

Office for  
Students



# Student characteristics data: Student outcomes

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# Overview

1. It is well known that there have been distinct patterns between successful outcomes in higher education and certain groups of students. Here we report the differences in continuation rates, completion rates, rates of achieving a first or upper-second class degree (attainment rate) and rates of progression into managerial or professional employment, further study or other positive outcomes (progression rate) by various student characteristics.

## Outcome measures

There are a number of ways of measuring student outcomes in higher education. These measures usually involve assessing the extent to which students continue their studies and how well they do in those studies. This report includes the following measures:

- **Continuation rate** – the proportion of entrants that were observed to be continuing in the study of a higher education qualification (or that have gained a qualification) one year and 15 days after they started their course (two years and 15 days for part-time students).
- **Completion rate** – the proportion of entrants that were observed to have gained a higher education qualification (or were continuing in the study of a qualification) four years and 15 days after they started their course (six years and 15 days for part-time students).
- **Attainment rate** – the proportion of qualifiers that achieve a first or upper-second classification of a first degree.
- **Progression rate** – the proportion of qualifiers that identify managerial or professional employment, further study, or other positive outcomes among the activities that they were undertaking at the Graduate Outcomes survey census date, 15 months after they left higher education.

2. The definitions of continuation, completion and progression measures used throughout this publication are consistent with those used by the Office for Students (OfS) in our regulation of student outcomes and access and participation and in the Teaching Excellence Framework.<sup>1</sup>
3. This report and associated dashboards<sup>2</sup> include unadjusted rates of continuation, completion, attainment and progression between different student groups. It does not examine the relationship between different characteristics and students' outcomes after taking other factors into account.

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<sup>1</sup> These definitions can be found in the 'Description and definition of student outcome and experience measures' document, available at: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/description-and-definition-of-student-outcome-and-experience-measures/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/description-and-definition-of-student-outcome-and-experience-measures/).

<sup>2</sup> The outcomes dashboard [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/outcomes-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/outcomes-data-dashboard/) and the entry qualifications and subjects dashboard [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/entry-qualification-and-subject-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/entry-qualification-and-subject-data-dashboard/)

## Student characteristics

Those marked with an asterisk (\*) relate to one of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

- Age\*
- Disability\*
- Ethnicity\*
- Sex\*
- Gender identity
- Religion or belief\*
- Sexual orientation\*
- Parental higher education
- Free school meals (FSM) eligibility
- Participation of local areas (POLAR4)<sup>3</sup>
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)
- Care experience
- Household Residual Income (HRI)
- Estrangement
- Socioeconomic background
- Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)<sup>4</sup>
- Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) quintiles for full-time and part-time continuation, completion and progression<sup>5</sup>
- Service child: indicates whether a student was recorded in the National Pupil Database (NPD) as a child of Service personnel when in key stage 4<sup>6</sup>
- Entry qualification
- Broad subject of study

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<sup>3</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

<sup>5</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students).

<sup>6</sup> The DfE does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the National Pupil Database (NPD) data by third parties.

## Key findings

**The findings in this section briefly summarise some of the sector-level trends in our Student characteristics data: Student outcomes dashboard. You can find all the data on our interactive dashboard, with splits by outcome, domicile, level of study and mode of study.<sup>7</sup> Data on outcomes by entry qualifications and subject can be found in the ‘Outcomes by entry qualifications and subject’ dashboard.<sup>8</sup>**

4. These findings relate to the years covered by the data and should not be assumed to reflect future performance. Outcomes may be interpreted differently in the different circumstances of the individual students, qualifications and providers involved at any given point in time.
5. Where students have refused to provide information, or the data is not applicable or is otherwise unknown, these students are excluded from the calculation of outcomes.
6. The OfS is a producer of official statistics, which means we follow the Code of Practice for Statistics.<sup>9</sup> Most of the student characteristics in this release have been reported previously and are established as official statistics. Information on whether a student was recorded in the National Pupil Database (NPD) as a child of Service personnel (‘service child’) is reported for the first time and so, in line with the expectations of the Code of Practice, we report this as an experimental statistic separately.
7. The ‘Official statistics’ and ‘Experimental statistics’ sections of this document summarise the key findings behind this data. Details of statistical methodology and population coverage can be found in Annex A. Annex B defines the outcome definitions, populations and student characteristics.

