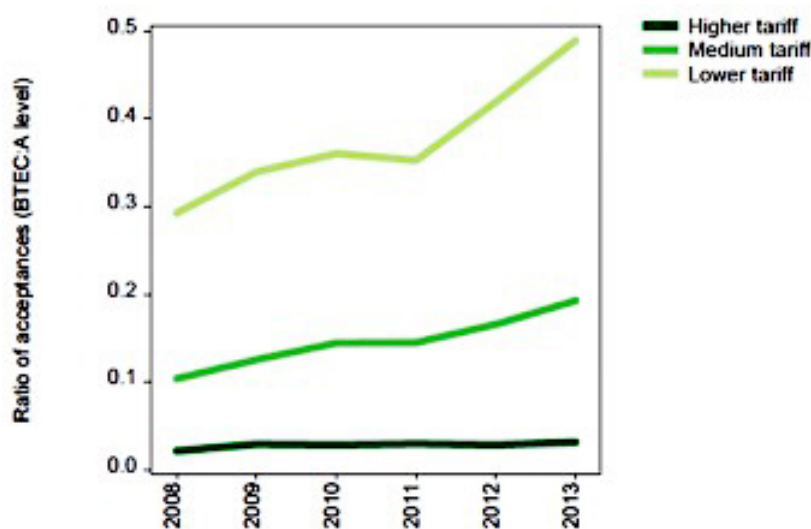
The key concern here is that people from different backgrounds are making different choices about their qualifications. There is an increasing proportion of acceptances to lower and medium tariff institutions for students holding BTECs, but the ratio of BTEC to A level acceptances for higher tariff institutions has remained largely stable. Higher tariff institutions have made it clear that they want to recruit students with academic

¹⁴UCAS, (2013), 2013 Application Cycle: end of cycle report, p51

¹⁵Ibid, p52

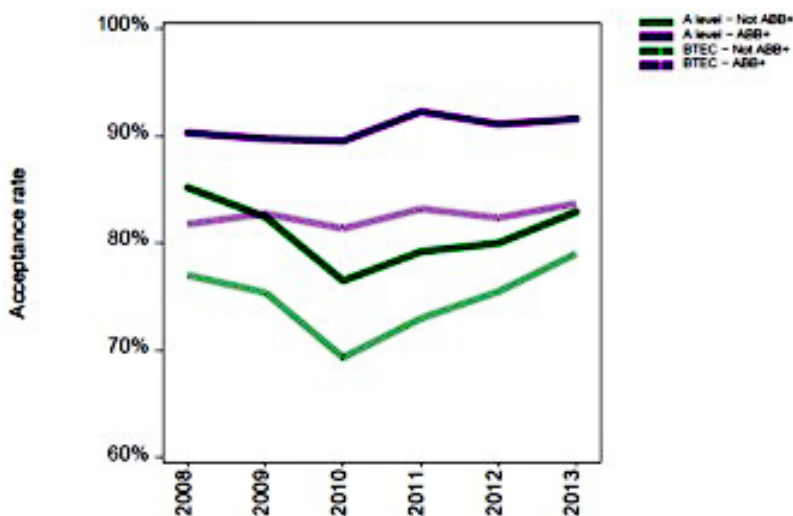
qualifications such as A-levels, and so when making decisions about applicants from low participation backgrounds, to some extent higher tariff institutions do so in the context of a decline in the population overall, and a decline in the proportion of that smaller population who have the right qualifications.

Figure 12: English 18 year old ratio of acceptances holding BTECs to acceptances holding A levels¹⁶



The following figure highlights the lack of parity of esteem between high grades at A-level and high grades a BTEC such that acceptance rates of applicants with A-levels at grades ABB+ are higher than acceptance rates for students with the equivalent grades at BTEC. In 2013, acceptance rates for students with grades ABB+ at BTEC were in line with the acceptance rates for students with A-levels at grades lower than ABB.

Figure 13: Acceptance rates for English-18 year-olds by the highest three grades achieved at A level¹⁷



¹⁶ibid, p54

¹⁷ibid. p57

Fair access

Participation rates in selective institutions

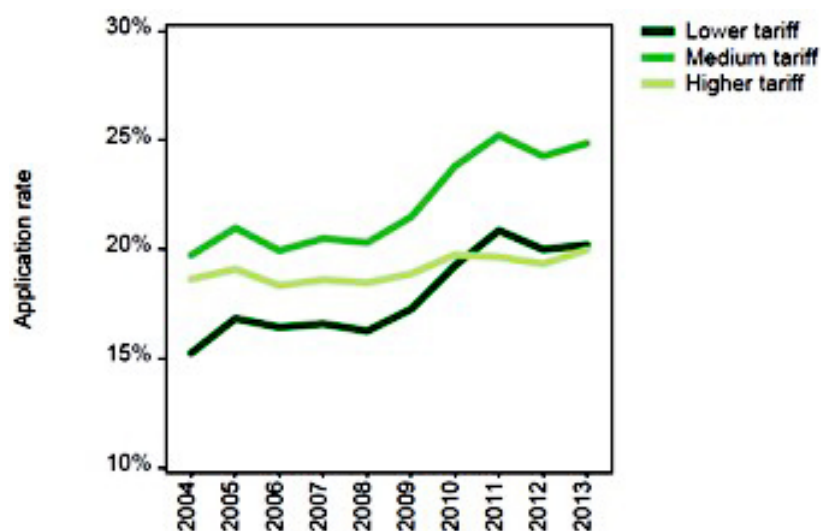
There are much greater participation differences by background for the most selective third of institutions than there are for HE as a whole. The application rate to higher tariff institutions from the most advantaged areas is 4.3 times the rate to higher tariff institutions from the most disadvantaged areas. The application rate from 2004 to present for the most advantaged areas has remained consistently at or around 36%. Across the same time period, the application rate from the most disadvantaged areas has increased by 2.4%, to 8.4%.

