

## Widening Participation and Student Retention Performance Indicators - 2020/21

### Introduction

The UK Performance Indicators provide comparative data on the performance of institutions in Widening Participation (Section 1) and Student Retention (Section 2). They cover publicly-funded higher education institutions in the UK (including the four locally established NI HE institutions and the Open University (NI)).

This report provides summary details of the key WP and retention PIs, with further details available in the Tables on [our web page](#).

#### **Notification of changes to the UK Performance Indicators:**

This is the last year that HESA will release the UK Performance indicators in their current form. A review of existing indicators will determine which measures will be migrated into core official statistics and open data published by HESA in 2023. Further information on these changes are available on the [HESA webpage](#).

### Section 1: Widening Participation

#### Participation of students who were in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA): All undergraduate students - 2020/21

This indicator is designed to provide information about the percentage of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance. For this indicator, a value higher than the benchmark<sup>1</sup> indicates that an institution was performing better than the sector average.

On average, NI Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were performing below the UK average of 6.9%, with 6.2% of all full-time undergraduates in receipt of DSA in 2020/21.

Ulster University and St Mary's University College were performing above their benchmarks, with respectively 8.1% (benchmark 6.9%) and 8.0% (benchmark 7.0%) of full-time undergraduates in receipt of DSA in 2020/21.

The proportions of full-time undergraduates in receipt of DSA in 2020/21 in Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Stranmillis University College were 4.4%, and 1.3% respectively. However, both institutions were performing below their benchmarks of 6.5% and 6.6% respectively. The Open University (OU) NI did not have a percentage for this Performance Indicator as all entrants for 2020/21 were part-time.

For part-time undergraduates, NI HEIs were performing above the UK average of 3.1%, with 4.1% in receipt of DSA.

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<sup>1</sup> The benchmark is a sector average, adjusted to take account of the subject and entry profile of the institution's students. For more information, see page 4 of the [Contextual Information](#) document.

**Table 1: Percentage of students in higher education who were in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) - 2020/21**

|                                | Full-time first degree           |               | Full-time all undergraduate      |               | Part-time all undergraduate      |               |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------|
|                                | Percentage in receipt of DSA (%) | Benchmark (%) | Percentage in receipt of DSA (%) | Benchmark (%) | Percentage in receipt of DSA (%) | Benchmark (%) |
| <b>Total UK</b>                | <b>7.0</b>                       |               | <b>6.9</b>                       |               | <b>3.1</b>                       |               |
| <b>Total Northern Ireland</b>  | <b>6.2</b>                       |               | <b>6.2</b>                       |               | <b>4.1</b>                       |               |
| Queen's University Belfast     | 4.4                              | 6.6           | 4.4                              | 6.5           | 4.1                              | 4.5           |
| St Mary's University College   | 8                                | 7             | 8                                | 7             | ..                               | ..            |
| Stranmillis University College | 1.3                              | 6.7           | 1.3                              | 6.6           | 1.6                              | 5.1           |
| Ulster University              | 8.1                              | 7             | 8.1                              | 6.9           | 5.8                              | 3.1           |
| Open University (NI)           | N/A                              | N/A           | N/A                              | N/A           | 3.4                              | 2.9           |

**Notes:**

1. Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'
2. From the 2014/15 academic year onwards, within DfE publications, Open University students are counted within the country where their national centre is located.

## Section 2: Student Retention

### Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time 2019/20 entrants and part-time 2018/19 entrants

For this indicator, a value lower than the benchmark indicates that an institution is performing better than comparable institutions. Benchmarks are calculated for each institution, but not at a country level (see [Contextual Information](#) document).

#### (a) Percentage of full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in Higher Education (HE) in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20 (Table 1)

The Open University (OU) does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2020/21 were part-time.

For all full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs, 4.2% of students were no longer in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20; better than the UK average of 6.9%.

On this basis, UU (4.9%), QUB (3.3%) and St Mary's (3.9%) all performed better than their benchmarks (7.6%, 4.2% and 4.4% respectively), while Stranmillis (6.1%) performed worse than its benchmark (5.8%), although none of these differences were statistically significant.