## Official statistics

**Unless stated otherwise the key findings are for UK domiciled full-time first degree students.**

### Age

8. Students who were over 21 years old in the year they began their studies had lower continuation, completion and attainment rates than students who were under 21 years old.

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<sup>7</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/outcomes-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/outcomes-data-dashboard/).

<sup>8</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/entry-qualification-and-subject-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-characteristics-data/entry-qualification-and-subject-data-dashboard/).

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>. Further information can be found in our compliance statement: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/official-statistics/compliance-statement/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/official-statistics/compliance-statement/).

9. In contrast to the other measures, the progression rate of mature qualifiers in 2019-20 was 3.6 percentage points higher than that of young students (74.9 per cent compared with 71.3 per cent).

## **Disability**

10. Students who self-reported as disabled tended to have lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students who did not report a disability. However, this varied with domicile, as disabled, non-UK domiciled, full-time first degree qualifiers had a higher attainment rate than those who did not report a disability. Looking at UK domiciled, full-time first degree students, we see that:
  - a. The continuation rate of entrants with a cognitive or learning disability in 2019-20 was 0.8 percentage points higher than that of students with no disability reported (92.6 per cent compared with 91.8 per cent). However, the continuation rate was lower for all other impairment types, and lowest for students reporting a mental health condition at 88.8 per cent in 2019-20.
  - b. The completion rate of entrants in 2016-17 reporting a mental health condition was 5.1 percentage points lower than that of students with no disability reported (83.8 per cent compared with 88.8 per cent). This gap has gradually reduced over the last five years, down from 11.1 percentage points for entrants in 2012-13.

## **Ethnicity**

11. The completion rate of entrants from a minority ethnic background in 2016-17 was 3.8 percentage points lower than for white students (86.0 per cent compared with 89.8 per cent). However, this trend is reversed for part-time students, with students who started their course in 2014-15 from minority ethnic groups having a completion rate of 49.3 per cent compared with 47.2 per cent for white students.
12. The attainment rate of qualifiers from a minority ethnic background in 2020-21 was 9.6 percentage points lower than for white students (76.1 per cent compared with 85.7 per cent). This gap has gradually decreased from 18.9 percentage points in 2010-11. Specifically, the attainment rate of black students was much lower than for white students (67.3 per cent compared with 85.7 per cent, 18.4 percentage points lower in 2020-21).

## **Sex**

13. In general, male students had lower continuation, completion and attainment rates across all levels of study than female students. However, male students had a higher progression rate at most levels of study, although the rates were very close for those qualifying from first degree courses in 2019-20 (72.0 per cent for males and 71.9 per cent for females).

## **Gender identity**

14. Students who self-reported as not being the same gender as the one they were assigned at birth had lower continuation, completion and attainment rates than students who self-reported as being the same as the gender assigned at birth. Progression rates appear to have been higher for students who self-reported as being a different gender, but the low numbers available for this lifecycle stage mean caution must be used when comparing this group with others.

- a. The continuation rate of entrants in 2019-20 who self-reported being a different gender to the one they were assigned at birth was 4.9 percentage points lower than students who self-reported as being the same as the gender assigned at birth (87.1 per cent compared with 92.0 per cent).
- b. The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2020-21 who self-reported being a different gender to the one they were assigned at birth was 4.9 percentage points lower than students who self-reported as being the same as the gender assigned at birth (78.4 per cent compared with 83.3 per cent).

## **Religion or belief**

15. Continuation, attainment and progression rates all varied by religious belief. For example, entrants in 2019-20 with no religion had a continuation rate of 92.5 percent compared with 96.0 per cent for Jewish students; 95.3 per cent for Hindu students; 93.7 per cent for Sikh students; 91.9 per cent for Christian students; 91.8 per cent for Buddhist students; 90.0 per cent for Muslim students; and 87.9 per cent for Spiritual students.
16. Qualifiers in 2020-21 with no religion had an attainment rate of 86.0 per cent compared with the 92.5 per cent for Jewish students; 85.0 per cent for Hindu students; 84.3 per cent for Spiritual students; 81.8 per cent for Sikh students; 80.7 per cent for Christian students; 79.0 per cent for Buddhist students; and 73.8 per cent for Muslim students.

## **Sexual orientation**

17. Students who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual had lower continuation, completion and progression rates than students who identified as heterosexual. For example, the completion rate of lesbian, gay or bisexual entrants in 2016-17 was 2.1 percentage points lower than for heterosexual students (86.8 per cent compared with 88.9 per cent).
18. Conversely, lesbian, gay or bisexual students had higher attainment rates, with an attainment rate of 86.3 per cent for qualifiers in 2020-21 compared with 82.8 per cent for heterosexual students.

