

Office for
Students



Postgraduate research students at high tariff providers

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Contents

Overview	3
Methodology	4
Provider type	4
Age on entry	5
Disability	6
Ethnicity	7
Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile	8
Sex	10
Annex A: Data tables	11
Provider type	11
Age on entry	12
Disability	12
Ethnicity	13
Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile	13
Sex	14
Annex B: Definitions of variables	15

Overview

1. This report summarises the characteristics of UK-domiciled postgraduate research (PGR) students at English higher education providers with high average tariff scores from 2010-11 to 2017-18.
2. In this report, PGR students are defined as those studying for PhD and MPhil qualifications.¹ High tariff providers are the top third of English higher education providers (excluding specialist providers, previously funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)²) when ranked by average tariff score of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants. Tariff scores are defined using HESA data from academic years 2012-13 to 2014-15.³

¹ For more detail, see the definition of 'B3MONLEVEL' in the Office for Students' (OfS's) '2019 core algorithms' document, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

² The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was the predecessor of the Office for Students (OfS). The OfS took over many of its functions from April 2018.

³ High tariff providers in England are those included in the OfS key performance measure (KPM) 2 definition, listed in the Annex to the methodology, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-participation-at-higher-tariff-providers-between-the-most-and-least-represented-groups/.

Methodology

3. To produce this report, we combined data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record⁴, HESA alternative provider (AP) student record⁵ and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Individualised Learner Record (ILR)⁶ for the academic years 2010-11 to 2017-18.
4. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest five and percentages to one decimal place. Counts have been suppressed where the number of students is less than 25. Percentages are calculated from totals which include those students with unknown characteristics, who are also included in the charts and tables.
5. The figures throughout the report show the proportions of PGR students for various characteristics. The actual numbers of students used to calculate these percentages can be found in the tables in Annex A. Definitions of the variables used throughout this report can be found in Annex B.

Provider type

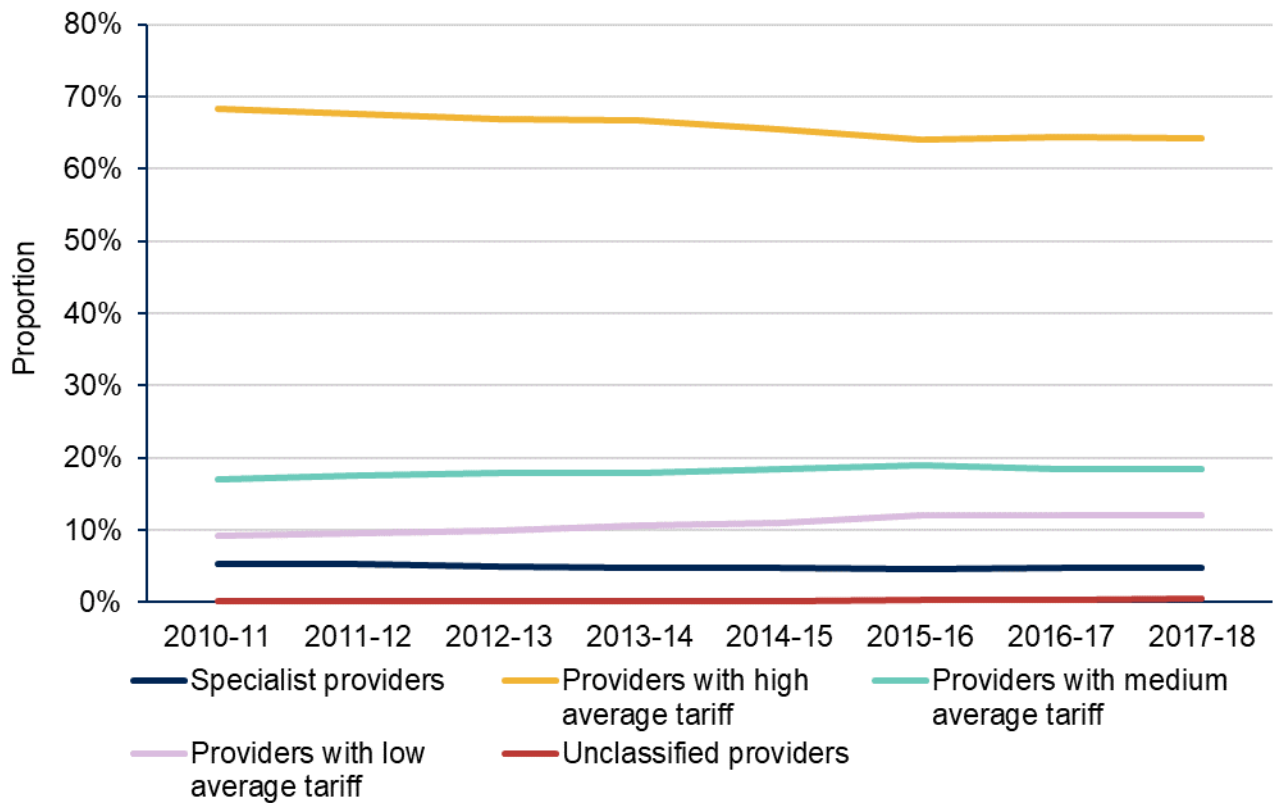
6. Figure 1 shows the proportion of PGR students by provider type. Across the period, the majority of PGR students were at high tariff providers. Since 2010-11, the difference in proportions of PGR students at providers with high average tariff scores and providers with low average tariff scores has narrowed marginally, with the proportion studying at high tariff providers having fallen 4.0 percentage points between 2010-11 and 2017-18. This has been driven by an increase in the number of PGR students at providers with low average tariff scores, from 4,605 in 2010-11 to 6,465 in 2017-18. However, the vast majority remain in high tariff providers; there were 53,565 PGR students in 2017-18, nearly two-thirds of which (64.3 per cent) were from providers with high average tariff scores.