Application rates to medium tariff institutions have generally increased across the period in all areas, but, as with the higher tariff institutions, there are greater increases in application rates from the most disadvantaged areas.

There is much less differentiation in application rates by background for applicants to lower tariff institutions. In 2004, the application rate to these institutions was 2.7 times the application rate from the most disadvantaged institutions. By the end 2013, the application rate from the most advantaged areas was 1.5 times the application rate from the most disadvantaged areas. These institutions have significantly increased the participation rates of those from the most disadvantaged areas.

Amongst UK domiciled 18-year-olds, the application rates to higher tariff institutions has been relatively consistent, increasing by 1.3 percentage points. Application rates to medium tariff institutions have increased by 5.1 percentage points and to lower tariff institutions by 5.0 percentage points.

Figure 14: Application rates for UK 18-year-olds by institution tariff group¹⁸



The most advantaged 20 per cent of young people are now seven times more likely to enter the most selective institutions than the most disadvantaged 40%. This ratio has risen from six times more likely in the mid-1990s but has not increased further since the mid-2000s.

¹⁸UCAS, (2013), Demand for full-time undergraduate higher education (2013 cycle, March deadline), p30

Recent research suggests that pupils from state schools need to be the equivalent of two grades better qualified than privately educated pupils to be as likely to high tariff universities.

Although the estimated number of state school pupils entering Russell Group universities increased by 1,464 between 2002/03 and 2011/12 (a rise of 2.6%), almost half of the new places created at Russell Group institutions over the past decade have gone to privately educated individuals: the number of privately educated students entering these institutions increased by 1,426 (a rise of 7.9%). Recent research suggests that, even after controlling for a range of factors, including A-level grades and the subjects taken at A-level, pupils from state schools need to be the equivalent of two grades better qualified than privately educated pupils to be as likely to high tariff universities.

THE EVIDENCE ON WIDENING PARTICIPATION POLICIES

Government funding and monitoring

Statutory responsibility for widening participation and fair access monitoring is held by HEFCE and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

HEFCE has been delivering funding specifically for widening participation to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs) since academic year 1999/2000. In 2013-14 The Higher Education Funding Council for England will allocate £332 million under the Student Opportunity fund.

OFFA is an independent, non-departmental public body established under the Higher Education Act of 2004. Higher education institutions and further education colleges are also investing in excess of £600 million in financial support, outreach and retention. OFFA's remit is to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education (HE) and to ensure these aims are met through the use of access agreements. These are documents which are updated annually, in which universities and colleges charging tuition fees above the basic rate set out the range of support, financial and non financial, that they intend to put in place to support the access and retention of students from under-represented groups.

From 1995 to present there has been a series of separate and overlapping funding initiatives to support widening participation activity in higher education institutions. The initial level of funding investment was £18.4 million from 1995-1999 and stood at over £704 million in 2011-12 (Appendix 1).

Examples of widening participation initiatives

The National Scholarship Programme

The National Scholarship Programme (NSP) was designed to benefit individual students from disadvantaged backgrounds as they enter higher education following the increase in tuition fees. Administered by HEFCE on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, in 2012-13 the government provided £50 million towards the programme rising to £100 million in 2013-14 and £150 million in 2014-15. Institutions are expected to match the award on a 1:1 basis.

Eligibility for the programme is governed by the following, if: a student ordinarily lives in England or is an EU national; the income for the household where they live is £25,000 or less; they are applying to study as an undergraduate either full-time or part-time in higher education in England (if part-time, students must be studying for more than 25 per cent of the full-time equivalent). In 2014-15 following feedback from the sector, the requirement to provide a 50% matched-funding contribution for

Following the spending review in June 2013, the government announced that the National Scholarship programme will cease as an undergraduate programme from 2015-16

institutions that charge less than the minimum fee threshold for all their full-time and part-time courses will be removed and a new options will be introduced for part-time students to ensure parity with full-time students.

HEFCE evaluation of the National Scholarship Programme found that potential recipients often do not know prior to commencing their studies whether they will receive an award, how much they will receive and in what form. The extent to which the NSP can be used as a tool to support widening access as well as retention and success is limited as a result. This limits the potential for the effectiveness of the programme and its eventual impact on students, institutions and wider policy objectives. Although most institutions believe that the NSP contributes to their WP work and has not diverted money away from other activities, not all are convinced that they would spend their widening participation funding in this way given the choice.

Following the spending review in June 2013, the government announced that the National Scholarship programme will cease as an undergraduate programme from 2015-16 and instead it will be realigned to support postgraduate students.

Aim Higher

BIS, the Learning and Skills Council, HEFCE and the Department of Health invested a total of £252,850,000 from 2008-2011 phase of the programme. In total, was invested. The role of Aimhigher was to widen participation in higher education (HE) by raising awareness, aspirations and attainment among learners from under-represented groups. The programme was delivered through a partnership model where funding and activities were managed amongst schools, further education colleges and higher education institutions by central coordinating bodies known as Aimhigher partnerships. Formal inter-institutional partnership was the condition of the funding for Aimhigher and subsequent evaluations have highlighted that the structured partnership approach of institutions collaborating around a common concern was to be the key success of initiative.

Aim Higher West Midlands

In 2011-12, the partnership worked with 44 schools and colleges, who collectively contributed an additional £100,000 of funding to enable over 750 young people to access mentoring, summer schools, and a specialised healthcare strand. The partnership also operated a brokerage service to facilitate the partner HEIs' engagement with schools and colleges in their wider outreach work.