## **Parental higher education**

19. Students who reported that their parent(s) did not hold a higher education qualification had lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students whose parent(s) held a higher education qualification.
20. The continuation rate of entrants in 2019-20 whose parent(s) did not hold a higher education qualification was 3.2 percentage points lower than for students whose parent(s) had a higher education qualification (90.9 per cent compared with 94.1 per cent).
21. The attainment rate of qualifiers whose parent(s) did not hold a higher education qualification in 2020-21 was 80.9 per cent compared with 86.3 per cent for students whose parent(s) had a higher education qualification.

## **Free school meal eligibility (FSM)**

22. Students who were recorded as eligible to receive free school meals (FSM) at any point in the six years up to key stage 4 (usually GCSE year) had lower continuation, completion, attainment

and progression rates than students who were not eligible, across all modes and levels of undergraduate study. For example, for full-time first degree students:

- a. The completion rate of 2016-17 entrants who were eligible for FSM was 7.2 percentage points lower than for students who were not eligible for FSM (84.1 per cent compared with 91.3 per cent).
- b. The attainment rate of 2020-21 qualifiers who were eligible for FSM was 10.3 percentage points lower than students who were not eligible for FSM (75.2 per cent compared with 85.5 per cent).

## **POLAR4**

23. Young students from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas (the areas with the lowest rates of participation in higher education among 18 and 19 year olds) had lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students from quintiles 2 and above.<sup>10</sup> For example:

- a. The completion rate for 2016-17 entrants from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas was 6.1 percentage points lower than for those from POLAR4 quintile 5 areas (86.8 per cent compared with 92.9 per cent).
- b. The progression rate for qualifiers from POLAR4 quintile 1 areas in 2019-20 was 7.7 percentage points lower than for students from POLAR4 quintile 5 areas (67.0 per cent compared with 74.7 per cent).

## **Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)**

24. Students from Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 1 areas (the most deprived areas) had lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students from quintiles 2 and above.

25. Entrants to first degree courses in 2019-20 from IMD quintile 1 had a lower continuation rate (88.3 per cent) than those from quintile 5 (94.8 per cent).

26. The attainment rate of qualifiers from IMD quintile 1 areas in 2020-21 was 15.5 percentage points lower than students from IMD quintile 5 (73.1 per cent compared with 88.6 per cent).

## **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)**

27. Students from Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) quintile 1 areas (areas of highest deprivation) had lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students from quintiles 2 and above. For example:

- a. The continuation rate of entrants from IDACI quintile 1 areas in 2019-20 was 6.4 percentage points lower than students from IDACI quintile 5 (88.3 per cent compared with 94.8 per cent).

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<sup>10</sup> For information about POLAR4, see [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/).

- b. The progression rate of qualifiers from IDACI quintile 1 areas in 2019-20 was 8.3 percentage points lower than students from IDACI quintile 5 (67.3 per cent compared with 75.5 per cent).

## Care experience

28. Full and part-time students who have experienced being in care had lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students who have not experienced being in care. Comparing full-time students who were care experienced we see that:
- a. The continuation rate for 2019-20 entrants who were care experienced was 5.3 percentage points lower than those who had not experienced being in care (87.1 per cent compared with 92.4 per cent).
  - b. The completion rates of 2016-17 entrants who were care experienced was 9.6 percentage points lower than those who had not experienced being in care (79.6 per cent compared with 89.2 per cent).
  - c. The attainment rate of 2020-21 qualifiers who were care experienced was 12.9 percentage points lower than those who had not experienced being in care (70.6 per cent compared with 83.6 per cent).

## Household Residual Income

29. Household Residual Income (HRI) is a measure of household income after accounting for certain outgoings. It is assessed by the Student Loans Company (SLC) and is used to determine a student's access to income-assessed student finance. For students who are financially dependent on parent(s)/guardian(s) it is based on parental income. For students who are financially independent it is based on their own income, and their partner's if they have one. This report includes HRI for students listed as being dependent on their parents, and students who are listed as being independent from their parents.