**Table 1: Percentage of full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20**

| Provider    | Young Entrants      |           | Mature Entrants     |           | All Entrants        |           |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
|             | No longer in HE (%) | Benchmark | No longer in HE (%) | Benchmark | No longer in HE (%) | Benchmark |
| UK          | 5.3                 | -         | 11.9                | -         | 6.9                 | -         |
| NI          | <b>3.9</b>          | -         | <b>5.6</b>          | -         | <b>4.2</b>          | -         |
| QUB         | 2.6                 | 3.2       | 6.6                 | 8.7       | 3.3                 | 4.2       |
| St Mary's   | 3.7                 | 4.2       | ..                  | ..        | 3.9                 | 4.4       |
| Stranmillis | 5.9                 | 4.5       | 7.0                 | 9.9       | 6.1                 | 5.4       |
| UU          | 4.9                 | 6.5       | 4.8                 | 11.0      | 4.9                 | 7.6       |

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

**(b) Percentage of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20.**

This indicator looks at the percentage of entrants who come from low participation neighbourhoods. This indicator is not applicable in NI due to the methodological issues around the calculation of low participation areas at the NI institutional level (further information on this is available in the [Contextual Information](#) document, which is published alongside this factsheet on the DfE website).

**(c) Percentage of mature full-time first degree entrants with a previous HE qualification failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20 (Table 2).**

OU does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2019/20 were part-time. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's and no measure has been produced for those with no previous HE qualification for Stranmillis.

For those with a previous HE qualification, the collective non-continuation rate for NI HEIs was better than the UK average of 10.3%, with 4.3% of mature full-time first degree entrants no longer in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20. For those with no previous HE qualification, NI HEIs (6.9%) also outperformed the UK average (12.6%).

UU performed significantly better than its benchmark both for those with a previous HE qualification (3.9% with an 11.3% benchmark) and those without a previous HE qualification (5.9% with a 10.8% benchmark). No other differences were significant.

**Table 2: Percentage of mature full-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20**

| Provider    | Previous HE qualification |           | No previous HE qualification |           |
|-------------|---------------------------|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
|             | No longer in HE (%)       | Benchmark | No longer in HE (%)          | Benchmark |
| UK          | 10.3                      | -         | 12.6                         | -         |
| NI          | 4.3                       | -         | 6.9                          | -         |
| QUB         | 5.2                       | 8.3       | 8.0                          | 9.1       |
| St Mary's   | ..                        | ..        | ..                           | ..        |
| Stranmillis | 0.0                       | 10.4      | ..                           | ..        |
| UU          | 3.9+                      | 11.3      | 5.9+                         | 10.8      |

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

**(d) Percentage of full-time other undergraduate entrants failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2019/20**

Due to small numbers this indicator could not be produced for NI HEIs.

**(e) Percentage of part-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2018/19 (Table 3)**

The part-time non-continuation indicator differs from the full-time indicators in that it looks at continuation two years following entry. It is further restricted to only include those students studying at least 30% of a full-time equivalent course and excludes students who are recorded as being registered on multiple courses and those registered on a first degree programme the year before they entered.

Collectively, the non-continuation rate for all part-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs was lower than the UK average (29.5%), with 25.4% such students no longer in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2018/19. UU (21.4%) performed significantly better than its benchmark (27.0%). QUB (14.6%), Stranmillis (7.7%) and OU (30.3%) performed better than their benchmarks (23.1%, 23.5 and 30.7% respectively) but not significantly so.

Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's.

**Table 3: Percentage of part-time first degree entrants failing to continue in HE in 2020/21, following entry in 2018/19**

| Provider    | Aged 30 and under   |           | Aged over 30        |           | All Entrants        |           |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
|             | No longer in HE (%) | Benchmark | No longer in HE (%) | Benchmark | No longer in HE (%) | Benchmark |
| UK          | 29.5                | -         | 29.6                | -         | 29.5                | -         |
| NI          | <b>24.8</b>         | -         | <b>26.4</b>         | -         | <b>25.4</b>         | -         |
| QUB         | 20.7                | 21.5      | ..                  | ..        | 14.6                | 23.1      |
| St Mary's   | ..                  | ..        | ..                  | ..        | ..                  | ..        |
| Stranmillis | 8.8                 | 22.2      | ..                  | ..        | 7.7                 | 23.5      |
| UU          | 21.5                | 26.8      | 21.2                | 27.5      | 21.4+               | 27.0      |
| OU (in NI)  | 29.5                | 30.6      | 31.3                | 30.7      | 30.3                | 30.7      |

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

#### Resumption of study in 2020/21 after a year out in 2019/20 (2018/19 entrants)

There are no benchmarks associated with this indicator, as the student's decision to return to study was not considered as an appropriate benchmark for comparing UK HEIs.