Results indicate increased aspiration to post-16 and HE study for Aimhigher West Midlands participants. From a sample of 893 learners, those engaged in Aimhigher were more likely to enter level 3 study than their peers who did not participate in the programme. They were also less likely than non-Aimhigher learners to become persons not in education, employment or training (1.8% compared with overall rates of 7.4% in Solihull). The programme succeeded at building aspiration and gathered evidence to show that the greater the number of interventions, the more likely learners were to progress onto Level 3 qualifications.

OFFA support for care leavers

OFFA championed the Buttle UK Quality Mark and wrote to all institutions with access agreements highlighting the quality mark. 70 organisations signed up to the mark and worked to encourage care leavers into higher education. Over a quarter of these

The government tasked HEFCE and OFFA to produce a National Strategy for Access and Student Success. The aim of the strategy is 'to ensure that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education has an equal opportunity to do so...'

institutions included targets relating to care leavers in their latest access agreements and approximately a third created financial support packages aimed at care leavers.

Sheffield Hallam University has now developed a comprehensive strategy for care leavers involving a programme of activity that starts from year 9 through to school and college and graduation. Retention support is offered in the form of a care leavers' focus group and bursary packages of £1,500 per year. Since 2008, 67 leavers enrolled at the university, of which 40% were aged between 19 and 25. There was also reduced attrition amongst care leavers from six in 2008-9 to zero in the past two years.

Sutton Trust summer schools

The Sutton Trust Summer Schools are free, subject-specific residential courses for Year 12 students from UK state-maintained schools. The summer schools allow bright students from non-privileged homes an idea of what life is like at a leading university and to gain an insight into what it is like to live and study as a first-year undergraduate student. The summer schools balance academic days with social activities, and provide attendees with the opportunity to meet current staff and students.

The aim is to demystify elite universities and to equip students many of whom will be the first in their families to go on to higher education with the knowledge and insight to make high quality applications to top universities. In 2013, the Sutton Trust expanded the number of summer school places available with over 1700 students taking part at the following universities:

Bristol, Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Imperial, King's College, Nottingham, St Andrews, and UCL.

An independent evaluation of the programme, by Dr Tony Hoare and Rosanna Mann at the University of Bristol in 2012 found that over three quarters (76%) of the Sutton Trust summer school attendees went on to a leading university (either a member of the Russell or 1994 Groups) compared to just over half (55%) of students with similar academic and social profiles who did not apply to the scheme. Nearly a quarter (23%) of the Sutton Trust students progressed to one of the host universities, compared to 13% of those who applied for a place on the summer school but were unsuccessful and 7% or less in the other control groups.

In 2012, the Sutton Trust also piloted a US summer school programme. This was expanded in 2013 and will continue in 2014. The programme is centred on a one week summer school in the US (based at either MIT or Yale University) with introductory events and application support in the UK before and after. The programme provides participants with a wide range of activities to help them make the right decisions about American higher education. In the first year, 21 out of 64 summer school participants gained places at leading US universities, including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, MIT and Columbia.

National Strategy for Access and Student Success

The government tasked HEFCE and OFFA to produce a National Strategy for Access and Student Success. The aim of the strategy is 'to ensure that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education has an equal opportunity to do so, regardless of background, age, ethnicity, disability or gender'. It is also envisaged that the strategy will also help maximise the impact of effort and investment in widening participation,

Widening access is a key challenge for 'selective' and 'specialist' institutions because, once recruited, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are almost as likely as students from more advantaged backgrounds to be retained and to succeed.

access and student success by universities, colleges, the government, HEFCE and other organisations.

The strategy is currently with ministers for approval and, as such, is confidential. However, the interim report submitted to BIS in January 2013 usefully brings together current knowledge of what works to widen participation in higher education; and presents an early assessment of how investment in widening participation is meeting, and might better meet government aims and objectives and support the HE sector's contribution to social mobility.

HEFCE and OFFA synopsis of research and evaluation studies enables the following conclusions.

- Outreach is most effective when delivered as a progressive, sustained programme of activity and engagement over time.
- Outreach programmes need to be directed towards young people at different stages of their educational career and begin at primary level.
- The effective delivery of outreach programmes requires the full, adequately resourced involvement and engagement of HEIs, FECs and schools.
- The collaborative provision of outreach delivers benefits in terms of scale, engagement, coordination and impartiality.
- Progression pathways for learners with non-traditional or vocational qualifications need to be clearly articulated.
- Outreach to mature learners depends on good links with FE colleges, employers and the community.
- Retention and success depends on fostering a sense of belonging.
- The academic sphere is key to establishing belonging, so issues of curriculum design, pedagogy, learning and teaching environments and student engagement and support are crucial.

Overall, institutions were typically found to focus their widening participation activities on under-represented groups living in the vicinity thereby influencing the extent and nature of widening participation activity. Patterns of widening participation challenges were found, however. These had a tendency to vary by institution type.

- 'Inclusive' institutions typically attract a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and so tend to be more focused on improving retention and reducing the gap in completion rates between WP and non-WP students.
- 'Small' institutions (including many FECs) typically attract a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds but receive only limited funding because of their size. They are consequently more likely to prioritise activities to support retention and success than other institutions.
- Widening access is a key challenge for 'selective' and 'specialist' institutions because, once recruited, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are almost as likely as students from more advantaged backgrounds to be retained and to succeed. Specialist institutions are also concerned about addressing under-representation in specific career areas, for example, the proportion of men in arts programmes.

Effective early years provision has been found to have a positive impact on children's progress over and above important family influences.

Overall, there is little evidence that the impact of WP activities is being systematically evaluated by the majority of institutions, despite recent emphasis on this by HEFCE. Although a minority of institutions have engaged external research agencies to evaluate aspects of their provision, most institutions appear not to be carrying out robust evaluations of longer term impact in order to develop a coherent understanding of 'what works and why'.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION SUPPORT NEEDS ACROSS LIFE STAGES

Early years

From as early as age three this gap emerges and widens as children enter and move through the schooling system, especially in the primary school years. The measure of school readiness is closely related to future educational attainment. The evidence shows that key drivers of these figures are:

- family factors eg parental education, maternal age, material deprivation, maternal and child health
- parental engagement and early home learning environment
- quality of early years settings.