30. We find that:

- a. Of dependent entrants in 2019-20, the group who had the highest rate of continuation were those who reported the highest HRI (£42,601+), at 94.6 per cent. The lowest rate of continuation was for those who had reported their HRI as £0, at 89.4 per cent. For independent students, those with an HRI of £0 also had lowest rate of continuation, at 86.5 per cent.
- b. For dependent qualifiers in 2020-21, the group who had the highest rate of attainment were those who listed their HRI as £1 to £42,601+, at 87.4 per cent. The lowest rate of attainment was for those who had listed their HRI as £0, at 75.9 per cent.

## Estrangement

31. Full and part-time students who were estranged from their parents had lower continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates than students who were not estranged. Comparing full-time students shows:

- a. The completion rate of 2016-17 entrants who were estranged from their parents was 12.6 percentage points lower than for students who were not estranged from their parents (76.9 per cent compared with 89.6 per cent).
- b. The attainment rate of qualifiers in 2020-21 who were estranged from their parents was 13.0 percentage points lower than for students who were not estranged from their parents (70.9 per cent compared with 84.0 per cent).

## **Socioeconomic background**

32. Students whose parents worked in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations had continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates which were higher than for students whose parents had never worked or were long-term unemployed. For example:

- a. The continuation rate of entrants in 2019-20 whose parents had never worked or were long-term unemployed was 5.6 percentage points lower than for students whose parents worked in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (90.2 per cent compared with 95.8 per cent).
- b. The progression rate of qualifiers in 2019-20 whose parents had never worked or were long-term unemployed was 19.0 percentage points lower than for students whose parents worked in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations (57.0 per cent compared with 76.0 per cent).

## **TUNDRA**

33. Across all four TUNDRA measures, students from TUNDRA quintile 5 areas (areas with the highest participation of young people in higher education) had the highest continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates.<sup>11</sup>

34. The attainment rate of qualifiers from TUNDRA Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) quintile 1 areas in 2020-21 was 7.0 percentage points lower than for students from TUNDRA quintile 5 areas (79.8 per cent compared with 86.8 per cent)

35. The progression rate of qualifiers from TUNDRA (LSOA) quintile 1 in 2019-20 was 6.3 percentage points lower than for students from TUNDRA quintile 5 (67.3 per cent compared with 73.6 per cent).

## **Associations between characteristics of students**

36. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) is a set of measures that seeks a better understanding of how outcomes vary for groups of students with different sets of characteristics (for example, ethnicity, sex and background).<sup>12</sup> The student characteristics selected when constructing these measures should not have an impact on students' outcomes, but the evidence shows that they do.

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<sup>11</sup> For information about TUNDRA, see [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

<sup>12</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students/access-to-higher-education/).

37. Since each ABCS measure is designed to indicate the likelihood of achieving a successful outcome, it is usually the case that the group with the highest rate will be quintile 5 and the group with the lowest rate will be quintile 1, regardless of which outcome you are describing. Indeed, each of the separate ABCS measures deliberately use different combinations of characteristics in the model in order to maximise these differences. The exception to this is when looking at undergraduate courses with a postgraduate component, where the very small population means that the time series is less stable.
38. This publication includes ABCS measures for continuation, completion and progression. They are reported separately for full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) students.
39. The continuation rate of entrants from ABCS FT continuation quintile 1 in 2019-20 was 11.9 percentage points lower than for students from ABCS FT continuation quintile 5 (84.0 per cent compared with 95.9 per cent).
40. The completion rate of 2016-17 entrants from ABCS FT completion quintile 1 was 22.1 percentage points lower than for students from ABCS FT completion quintile 5 (74.0 per cent compared with 96.0 per cent).
41. The progression rate of qualifiers from ABCS FT progression quintile 1 in 2019-20 was 20.7 percentage points lower than for students from ABCS progression quintile 5 (61.6 per cent compared with 82.3 per cent).

#### **Entry qualifications (Entry qualifications and subject of study dashboard)**

42. Outcomes by entry qualifications are published for UK domiciled students on undergraduate courses. Continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates were seen to vary by level of entry qualifications.
43. The attainment rate of full-time undergraduate qualifiers in 2020-21 who achieved three 'C' grades at A-level was 9.3 percent lower than for students who achieved three 'A' grades at A-level (96.5 per cent compared with 87.2 per cent)

#### **Broad subject of study (Entry qualifications and subject of study dashboard)**

44. Outcomes by broad subject of study are published for UK domiciled students on undergraduate courses. Continuation, completion, attainment and progression rates varied by subject of study.
45. The continuation rate of full-time undergraduate entrants studying subjects related to business and management in 2019-20 was 11.3 percentage points lower than for students studying subjects in medicine, dentistry and veterinary sciences (86.8 per cent compared with 98.3 per cent).
46. The attainment rate of full-time undergraduate qualifiers studying subjects related to education and teaching in 2020-21 was 12.1 percentage points lower than students studying subjects in humanities and languages (78.2 per cent compared with 90.3 per cent).