#### (a) Full-time first degree entrants (Table 4)

OU does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2018/19 were part-time. Due to small numbers, this measure has not been produced for St Mary's or Stranmillis.

Of all full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2018/19 who took a year out in 2019/20, 72.6% did not return to HE in 2020/21. This figure was better than the UK average of 77.6%.

At QUB, 61.3% of all full-time first degree entrants in 2018/19 who took a year out in 2019/20 did not return in 2020/21; this compares with 79.3% at UU.

**Table 4: Percentage of full-time first degree entrants in 2018/19 who took a year out in 2019/20 and were no longer in HE in 2020/21**

| Provider    | Young Entrants | Mature Entrants | All Entrants |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| UK          | 75.2           | 81.7            | 77.6         |
| NI          | <b>72.4</b>    | <b>73.1</b>     | <b>72.6</b>  |
| QUB         | 57.0           | 71.4            | 61.3         |
| St Mary's   | ..             | ..              | ..           |
| Stranmillis | ..             | ..              | ..           |
| UU          | 80.3           | 75.4            | 79.3         |

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

**(b) Full-time other undergraduate entrants**

Due to small numbers, this indicator has not been produced for NI as a whole or for individual NI HEIs.

**Projected learning outcomes: Full-time first degree entrants – 2019/20**

Another way to look at non-continuation rates is to use information on current movements of students to project what would happen in the long term. Thus, this indicator projects what proportion of students will eventually gain a degree, what proportion will leave their current university or college and transfer into HE elsewhere, and what proportion will leave HE altogether without any qualification.

**Table 5: Percentage of full-time first degree students expected to gain a degree or to gain neither an award nor transfer – 2019/20 entrants**

| Provider    | Obtain degree |           | No award nor transfer |           |
|-------------|---------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
|             | Percentage    | Benchmark | Percentage            | Benchmark |
| UK          | 82.1          | -         | 9.4                   | -         |
| NI          | <b>90.4</b>   | -         | <b>5.9</b>            | -         |
| QUB         | 92.0          | 88.6      | 5.0                   | 5.2       |
| St Mary's   | 91.8          | 88.9      | 4.9                   | 5.1       |
| Stranmillis | 91.2          | 88.2      | 6.9                   | 6.0       |
| UU          | 88.9          | 83.5      | 6.6                   | 8.8       |

Note: Percentages are not subject to rounding, but those calculated on populations containing fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed and represented as '..'

A '+/-' beside the percentage shows that the indicator is significantly better/worse than its benchmark.

OU does not have a percentage for this indicator, as all entrants during 2019/20 were part-time.

### **(a) Projected to attain a degree<sup>2</sup> (Table 5)**

For this section, a value higher than the benchmark indicates that an institution is projected to perform better than comparable institutions.

Collectively, NI HEIs were projected to perform better than the UK average of 82.1%, with 90.4% of full-time students starting first degree courses in 2019/20 expected to gain a degree.

QUB (92.0%), St Mary's (91.8%), Stranmillis (91.2%) and UU (88.9%) were all projected to perform above their respective benchmarks (88.6%, 88.9%, 88.2% and 83.5%) for full-time first degree entrants expected to gain a degree.

### **(b) Projected to finish without either gaining an award or transferring to another HEI (Table 5)**

For this section, a value below the benchmark indicates that an institution is projected to perform better than comparable institutions.

Overall, NI HEIs were projected to perform better than the UK average, with 5.9% of full-time first degree entrants to NI HEIs in 2019/20 projected to finish without either gaining an award or transferring to another HEI, compare with 9.4% for the UK as a whole.

On this basis, Stranmillis (6.9%) was projected to perform worse than its benchmark (6.0%), whereas QUB (5.0%), St Mary's (4.9%) and UU (6.6%) were projected to perform better than their respective benchmarks (5.2%, 5.1% and 8.8%). None of these differences were significant.

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<sup>2</sup> See [Contextual Information](#) document point 4.