The significant body of evidence on the benefits of early years education demonstrates that early childhood education and care has positive, long-term educational, occupational and social outcomes for disadvantaged children. It has been found to improve subsequent educational levels, socio-economic status, income and health, and OECD findings show that literacy at age 15 is strongly associated with pre-school participation in countries where a large proportion of the population use pre-school, where pre-school is for more months, and where there were measures to maintain its quality.

Differences in the home learning environment, particularly at the age of three, have an important role to play in explaining why children from poorer backgrounds have lower test scores than children from better-off families. Effective early years provision has been found to have a positive impact on children's progress over and above important family influences. The quality of the pre-school setting experience as well as the quantity (more months but not necessarily more hours/day) are both influential.

Exploration of European and international recommendations in the field of early years suggest that early years provision should:

- be universally available, high-quality and inclusive, free or at minimal cost
- include strong collaboration between the different policy sectors, such as education, employment, health and social policy
- include engagement with parents/carers
- support staff to continuously reflect on their pedagogical practice and there should be a systemic approach to professionalisation of the staff involved. Staff competences are key to high quality provision.

Family learning

Family learning is the name denoted to any activity that sees children and adult family members interacting together to achieve learning outcomes. The 2013 Inquiry into

Family learning should be a key element of adult learning and skills strategies to engage those furthest from the labour market and improve employability, especially through family English and maths provision.

Family Learning in England and Wales was set up with the aim of ‘placing family learning back at the heart of policy, research and development’. The Inquiry gathered together the evidence for family learning. Examples include: family learning can increase the overall level of children’s development by up to 15 percentage points for those from disadvantaged groups and provide an average improvement to six months of reading age. For adults, it also widens participation in adult learning and supports achievement progression to further learning for adults. NIACE developed a series of recommendations including:

- Family learning should be integral to school strategies to raise children’s attainment and to narrow the gap between the lowest and highest achievers.
- Family learning should be a key element of adult learning and skills strategies to engage those furthest from the labour market and improve employability, especially through family English and maths provision.
- Every child should have the right to be part of a learning family. Public bodies should target support to help these families.
- Key government departments should include family learning in their policies and strategies in order to achieve cross-departmental outcomes.
- The governments of England and Wales should regularly review the funding for and supply of family learning against potential demand.

Sure Start Children’s Centres

The first 524 Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs) were established between 1999 and 2003. They were aimed at families with children up to the age of 4 living in disadvantaged areas. The aim was to bring together early education, childcare, health services and family support to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and children. SSLPs aimed to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty, school failure and social exclusion by providing early intervention to improve the developmental trajectories of children at risk of compromised development.

The details below summarise some of the evaluated benefits of Sure Start programmes. It is very likely that SSLP interventions will lead to further positive benefits in future years, but the size of the benefits will not be known until the early cohorts of children reach age 15.

- On average, Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs) cost around £1,300 per eligible child per year at 2009-10 prices (or £4,860 per eligible child over the period from birth to the age of four).
- The economic benefits of early childhood interventions can be high, but they typically do not emerge until at least fifteen years after the intervention begins.
- By the time children reached the age of five, SSLPs had already delivered economic benefits of between £279 and £557 per eligible child. These benefits relate to the fact that parents living in SSLP areas moved into paid work more quickly than parents in comparison areas.
- There are several other small scale positive outcomes of SSLPs as measured at the age of five years, which have the potential to generate economic benefits in the future. These outcomes are:

Independent evaluation found that the pupil premium is playing an important role in enabling schools to tackle educational disadvantage.

- less harsh discipline in the home
- lower rates of family chaos
- a richer home learning environment.

As at 30 April the total number of designated children's centres was 3,631. It is estimated that there are at present 576 fewer Sure Start centres since the 2010 General Election. The longitudinal effectiveness of the current iteration, now called Sure Start Children's Centres is now being measured through the Evaluation of Children's Centres in England (ECCE) project. The evaluation will run to 2017.

6-14

Attainment at age 11: attainment at age 11 is closely related to GCSE attainment eg less than a fifth of children who do not achieve level 4 in Maths go on to achieve a C grade or better in Maths GCSE. There are significant gaps in attainment by social background. Key drivers of these statistics are:

- prior attainment in the Foundation Years and at age 7
- quality of primary schools – 476 primary schools are below the floor target (less than 60% achieve level 4 in English and Maths and fewer pupils than average make expected levels of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2)
- parental engagement and the home learning environment

In April 2011, the government introduced the pupil premium and the service premium. This gave schools £625 million of extra funding to close attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils and to assist with the pastoral needs of children with parents in the armed forces. It will rise to £2.5 billion in the year 2014 to 2015.

The pupil premium takes the form of additional funding allocated to schools on the basis of the numbers of children entitled to and registered for free school meals (FSM) and children who have been looked after continuously for more than six months. Schools received £623 per eligible pupil in 2012-13. Eligibility was widened to cover approximately 27% of the population in 2012-13 with the inclusion of those recorded as eligible for FSM at any point in the last six years.

Independent evaluation found that the pupil premium is playing an important role in enabling schools to tackle educational disadvantage. However, it is not used by schools as a stand-alone funding stream and is not sufficient to fund all of schools' current provision for disadvantaged pupils, it also appears to be catering for a wider set of pupils than those eligible for the pupil premium.

In September 2011, it was announced that £50 million would be made available every year for the summer schools programme. The scheme supports disadvantaged pupils as they move from primary to secondary school. In the summer of 2013, over 1,900 schools participated.