## Experimental statistics

### Service child

47. Students who were recorded as a child of Service personnel when they were in key stage 4 (GCSE year) had broadly similar rates of continuation, completion, attainment and progression to those who did not.
48. The completion rate of entrants who were recorded as a child of Service personnel when they were in key stage 4 in 2016-17 was 0.8 percentage points higher than for students who were not (90.1 per cent compared with 89.3 per cent).
49. The progression rate of qualifiers who had a parent in the military in 2019-20 was 1.8 percentage points lower than for students who did not have a parent in the military (68.5 per cent compared with 70.3 per cent).

**We are keen to receive feedback on these experimental statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Jim Owen at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk).**

# Notes

## User guide

50. The 'Student characteristics data: student outcomes' dashboard allow users to examine outcomes by different student characteristics for different domiciles, modes of study and levels of study. The dashboard displays the rate for each outcome, that is, the proportion of students achieving an outcome that our definitions categorise as positive, and gaps between the rates for the largest attribute within a characteristic and all other attributes. For example, when we look at the 'Age (Broad)' characteristic, the rate of attainment for full-time, UK-domiciled first-degree students under 21 years of age in 2020-21 was 84.4 per cent. This means that 84.4 per cent of these students achieved a first or upper second (2:1) class degree. The attainment rate for students over 21 years of age was 74.5 per cent. Since students under 21 are more numerous, the gap was calculated by subtracting the rate for students over 21 from the rate for students under 21. The gap in rates between these two attributes was therefore 9.9 percentage points.
51. Users can select the lifecycle stage, domicile, mode of study, level of study and student characteristic of interest by clicking on the drop-down boxes at the top of the dashboard and selecting the group of interest. The options on the right-hand side allow for switching between rates and gaps.
52. Some combinations of the lifecycle stage, domicile, mode of study, level of study and student characteristic of interest do not have any data. For example, some data is available for UK domiciled students only, so selecting 'Non-UK' from the domicile option will not produce any data. When this happens, users need to select a different combination from the drop-downs to show available data.
53. The 'Entry qualification and subject data dashboard' allows users to examine outcomes by entry qualification and subject of study. In both dashboards, users can select which mode of study to view. For entry qualifications, it is possible to view two years at a time on the chart by using the drop-downs underneath the chart. For both entry qualifications and broad subject of study, the data is for all undergraduate UK-domiciled students.

## How this publication relates to other OfS publications

54. This release complements recent publications by the OfS of student outcomes data at both sector and provider level: the 'student outcomes data dashboard' and the 'sector distributions of student outcomes and experience measures data dashboard'.<sup>13</sup> It reports sector-level outcomes for the same population of students. It considers a wider range of student characteristics, as well as some characteristics at a more disaggregated level than is available in the other publications.
55. The student population covered by this release also represents an extension to the coverage of the OfS access and participation data dashboard, which reports sector-level data for the

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<sup>13</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/) and [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/sector-distribution-of-student-outcomes-and-experience-measures-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/sector-distribution-of-student-outcomes-and-experience-measures-data-dashboard/).

population of UK-domiciled undergraduate students only (as the population most relevant to regulations made under the Higher Education and Research Act in relation to access and participation).<sup>14</sup> In doing so, the range of student characteristics considered here includes a number which are not currently included in the access and participation data dashboard. For example, sexual orientation, household residual income and care experience.

56. Furthermore, this release also includes undergraduate sector-level outcomes data for entry qualifications and subject of study, which were previously published alongside the access and participation dashboard.
57. It follows that some of these characteristics included in this release apply to small populations and it is important to note that we have not performed significance or sensitivity analysis on the raw rates included here. Small differences in rates may not represent statistically significant differences in outcomes for students with those characteristics.

### **How does this publication differ from other publications about student outcomes?**

We have a number of data publications that include student outcomes data. This one includes the broadest set of student characteristics and its population matches the ‘student outcomes’ and ‘sector distribution of student outcomes and experience measures’ described below. These other data publications include:

#### **Exploring student outcomes data dashboard<sup>15</sup>**

This dashboard shows the extent to which differences in continuation, completion and progression between student groups can be accounted for by other underlying factors, for a smaller set of student characteristics.