⁴ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17051>

⁵ See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c17054>

⁶ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ilr-specification-validation-rules-and-appendices-2017-to-2018>.

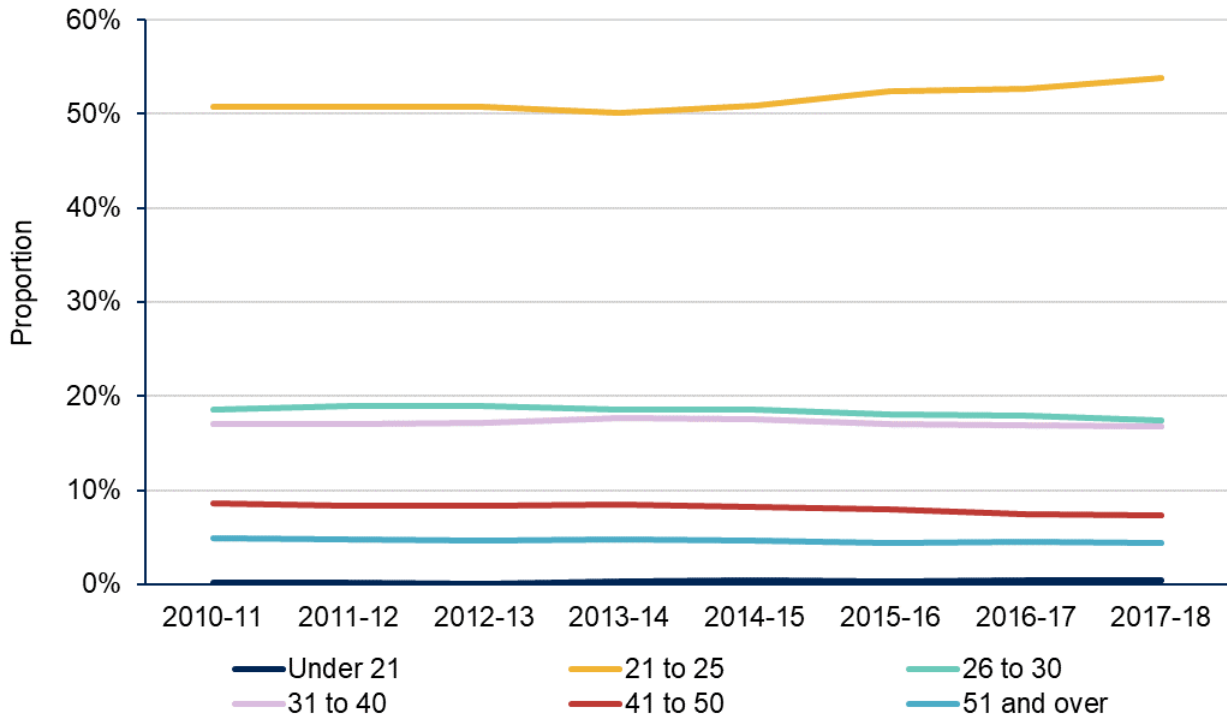
Figure 1: Proportion of PGR students by provider types



Age on entry

7. From here onwards, this report considers only those PGR students at providers with high average tariff scores.
8. Figure 2 shows the proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by age on entry to their PGR course. The data shows that the majority of these students begin PGR courses in the years immediately after graduating from their undergraduate or postgraduate taught study, with over half (53.8 per cent) of PGR students in 2017-18 having started their course aged 21 to 25.