Information, advice and guidance

From September 2012, the Education Act 2011 placed schools under a duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for their pupils in years 9-11. The Careers Guidance in Schools Regulations 2013 will extend the age range to which the duty applies. From September 2013, the duty will be extended to include all registered pupils in year 8 (12-13-year-olds) and years 12 and 13 (16-18-year-olds).

For young people in schools, provision is a postcode lottery subject to budgets and head-teachers' commitment to independent, impartial career guidance.

There is universal agreement that the information, advice and guidance is at best patchy, and for many individuals, inadequate. A number of concerns have been raised by the wide range of stakeholders, however, they are well summarised in the Institute of Careers Guidance's evidence to the Education Select Committee in October 2012.

- There is no overall coherence of career guidance provision whatsoever for young people up to 18.
- For young people in schools, provision is a postcode lottery subject to budgets and head-teachers' commitment to independent, impartial career guidance.
- The service in schools is at best restricted in terms of student coverage and limited to the 30 weeks of term-time provision. In the past, students and parents have always appreciated the opportunity to access independent career guidance during school holidays. Now, at these times, it is not possible to access independent career guidance without payment.
- Email correspondence between the Association of South East Colleges and the Skills Funding Agency has highlighted that the National Careers Service website excludes a range of courses offered by colleges of further education that are not funded by the Skills Funding Agency.
- Young people between 16 and 18 who are in employment but wish to change direction or develop their career prospects do not have access to any independent face-to-face careers guidance service without payment.¹⁹

A recent Ofsted report found that although nearly all of the schools visited did offer a range of different careers guidance activities, the provision was not sufficiently well coordinated or reviewed to ensure that each student received appropriate guidance. Very few of the schools visited knew how to provide a service effectively or had the skills and expertise needed to provide a comprehensive service and few schools had purchased an adequate service from external sources. Schools were not found to be working well enough with employers to provide their students with direct experience of the world of work, which would help to broaden students' minds about possible future employment. Vocational training and apprenticeships were rarely promoted effectively, especially in schools with sixth forms.

Information needs of university applicants

UCAS conducted a survey of 36,000 students to find out what they think about a range of issues that influence their education choices. The main findings about information needs were:

- Students choosing their GCSEs and A levels or equivalents would have liked more information about the content of these courses and the way they are assessed.
- In particular, younger (aged 20 or under) students would like to have had more information about the A level or equivalent subjects and grades required to apply to particular university or college courses.
- Many UK sixth formers interested in applying to university or college said they wanted more information about student finance as well as bespoke careers advice.

¹⁹Evidence based on responses from its members and research with 200+ schools across Lincolnshire, Cheshire, Coventry, Warwickshire, Kent, two other shire counties, and a selection of South London boroughs

Research at the Institute of Education has found that learners at age 17 is a crucial phase for participation and progression.

- Many young pre-applicants would also have liked information about other post-18 options such as study abroad, gap years, and apprenticeships.
- Mature UK applicants said that they wanted additional information about loans, scholarships and bursaries, and more information about what university and college courses typically cover.

14-19

Attainment at age 16 and free school meal eligibility: this indicator measures the proportion of children achieving A*-C in English and maths at GCSE by free school meal eligibility. This is an important indicator of social mobility as good performance at GCSE is a key predictor of success in post-16 education and the labour market. In 2011-12 there was a 26.2% gap between the performance of children on free school meals and all other pupils.

Key influences of this indicator are:

- prior attainment at age 11
- the quality of secondary schools

Attainment by age 19

This indicator looks at the proportion of children in maintained schools at age 15 who achieve level 3 qualifications (at least 2 A-levels or equivalent) by age 19 by free school meal eligibility at age 15. We know that achieving two or more A-Levels leads to significant returns in the labour market of on average 14% greater salaries than those without as well as an increased means to progress to higher education. A key driver of this indicator is attainment at GCSE.

High A-level attainment by age 19 by school or college type

The proportion of 16-18 year olds studying towards A-level qualifications achieving at least AAB at A-level in 'facilitating subjects', by type of school or college attended. High achievement at A-level is necessary to allow young people to progress to the most selective universities which provide the highest labour market returns. The 'facilitating subjects' have been identified by the Russell Group as those subjects most likely to be required or preferred for entry to degree courses. Choosing these subjects is likely to help students keep their university options open.

Key influencers of this indicator are:

- performance of maintained and independent schools and colleges
- prior attainment of children in maintained schools at age 16.

The significance of choices at age 17

Research at the Institute of Education has found that learners at age 17 is a crucial phase for participation and progression. 17+ is also a major point of potential disruption in progression and is arguably becoming a new point of selection. If pupils take a level 2 qualification and fail to get a merit or distinction then they are unable to progress to a level 3 course, and if they do not do as well in their A-levels as expected they are often 'directed elsewhere' or have to repeat the year. The crisis in IAG provision is compounded at this phase of education where good decisions for the individual are largely reliant on good information, advice and guidance. We know the importance of

A clear problem with the current admissions system is that it relies on predicted grades, only half of which are accurate both applicants and admissions tutors make their decisions based on these.

sustained and high quality participation post-16 for successful progression into employment or further learning.

There is an argument for the potential role of 16-19 programmes of study to include:

- inclusion of Level 2 English and maths for progression
- a possible mix of general and vocational study
- a possible mix of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications for learners with lower GCSE profiles
- inclusion of work experience, tutorial support and IAG
- the development of admissions policies for sustained 17+ participation
- the possibility of a three-year sixth form.

Individualism and autonomy in the school sector mean that colleges, as well as new and existing school sixth forms are competing with each other to recruit students at age 16. It is necessary to actively challenge the government view that competition at this phase will increase performance. The evidence shows that it does not. The increased tendency for schools to create their own small sixth forms is dangerous because there are often not enough learners per subject to facilitate the critical mass for peer-learning, and teachers can be compelled to encourage learners to stay on in the institution despite the fact that it may not be in the learners' best interests.