#### **Student outcomes dashboard<sup>16</sup>**

The student outcomes data dashboard shows measures of continuation, completion and progression outcomes for individual providers and the sector overall, and is used to inform our regulation of condition B3. It reports on the same, broad population as this publication but only includes a subset of the characteristics included here and does not show a time series by characteristic. It includes information about the statistical uncertainty associated with each indicator value.

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<sup>14</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

<sup>15</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-and-experiences-data-dashboards/exploring-student-outcomes-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-and-experiences-data-dashboards/exploring-student-outcomes-dashboard/).

<sup>16</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/).

## **Sector distributions of student outcomes and experience measures data dashboard<sup>17</sup>**

The sector distributions data dashboard shows how measures of continuation, completion and progression outcomes are distributed across individual providers. It reports on the same, broad population as this publication, but includes a subset of the characteristics included here.

## **Access and participation dashboard<sup>18</sup>**

This includes outcomes data for the sector and each registered provider. It includes access data, as well as continuation, attainment and progression data. It includes a subset of the characteristics published here and a shorter time series. The sector numbers in this publication are not restricted to students registered or taught at OfS-registered providers and so will not match the numbers published here.

## **COVID-19 pandemic**

58. The dashboards include data up to the 2020-21 academic year. There may be some expectation that these statistics will reflect changes due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, given that the first lockdown in the UK was declared in March 2020. For example, the impact of the pandemic could have affected students' decisions in terms of whether and how they might choose to enrol on higher education courses, and subsequently continue with their studies.
59. However, users should not automatically interpret changes seen in the data since this point to have been caused by the pandemic. It is often not possible to attribute cause without further knowledge of the motivations and experiences of the students involved. The data reported in the dashboards reflect only the early stages of the pandemic, where alternative options for students were limited. It may therefore take more time for effects of the pandemic to manifest in student outcomes and experience data.

## **Official statistics**

60. The OfS is a producer of official statistics, which means we follow the Code of Practice for Statistics.<sup>19</sup>
61. Most of the student characteristics in this release have been reported previously and are established as official statistics. Information on whether a student was recorded in the NPD as a child of Service personnel (service child) is reported for the first time and so, in line with the expectations of the Code of Practice, we report this as an experimental statistic separately.

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<sup>17</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/sector-distribution-of-student-outcomes-and-experience-measures-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/sector-distribution-of-student-outcomes-and-experience-measures-data-dashboard/).

<sup>18</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/).

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/>. Further information can be found in our compliance statement: [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/official-statistics/compliance-statement/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/official-statistics/compliance-statement/).

62. The separation of official and experimental statistics does not reflect the underlying quality of the data. We assessed all characteristics using the OfS's data quality framework,<sup>20</sup> to determine whether they were valid to include and to establish the appropriate population coverage to use. Detail on the implementation of this framework can be found in Annex A, while an assessment of the service child data quality can be found alongside the relevant definitions in Annex B.
63. The student characteristics included in this release are listed below. Those marked with an asterisk (\*) relate to one of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.
64. Throughout these statistics, we refer to these characteristics using the same language as was used in the collection of this data. In some cases, these terms deviate from those used to define the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. For example, 'ethnicity', as reported in this data, is more narrowly defined than 'race', as defined in the Equality Act, which can refer to a person's colour, nationality, or ethnic origins.<sup>21</sup>
65. For some characteristics we have added multiple groupings to maximise the utility of the information we are making available for a range of users. For instance, the data is split by both broad and detailed age groups, where age is presented in two and six groups respectively.

## Official statistics

- Age (broad and detailed)\*
- Disability (broad and type)\*
- Ethnicity (two groups, five groups and 15 groups)\*
- Sex\*
- Gender identity
- Religion or belief\*
- Sexual orientation\*
- Parental higher education
- Free school meals (FSM) eligibility, an indicator of financial disadvantage for key stage 4 pupils
- Participation of local areas (POLAR4)<sup>22</sup>, an area-based measure reflecting higher education participation rates
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), an area-based measure of deprivation in England
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), an area-based measure of children living in income deprived households in England
- Care experience, indicating whether a student has been in care

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<sup>20</sup> See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#race>.

<sup>22</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/).