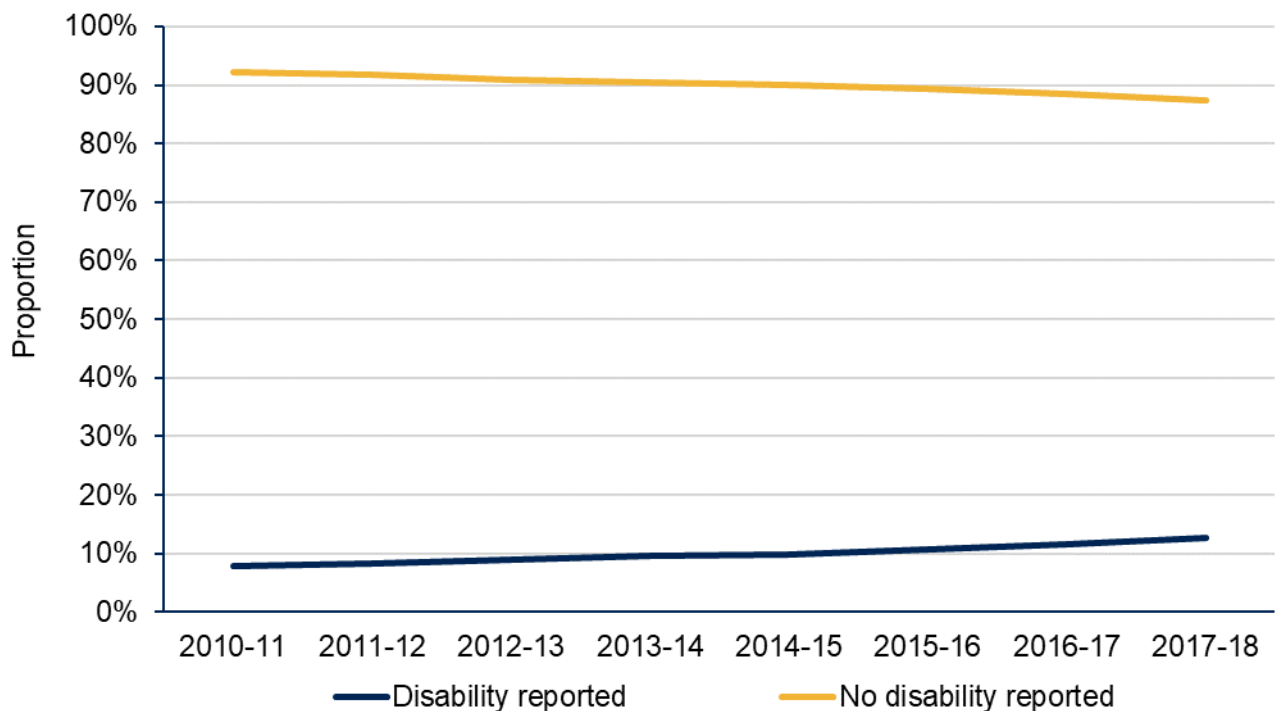
Figure 2: Proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by age on entry



Disability

9. Figure 3 shows proportions of PGR students at high tariff providers by disability. The majority (87.3 per cent in 2017-18) did not report a disability. However, the proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers reporting a disability has increased by 4.8 percentage points between 2010-11 and 2017-18.

Figure 3: Proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by disability



Ethnicity

10. Figures 4 and 5 show proportions of PGR students at high tariff providers by ethnicity, with the second chart disaggregating those from minority ethnic backgrounds for a more detailed view. Nearly eight out of 10 PGR students at high tariff providers (79.5 per cent) were white in 2017-18.
11. All ethnic groups have seen a rise in the number of PGR students at high tariff providers between 2010-11 and 2017-18, apart from Asian students.
12. Nonetheless, there has been little change in the proportion of minority ethnic students at high tariff providers: 15.7 per cent in 2010-11 compared to 17.1 per cent in 2017-18.

