

What happens to students entering HE with access qualifications?

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Introduction

Every year, HEFCE publishes performance indicators (PI) for higher education institutions (HEI) which include information about the progression of students at individual HEIs, and their employment outcomes. These figures are based on the information submitted to HESA by institutions.

The sector figures can also be broken down by entry qualification and subject of study, with certain caveats. The HESA student record provides the 'highest qualification on entry' of each student, one of the categories being 'Access course'. At present this does not distinguish between validated courses and others, so the figures given here cannot make this distinction.

The following tables give values for mature students, i.e. those who were over 21 when they entered higher education. As the main interest here is in students from access courses, who are predominantly mature, this provides the most appropriate basis for comparison.

Non-continuation rates

The non-continuation rate is the proportion of students who enter HE in a particular year who are no longer studying in HE the following year, and have not obtained a qualification. Table A shows the results for all mature entrants, and compares the non-continuation rates for those entering with access qualifications and those entering with other qualifications. It shows the figures for the last two years, i.e. for those entering in 1999-2000 and for those entering in 2000-01.

Table B shows equivalent figures by subject of study, for subjects where there were at least 400 access entrants.

The non-continuation rates for young students, and for other groups of mature students, can be found in the HEFCE publication 2003/59, tables B9 and B10 in Annex B. The institutional rates are shown in Table T3 of that document.

Employment rates

Shortly after graduation, students are asked to complete a First Destination survey. This looks at their employment status six months after graduating. The possible outcomes are: in employment, seeking employment, undertaking further study or training, and other outcomes (e.g. travelling, caring for a dependent, etc.). Tables C and D show the unemployment rate defined as the proportion of those employed, seeking employment, or studying who are seeking employment – i.e. omitting those with other outcomes. Table C shows the rates by entry qualifications, and table D shows them by the same subjects of study as used in table B, for graduates in 2000-01 and in 2001-02. Again these tables only show results for students who entered higher education after the age of 21, to show how access entrants fare in the job market. Note that no account is taken of the type of job being done.

[Note that the values in the following tables are based on entrants to full-time first degree courses only.]

Table A: Non-continuation rates of mature entrants, by entry qualifications

Entry qualifications	1999-2000 mature entrants		2000-01 mature entrants	
	Number of entrants	Non-continuation rates	Number of entrants	Non-continuation rates
Access	8,530	15.8	8,430	14.3
Foundation course	2,170	13.3	1,910	12.0
A-levels <12	5,770	13.2	6,180	12.2
A-levels 12-22	3,490	14.6	4,240	10.8
A-levels over 22	1,340	9.7	1,760	9.9
BTEC	2,870	17.3	2,650	16.2
Degree	3,050	10.9	3,210	11.5
Other HE	12,140	15.3	11,750	13.4
Other / unknown	7,850	19.2	19,990	17.5
All entry quals	60,390	15.9	60,120	14.5

Table B: Non-continuation rates of mature entrants, by selected subject of study

	1999-2000 mature entrants				2000-01 mature entrants			
	All entrants		Access entrants		All entrants		Access entrants	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Subjects Allied to Medicine	6,490	11.6	1,000	12.8	7,580	10.4	1,320	11.8
Biological Sciences	3,080	15.9	620	18.8	3,200	15.2	610	16.9
Computer Science	4,750	19.6	580	22.0	5,150	17.3	690	19.1
Social, economic & political studies	6,080	15.0	1,420	13.7	5,560	14.6	1,300	13.4
Languages	2,150	16.6	410	17.5	2,140	14.2	400	13.9
Humanities	1,810	16.4	430	14.7	1,890	14.0	430	11.7
Creative Arts	6,310	13.1	460	10.9	6,280	11.8	430	12.5
Education	4,010	12.1	960	12.5	3,810	10.8	840	10.6
Combined	6,310	19.3	1,300	17.3	5,610	17.9	1,020	15.3
All subjects	60,390	15.9	8,530	15.8	60,120	14.5	8430	14.3

Table C: Unemployment rates of those who entered HE as mature students, by entry qualifications

Entry qualifications	Graduates in 2000-01		Graduates in 2001-02	
	Number of eligible graduates	Unemployment rates	Number of eligible graduates	Unemployment rates
Access	4,070	10.7	3,590	11.0
Foundation course	1,230	12.1	1,270	13.8
A-levels <12	4,180	8.0	3,790	9.0
A-levels 12-22	2,740	7.1	2,780	7.4
A-levels over 22	1,720	4.7	1,810	3.9
BTEC	1,510	11.5	1,340	11.3
Degree	1,650	3.7	1,840	3.3
Other HE	6,540	10.0	6,600	9.7
Other / unknown	2,800	8.6	8,130	9.5
All	33,000	8.8	31,160	9.0

Table D: Unemployment rates of those who entered HE as mature students, by selected subject of study

	Graduates in 2000-01				Graduates in 2001-02			
	All graduates who entered HE as mature students		Graduates with access entry qualifications		All graduates who entered HE as mature students		Graduates with access entry qualifications	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Subjects Allied to Medicine	3,770	2.2	430	4.2	4,090	2.3	510	4.0
Biological Sciences	1,850	9.9	340	12.2	1,540	9.2	260	12.8
Computer Science	2,000	16.9	180	18.2	2,020	17.6	170	17.5
Social, economic & political studies	2,960	8.2	710	10.6	2,640	9.1	580	11.3
Languages	1,440	9.4	250	10.5	1,180	10.6	210	12.8
Humanities	1,140	8.9	260	10.9	930	9.9	210	13.6
Creative Arts	3,430	13.4	250	17.5	3,560	13.6	210	20.0
Education	2,780	2.4	560	3.1	2,960	3.5	550	5.3
Combined	2,510	11.5	510	14.5	2,230	12.2	380	13.1
All subjects	33,000	8.8	4,070	10.7	31,160	9.0	3,590	11.0