A transparent admissions system

A fair admissions system is one that provides equal opportunity for all individuals, regardless of background, to gain admission to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. Applicants should be chosen on merit. A clear problem with the current admissions system is that it relies on predicted grades, only half of which are accurate both applicants and admissions tutors make their decisions based on these. It is widely acknowledged also that the current system gives an unfair advantage to pupils at selectiv schools. These pupils are encouraged to apply to institutions well ahead of the official deadline and, applying early can give students more of a chance of being offered a conditional place. This cannot be said to be fair as this methodology is neither transparent nor reliable and may present barriers to applicants who lack self-confidence.

The Fair Admissions to Higher Education group recommends that a fair admissions system should:

- be transparent
- enable institutions to select students who are able to complete the course as judged by their achievements and their potential
- strive to use assessment methods that are reliable and valid
- seek to minimise barriers for applicants
- be professional in every respect and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes.

Research found that many students are struggling to make ends meet, concentrate on their studies and stay the course, because financial support is systemically inadequate across both further and higher education.

Retention

Student finance

Pound in Your Pocket research conducted by NUS found that many students are struggling to make ends meet, concentrate on their studies and stay the course, because financial support is systemically inadequate across both further and higher education.

- There are clear associations between financial support policy and practice, student wellbeing, socio-economic background and retention.
- Financial difficulties are pushing many students to the brink of 'dropping out'.
- Around a third of students across all groups report negatively on their wellbeing, on key indicators such as 'ability to meet the cost of basic expenses like rent and bills' and 'ability to concentrate on studies without worrying about finances'.

Fee support

In 2010-11 of the percentage of overall sector funding on widening participation, almost two-thirds of was reported as being spend on current students.

UUK research explored how government might offset the impact of an increase in public sector net borrowing that would be required to support the increased number of student loans that would need to be provided.

Options to fund current cash flow are:

- reducing other items of BIS resource cash spend
- reducing other department's spend
- increasing revenue to the government
- increasing private funding to universities.

Options to support future cash flow are:

- increasing the interest rate that students pay
- increasing the repayment period
- reducing the repayment threshold
- improving collection and follow up

Induction

NUS research on first year student experiences found that students reported wanting interactive and fun induction tasks which required active participation rather than passive group sessions. Students also felt that some induction material was delivered too late, and would have been better received prior to arrival, for example library induction. Students identified fellow classmates and lecturing staff as central to their support whilst at university.

Paired Peers is a three year (2010-2013) collaborative project between the University of Bristol (UoB) and the University of the West of England (UWE). The project looks at the impact of class on the experience of undergraduate university students. Key findings include:

- Working-class students faced considerable financial hardships, while middle-class students were cushioned by their parents' financial support.
- Financial restrictions limited working-class students in terms of extra-curricular activities, with many of them having to work during term time.

There are examples of examples of professions such as accountancy, which has never become an all-graduate entry profession.

- There was a social chasm between private and state school students, often exacerbated by university accommodation costs.

Fair access to the professions

Unleashing Aspiration: the final report of the panel on fair access to the professions was published in July 2009 by a cross-party party assembly chaired by Alan Milburn. The report explored unequal access to the professions in response to increasing concerns that people from low-income backgrounds were being denied access to professional careers.

The report found that across the professions as a whole, the typical professional grew up in a family with an income well above the average family's: today's younger professionals (born in 1970) typically grew up in a family with an income 27 percent above that of the average family, compared with 17 percent for today's older professionals (born in 1958). This reverses the trends of the first decades after World War II, where education expanded massively, and people of lower income backgrounds entered the professions in ever greater numbers.

There are over 130 different professional sectors in the UK, with around 11 million people in the labour force working in professional and managerial occupations. There is no single definition of 'the professions' but typically they have:

- **Recognisable entry points** – for example, with standard qualification requirements
- **Codes of ethics** – for example, that set out aspects of professional responsibility
- **Systems for self-regulation** – for example, setting and regulating standards for professional development
- **A strong sense of vocation and professional development.**

Currently, 42% of all employment in the UK is in the professions. This figure is set to rise to 46% by 2020 and it is estimated that employment in the professions will account for over 80% of employment growth in the next decade. These professions are currently dominated by a social elite. There are examples of professions such as accountancy, which has never become an all-graduate entry profession. The Association of Accounting Technician's (AAT) has provided an open door for non-graduates. Three in 10 graduates progress to get chartered status and can qualify with AAT four years after A-levels.

International research on the effectiveness of widening participation²⁰

HEFCE commissioned CFE and Edge Hill University to produce a report on effective approaches to widening participation in case study. Key findings include:

Australia

- Two targets: 20% of the undergraduate population to be from low SES backgrounds by 2020, and 40% of 25-34-year-olds to hold a bachelor's degree by 2025.
- Currently enrolments are not keeping pace with these targets and the sector is not 'able, or willing', to expand at this pace.

²⁰HEFCE, (2013), International research on the effectiveness of widening participation <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2013/wpeffectiveness/>

- Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPP) introduced in 2009 with the aim of improving access and retention amongst students from low participation backgrounds. Includes a financial incentive of around 1,500 Australian Dollars, to enrol and retain students from lower SES backgrounds. The funding has also led to collaboration by universities, eg Queensland Consortium of Universities.
- The destinations of different groups of students following the completion of their studies have been given little attention in policy and there is a corresponding lack of data regarding this subject.
- In 2011, a new performance based funding model was introduced. Institution specific compacts between each HEI and the Australian Government. Reward funding is given to institutions who meet their improvement targets.