Figure 4: Proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by ethnicity

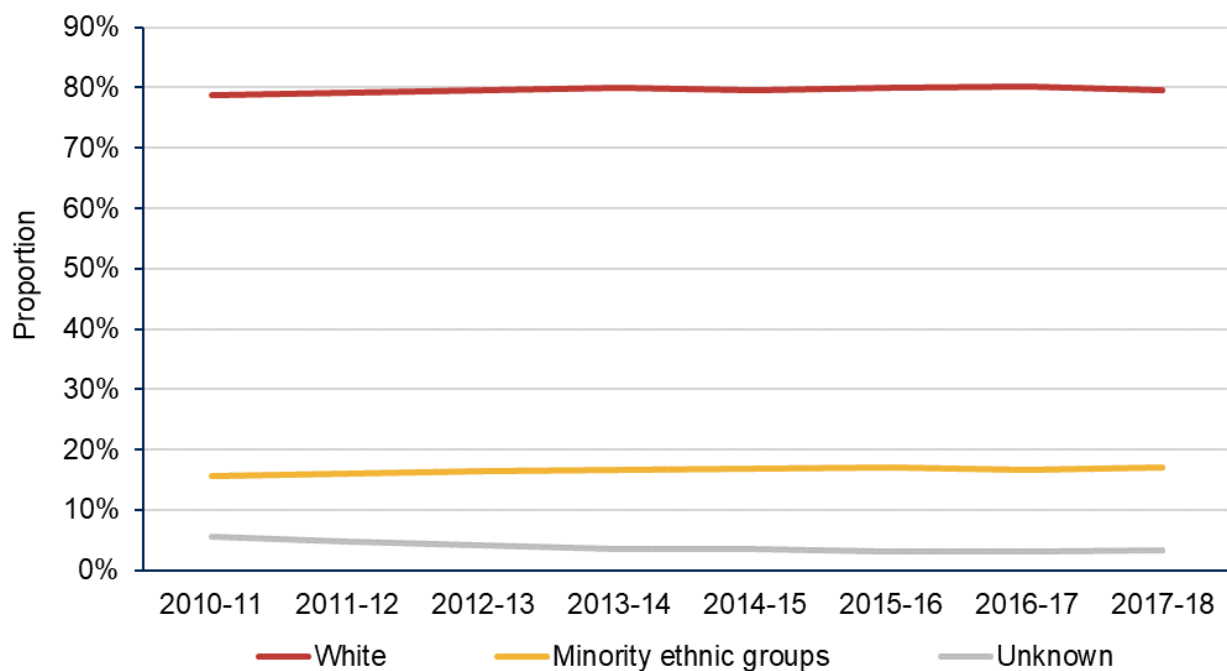
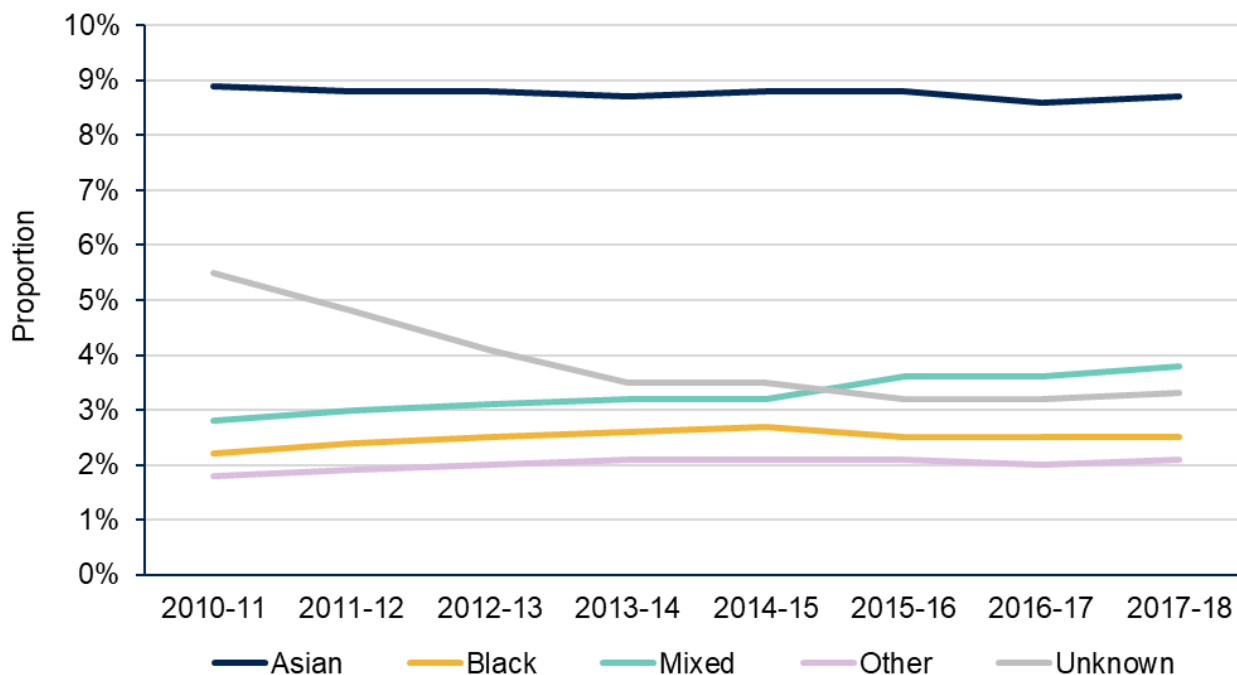


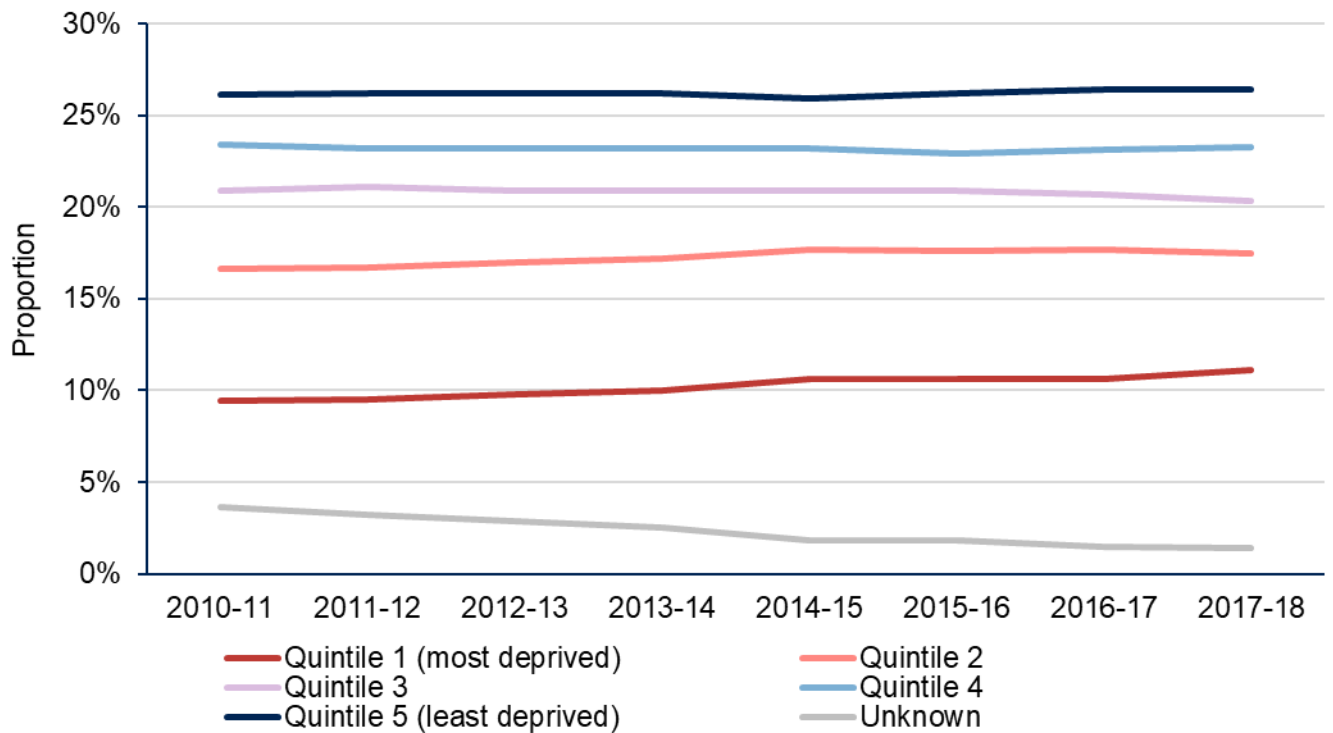
Figure 5: Proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by ethnicity



Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile

13. Figure 6 shows proportions of PGR students at high tariff providers by IMD quintile. It should be noted that IMD quintiles are calculated using the home postcode provided by the student on entry to their course. For many PGR students, this will differ to their postcode at 18.
14. Overall, there has been little change in the proportions of students from each of the IMD quintiles amongst PGR students at high tariff providers. The biggest change has been the proportion of students from the most deprived areas (IMD quintile 1), which increased from 9.4 per cent in 2010-11 to 11.1 per cent in 2017-18.
15. The gap between the proportions of PGR students at high tariff providers from the most deprived quintile and the least deprived quintile has fallen slightly, from 16.7 percentage points in 2010-11 to 15.3 percentage points in 2017-18.