The Netherlands

- There is a binary system of traditional research universities and Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS).
- The Dutch government has set a target of 50 per cent of the workforce aged 25-43 to have an HE degree by 2020.
- A review of the UAS sector noted that while intake from vocational pathways had increased (leading to more diverse student populations) the number of students qualified for HE applying to the UAS sector had decreased, as suitably qualified students preferred to enter traditional universities. While these trends have been regarded as positive for widening access, the relative increase in lower qualified students (within the traditional university sector there has been an overall decrease in the number of students eligible for traditional university study), is regarded as negative from a quality perspective.
- Structural reforms in secondary education have postponed the time at which the decision to select a specific education track has to be made, and have increased the permeability of the boundaries between the three tracks. A number of changes to the curriculum have also been made to help pupils better prepare for HE including a national curriculum.
- Government WP policy has focused on improving information and communications about HE to assist students to make informed choices about whether to study HE, and if so, what and where.
- A new national web-portal for HE containing a range of information on programmes of study and institutions.

Norway

- Norway aims to have an open and universal education system that will encourage participation among students from all social backgrounds in a similar fashion to wider social and economic policy.
- Despite comparatively fewer barriers to HE and internationally-favourable participation rates for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, however, students from more educated families are more likely to complete the academic upper secondary school track with direct access to HE and to complete HE once they have started than those from less educated families.

- In 2002, The Quality Reform implemented new three-year bachelors' degrees to replace four-year courses; alignment of course programmes with other international countries resulting in fewer elective choices; new teaching and evaluation methods requiring more frequent examinations and written assignments; tighter admissions criteria for science degrees requiring advanced science classes in upper secondary education, and a new funding system rewarding institutions on the number of students completing degrees. This has successfully generated greater institutional interest in retention and dropout rates.

Republic of Ireland

- WP prioritised in the 1971 Higher Education Act. Policy governed by The National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008-2013. The plan promotes five key principles: institution-wide approaches to access; enhancing access through lifelong learning; alignment of institutions' access projects to national WP priorities; modernisation of student financial support systems; and WP for people with disabilities.
- The Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) began in 2006 rewards Irish HEIs that can demonstrate inter-institutional collaboration and the formation of strategic alliances around access and lifelong learning projects. Recent evaluations have concluded that the 'access agenda has advanced as a result of the investment' and that collaboration has resulted in stronger academic programmes and research, increased operating efficiencies, and cost savings.
- A new funding model for access was introduced in January 2011, based on Equal Access data, with core funding linked to the number of students from under-represented groups enrolled in each HEI.

USA

- current target groups include those from disadvantaged backgrounds (measured in terms of family income and the educational background of parents), disabled individuals, under-represented minority groups, and Limited English Speakers (LES).
- To expand access, the US government has used student financial aid; developed community colleges and two-year degree programmes; increased the number of places available; increased open admissions, and supported academic preparation and aspirations for secondary school and HE attainment. Federal funding is available for HEIs serving high proportions of minority students, eg the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) TRIO programmes which aim to create a 'college pipeline' by delivering national access programmes including Talent Search, Upward Bound and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). These programmes combine approaches such as developmental and catch-up education, support with applications, financial aid and increased familiarisation with HE. They are primarily focused on accelerating students' abilities and creating pathways to HE.
- Approximately 45% of students receive means-tested Federal Pell Grants, awarding up to US\$5,500 per year. Federal loans are received by about 60% of all students, again awarded with reference to family income. The real value of these grants has continued to decline since they were first introduced. College tuition fees have increased faster than inflation at a time when median family income has declined in real terms and income inequality has increased. There are growing wage differentials between those with college degrees and those without.

CONCLUSION – TOWARDS A HOLISTIC UCU POLICY ON WIDENING PARTICIPATION

The following sets out a new set of holistic principles and opportunities for UCU explore and develop to support multiple and student life-cycle long opportunities to reduce the impact of socioeconomic background, support progression and ultimately widen participation in higher education.

Early years

- UCU should agitate for greater investment in early years provision.
- Government should establish a timeframe for the provision of free early education each week for all children aged 2 through to school age.
- Government should review and improved funding levels for family learning
- Government should review and regulate the cost of childcare supporting parents and carers to return to work and/or learning.

Information, advice and guidance

UCU should develop proposals for a new statutory regionalised strategy. The strategy should comprise joint responsibility and accountability between primary and secondary schools, HE, FE, adult education and the local Enterprise Partnership and the local authority. Key features could include:

- school, college, adult education and higher education visits linked in with civil society activity by employers – eg careers advice, interview practice offers, this is what I do...
- student financing and financial literacy support
- multiple sources of advice for all learners, multiple contact points
- careers weeks/days/regional careers fairs led by the local authority.

Government should:

- extend the remit of Sector Skills Councils to include setting a sector specific careers strategy
- review careers education qualifications and regulations
- include a statutory face-to-face offer and re-advertise the National Career Service
- provide funding support for postgraduate advice.

14-19

UCU should explore partnership opportunities to:

- research and lobby for an integrated 14-19 phase with a multi-level diploma based on credit accumulation and transferability to be taken by all students
- lobby for the reintroduction of the universal entitlement to work experience at Key Stage 4
- research and publicise the negative impact of the increase in new and small sixth forms. Competition is reducing quality
- continue to campaign against plans to reduce the full-time funding rate for 18-year-old learners to 17.5% less than 16 and 17-year-olds

- government to restore proper financial support for learners to replace the Educational Maintenance Allowance – explore HE funding opportunities for this
- launch the Youth Resolution.

Alternative pathways to HE

UCU should:

- continue to give publicity to the the collapse of part-time entry and the disastrous impact on widening participation and social mobility
- engage with membership to explore how accreditation of prior learning and labour market experiences breakdown might be better used across low, medium and high tariff institutions
- explore how HE could support the creation of more pathways from further and adult education to higher education, egsupplementary provision
- research and critique increasing BTEC uptake amongst more disadvantaged learners.