Figure 6: Proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by IMD quintile

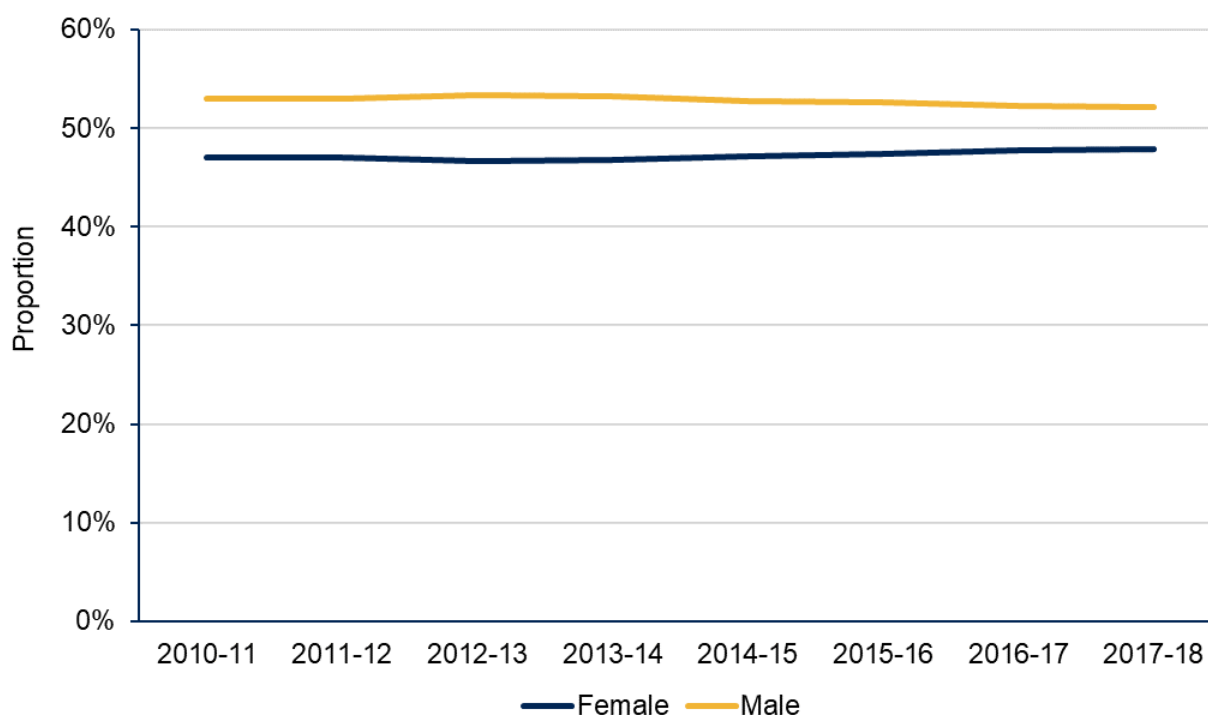


Note: IMD quintiles are only calculated for students who were domiciled in England prior to their course. Those who were domiciled in England but have not provided a postcode, or whose postcode is not associated with an IMD quintile, have been included as 'unknown'. Those who were not domiciled in England have been excluded.

Sex

16. Figure 7 shows the proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by sex. From 2010-11 to 2017-18, the difference in the proportions of male and female students has decreased. However, there remains a higher proportion of male PGR students at high tariff providers in 2017-18 (52.1 per cent compared to 47.9 per cent).
17. This is in contrast to the UK-domiciled undergraduate population, the majority of which (56.0 per cent in 2017-18) are female.⁷ This difference suggests that female undergraduates are less likely to go on to study in PGR than male undergraduates.

Figure 7: Proportion of PGR students at high tariff providers by sex



Note: A small number of students whose sex is reported as 'Other' have been excluded from this chart. They have been included in the counts in Annex A.

⁷ See more equality and diversity data at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/equality-and-diversity-student-data/equality-and-diversity-data/.

Annex A: Data tables

Provider type

Year	Specialist providers		Providers with high average tariff scores		Providers with medium average tariff scores		Providers with low average tariff scores		Unclassified providers		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2010-11	2,705	5.4%	34,165	68.3%	8,545	17.1%	4,605	9.2%	35	0.1%	50,055
2011-12	2,820	5.3%	35,935	67.6%	9,325	17.5%	5,090	9.6%	30	0.1%	53,195
2012-13	2,610	5.0%	34,900	66.9%	9,400	18.0%	5,225	10.0%	60	0.1%	52,185
2013-14	2,460	4.7%	35,215	66.7%	9,445	17.9%	5,585	10.6%	100	0.2%	52,805
2014-15	2,500	4.8%	34,025	65.5%	9,595	18.5%	5,700	11.0%	110	0.2%	51,930
2015-16	2,400	4.6%	33,175	64.1%	9,805	19.0%	6,200	12.0%	150	0.3%	51,730
2016-17	2,545	4.8%	34,260	64.4%	9,820	18.5%	6,420	12.1%	145	0.3%	53,190
2017-18	2,515	4.7%	34,445	64.3%	9,865	18.4%	6,465	12.1%	275	0.5%	53,565

Note: 'N' denotes number of students.

Age on entry

Year	Under 21		21 to 25		26 to 30		31 to 40		41 to 50		51 and over		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2010-11	65	0.2%	17,325	50.7%	6,345	18.6%	5,805	17.0%	2,940	8.6%	1,690	4.9%	34,165
2011-12	60	0.2%	18,270	50.8%	6,810	19.0%	6,095	17.0%	2,990	8.3%	1,705	4.8%	35,930
2012-13	50	0.1%	17,740	50.8%	6,580	18.9%	5,980	17.1%	2,930	8.4%	1,615	4.6%	34,895
2013-14	105	0.3%	17,650	50.1%	6,560	18.6%	6,215	17.7%	2,980	8.5%	1,700	4.8%	35,215
2014-15	125	0.4%	17,310	50.9%	6,285	18.5%	5,955	17.5%	2,795	8.2%	1,555	4.6%	34,025
2015-16	115	0.3%	17,370	52.4%	5,980	18.0%	5,645	17.0%	2,610	7.9%	1,450	4.4%	33,175
2016-17	145	0.4%	18,065	52.7%	6,135	17.9%	5,800	16.9%	2,580	7.5%	1,525	4.5%	34,260
2017-18	140	0.4%	18,515	53.8%	6,005	17.4%	5,775	16.8%	2,500	7.3%	1,510	4.4%	34,445

Note: 'N' denotes number of students.

Disability

Year	Disability reported		No disability reported		Total
	N	%	N	%	
2010-11	2,685	7.9%	31,485	92.1%	34,165
2011-12	2,945	8.2%	32,985	91.8%	35,930
2012-13	3,130	9.0%	31,770	91.0%	34,900
2013-14	3,330	9.5%	31,885	90.5%	35,215
2014-15	3,365	9.9%	30,660	90.1%	34,025
2015-16	3,525	10.6%	29,650	89.4%	33,175
2016-17	3,970	11.6%	30,290	88.4%	34,260
2017-18	4,380	12.7%	30,065	87.3%	34,445

Note: 'N' denotes number of students.

Ethnicity

Year	Asian		Black		Mixed		Other		White		Unknown		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2010-11	3,030	8.9%	760	2.2%	970	2.8%	615	1.8%	26,920	78.8%	1,870	5.5%	34,165
2011-12	3,160	8.8%	865	2.4%	1,070	3.0%	690	1.9%	28,430	79.1%	1,715	4.8%	35,935
2012-13	3,065	8.8%	865	2.5%	1,090	3.1%	695	2.0%	27,755	79.5%	1,425	4.1%	34,900
2013-14	3,070	8.7%	910	2.6%	1,120	3.2%	740	2.1%	28,150	79.9%	1,230	3.5%	35,215
2014-15	3,005	8.8%	920	2.7%	1,105	3.2%	720	2.1%	27,080	79.6%	1,195	3.5%	34,025
2015-16	2,915	8.8%	825	2.5%	1,180	3.6%	690	2.1%	26,500	79.9%	1,060	3.2%	33,175
2016-17	2,960	8.6%	855	2.5%	1,240	3.6%	690	2.0%	27,425	80.1%	1,085	3.2%	34,260
2017-18	3,000	8.7%	870	2.5%	1,325	3.8%	710	2.1%	27,400	79.5%	1,140	3.3%	34,445