Admissions

UCU should:

- commission research on the crisis in male participation and explore partnership opportunities for this work
- commission research on the higher education pathways from BTEC qualifications
- lobby government to introduce financial incentives for colleges and universities who collaborate to widen participation
- engage with membership and partner organisations to test proposals for a new transparent admissions process, including the use of contextualised admissions and post-qualification assessment
- explore what mechanisms could be employed to make equality of access to higher education as explicit as teaching and research excellence
- lobby the Russell Group to set a clear target for how much progress its members are aiming to make in closing the ‘fair access gap’.

Retention

UCU should:

- call for an overhaul of the funding and support system. Learners should know what support they will get before they begin their courses. Student funding should always cover the cost of living support – at present it does not fully cover accommodation in all cases. The current model is unsustainable, especially in the light of the lifting of student number controls.
- review the National Strategy for Access and Student Success when published
- call for higher education retention strategies to be made more explicit and more transparent
- call for universities to work with HEFCE and OFFA to develop a collaborative research programme to establish which forms of outreach activity and fair access strategies are working

- champion induction processes which create an early sense of belonging that avoids the tension in a deficit model along the rhetoric of ‘join clubs, go out, students=alcohol’
- work with partner institutions for call for more strategic use of peer mentoring – Harriet Bradley’s paired peers project as an example of this
- interrogate the wider benefits of bursaries to students. How much financial support makes a difference, to learners, beyond retention e.g. attendance, hours of term-time employment, participation in non-course activities, attainment
- call on government to reward institutions which increase participation of students from under-represented groups and also to help these students to succeed.

Fair access to the professions

UCU should:

- call for greater access to the professions with the development of non-academic routes. Accountancy and Surveyance as examples.
In *Unleashing Aspiration*, Alan Milburn urged each profession to carry out a review of current practice on fair access with a view to developing practical ideas for improvement and report these publicly with a clear set of recommendations and an action plan by 2010. This has not been done. Government should enforce this.
- continue to give publicity to good examples eg UCU comment on Clifford Chance’s announcement that it will make the final round of its applications CV blind so that assessors will be unable to see which school or university applicants attended
- explore how widening participation funding could include bursaries to support low income salaries during internships to support progression and fair access
- call on all universities and colleges to explicitly reject exploitative internships for their students.

Social mobility indicators

The government’s strategy for social mobility identified a series of ‘leading indicators’ to monitor and identify success in improving social mobility for each life stage. The data will be published annually. UCU proposes to report on this selection of the indicators in UCU updates on progress on widening participation.

- Early child development, by social background
- Attainment at age 16 by free school meal eligibility
- High A-level attainment by age 19 by school or college type
- 18 to 24 participation in education by social background
- 18 to 24 participation in employment by social background
- Access to the professions
- Proportion of the lowest earning 25 to 30-year-olds that experience wage progression 10 years later
- Second chances – achievement of level 2 and level 3 qualifications by adults aged 19 and over.

In addition UCU will continue to monitor and publicise the data on take up of part-time courses and take up of mature study.

APPENDIX 1: INVESTMENT PER FUNDING STREAM, 1995-2015²¹

Year	Funding stream	Level (£M)	Purpose
1995-96 to 1998-99	Non award-bearing education programme	18.4 over lifetime of programme	Support of non award-bearing provision for liberal adult education and widening access programmes
1997-98 to 2000-01	Disability strand projects	7.3 over lifetime of programme	Special funding initiative to develop and embed good practice in provision and support for disabled students
1998-99	Widening participation programme	1.5 over lifetime of programme	Programme to build partnerships and help lay the foundations for effective institutional strategies
1999-2000 to present	Widening participation formula funding allocation	20 in 1999-2000 rising to 60 in 2012-13	HEFCE's first recurrent formula funding for WP based on full time students from disadvantaged backgrounds
2000-01 to present	WP allocation plus further formula for part-time students	24 in 2000-01 rising to 67 in 2012-13	Recurrent formula funding for WP based on part-time students from disadvantaged backgrounds
2000-01 to present	Mainstream disability allocation	7 in 2000-01 rising to 13 in 2012-13	Recurrent formula funding for provision and support for disabled students
2002-03	Additional funding for WP	20 (Jointly funded by HEFCE and Learning and Skills Council)	Funding for the development and delivery in 2003-04 of Partnerships for Progression
2003-04 to present	Improving retention allocation	217 in 2003-04 rising to 224	Recurrent formula funding to recognise costs of supporting students at greater risk of withdrawal
2004-05 to 2010-11	Aimhigher	84 per year on average (HEFCE, BIS and Learning and Skills Council/Skills Funding Agency main funders)	National outreach programme developed from the integration of the Excellence Challenge initiative and Partnerships for Progression
2004-05 to 2011-12	Lifelong Learning Networks	100 over lifetime of programme	Partnerships between HE institutions and FECs to support the progression into HE of learners with vocational Level 3 qualifications

²¹HEFCE, OFFA (2013) National Strategy for Access and Student Success: interim report, p15

Year	Funding stream	Level (£M)	Purpose
2006-07 to present	Institutional funds delivered to access measures through access agreement commitments	424 in 2010-11. Rising to 672 in steady state under the new arrangements	OFFA was created in 2004 to ensure that higher fees introduced in 2006-07 did not deter people from entering HE for financial reasons and that institutions were explicitly committed to widening participation
2012-13 - 2014-15 (in its current form)	National Scholarship Programme	50 in 2012-13 rising to 150 by 2014-15	Provision of individual financial benefit for students with a residual household income of £25,000 or less, who meet individual institutional criteria and are selected for an award

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Miscellaneous

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