Note: 'N' denotes number of students.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile

Year	Quintile 1 (most deprived)		Quintile 2		Quintile 3		Quintile 4		Quintile 5 (least deprived)		Unknown		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2010-11	3,050	9.4%	5,390	16.6%	6,770	20.9%	7,595	23.4%	8,465	26.1%	1,155	3.6%	32,430
2011-12	3,255	9.5%	5,705	16.7%	7,200	21.1%	7,920	23.2%	8,935	26.2%	1,095	3.2%	34,120
2012-13	3,255	9.8%	5,655	17.0%	6,925	20.9%	7,705	23.2%	8,685	26.2%	955	2.9%	33,180
2013-14	3,360	10.0%	5,775	17.2%	6,990	20.9%	7,780	23.2%	8,765	26.2%	825	2.5%	33,490
2014-15	3,420	10.6%	5,725	17.7%	6,765	20.9%	7,505	23.2%	8,380	25.9%	590	1.8%	32,380
2015-16	3,330	10.6%	5,565	17.6%	6,600	20.9%	7,220	22.9%	8,270	26.2%	565	1.8%	31,550
2016-17	3,435	10.6%	5,760	17.7%	6,740	20.7%	7,510	23.1%	8,595	26.4%	485	1.5%	32,520
2017-18	3,620	11.1%	5,710	17.5%	6,650	20.3%	7,610	23.3%	8,640	26.4%	470	1.4%	32,700

Note: IMD quintiles are only calculated for students who were domiciled in England prior to their course. 'N' denotes number of students.

Sex

Year	Female		Male		Other sex		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
2010-11	16,040	46.9%	18,125	53.0%	-	-	34,165
2011-12	16,885	47.0%	19,045	53.0%	-	-	35,930
2012-13	16,280	46.6%	18,615	53.3%	-	-	34,890
2013-14	16,485	46.8%	18,715	53.1%	-	-	35,200
2014-15	16,050	47.2%	17,965	52.8%	-	-	34,015
2015-16	15,710	47.4%	17,450	52.6%	-	-	33,160
2016-17	16,335	47.7%	17,890	52.2%	35	0.1%	34,260
2017-18	16,460	47.8%	17,910	52.0%	75	0.2%	34,445

Note: 'N' denotes number of students.

Annex B: Definitions of variables

Provider type

1. Provider types are defined by the average tariff scores of entrants at a given provider, using HESA data from academic years 2012-13 to 2014-15. High tariff providers are the top third of English higher education providers (excluding specialist providers, previously funded by HEFCE) when ranked by average tariff score of UK domiciled undergraduate entrants.⁸

Age on entry

2. The age recorded is the age of the student on 31 August in the year in which they started their PGR study, calculated from the date of birth, as reported by the student. For more detail, see the definition of 'B3MONBIRTHDATE' in the OfS '2019 core algorithms' document.⁹

Disability

3. This field indicates whether the student has reported a disability to their provider. For more detail, see the definition of 'B3MONDISABLE' in the OfS '2019 core algorithms' document.¹⁰

Ethnicity

4. This field indicates ethnicity, as reported by the student. For more detail, see the definition of 'B3MONETHNIC' in the OfS '2019 core algorithms' document.¹¹

IMD quintile

5. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 is a measure of levels of deprivation for small areas within England. It is calculated at lower-layer super output area (LSOA) level and combines a number of measures to determine levels of deprivation. It is produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.¹² In this report, we group areas into IMD quintiles, where the most deprived areas are in quintile 1 and the least deprived are in quintile 5.
6. Since the IMD measure only covers areas in England, students who were domiciled outside of England at the start of their course have been removed from the proportion calculations. Those who were domiciled in England but have not provided a postcode, or whose postcode is not associated with an IMD quintile, have been included as 'unknown'.

⁸ High tariff providers in England are those included in the OfS KPM 2 definition, listed in the Annex to the methodology, available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/about/measures-of-our-success/participation-performance-measures/gap-in-participation-at-higher-tariff-providers-between-the-most-and-least-represented-groups/.

⁹ Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/.

¹⁰ See footnote 9 above.

¹¹ See footnote 9 above.

¹² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015>.

7. It should be noted that IMD quintiles are calculated using the home postcode provided by the student on entry to their course. For many PGR students, this will differ to their postcode at 18, and therefore will not always reflect the student's socioeconomic background.

Sex

8. For more detail, see the definition of 'B3MONSEX' in the OfS '2019 core algorithms' document.



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