- Household Residual Income (HRI), a measure of household income after accounting for certain costs. This is reported separately for students assessed as financially dependent on parent(s)/guardian(s) and students assessed as financially independent
- Estrangement, indicating whether a student is no longer communicating with their parents
- Socioeconomic background
- Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)<sup>23</sup> at both Middle-layer Super Output Area (MSOA) and Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA) and applied to young undergraduates who attended state-funded mainstream schools in England (mainstream-funded pupils) and to all young undergraduates domiciled in England (all undergraduates). TUNDRA is an area-based measure that tracks state-funded mainstream school pupils in England into higher education.
- Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) quintiles for full-time and part-time continuation, completion and progression,<sup>24</sup> grouping students with certain combinations of characteristics by their likelihood of achieving successful outcomes in higher education
- Entry qualifications
- Broad subject of study.

### Experimental statistics

- Service child: indicates whether a student was recorded in the NPD as a child of Service personnel when in key stage 4.

**We are keen to receive feedback on these statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Jim Owen at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk).**

<sup>23</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

<sup>24</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/associations-between-characteristics-of-students).

# Annex A: Methodology and data coverage

1. This annex summarises the methodology used to produce the statistics in this release and describes the framework used to determine population coverage.
2. The outcome measures for students who have refused to provide information, or where their data is missing or otherwise unknown, are not reported. Similarly, rates are not calculated for students not included in the population coverage, as defined by Table A1 below, and those who could not be linked to a requisite data source. If students with a particular attribute were more likely to refuse information, or were more likely to be excluded from the population coverage, then this could have had an impact on the reported rates.
3. When statistics were split by subject, students studying more than one subject were partially counted for each subject. For instance, a student studying half English and half history would have been counted as 0.5 in each subject.<sup>25</sup>

## Rounding and suppression

4. All rates and percentage point gap values were rounded to one decimal place. Rates were calculated using the unrounded student numbers for the numerator and denominator. Therefore, the value of the rate can be slightly different from the rate that you would get by using the rounded values in this release. Differences between rates (gaps) were calculated using unrounded rates. As such, the value of the difference between rates can be 0.1 percentage points higher or lower than the difference between the rounded rates included in this release.
5. Student numbers are reported as counts rounded to the nearest 10.
6. Student numbers are suppressed in certain circumstances, for data protection reasons. This can occur:
  - a. Where there are fewer than 23 students (prior to rounding) in the chosen category. When this is the case, the rate and gap for the group are also suppressed.
  - b. Where the numerator informing calculation of a rate refers to less than or equal to two individuals who achieved the outcome in question.
  - c. Where the numerator is greater than two but is within two of the denominator (the number of students for which we are measuring the outcome).
7. These thresholds were chosen to retain as much information as possible, while ensuring that information about individuals cannot be identified from the data.

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<sup>25</sup> See 'What are the differences between a count of students, full-person equivalent (FPE) and full-time equivalent (FTE)?' at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/definitions>.

## Data quality framework and population coverage

8. All the student characteristics (except for service child) in this release have previously been assessed against the OfS's data quality framework. The framework provides a standardised method of investigating the quantity and quality of student characteristic data to aid in making decisions whether to publish data and whether to use it in further analyses. Judgements around the appropriate population coverage for these student characteristics which have previously been used remain as they were in the June 2021 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' publication.<sup>26</sup>
9. As this year's publication is the first in which the service child data has been published, a detailed table summarising the results of applying the framework can be found in Annex B.
10. Table A1 below provides a summary of population coverage of each student characteristic.
11. As shown in the table, the data included in this release was derived from the following sources:
  - a. the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA's) individualised learner record (ILR)<sup>27</sup>
  - b. the Higher Education Statistics Agency's (HESA's) Student record<sup>28</sup>
  - c. HESA's Student Alternative (SA) record<sup>29</sup> (formerly known as the Alternative Provider record)
  - d. the Student Loans Company (SLC) data; and the National Pupil Database (NPD) provided by the Department for Education<sup>30</sup>
  - e. Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles are produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)<sup>31</sup> and are merged with the ILR and HESA records.

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<sup>26</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>.

<sup>28</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051>.

<sup>29</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054>.

<sup>30</sup> The DfE does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the NPD data by third parties.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

**Table A1: Summary of population coverage of each student characteristic**

Characteristic	Data source(s)	Domicile	Level of study	Other
Age (broad and detailed)	HESA Student & SA, ILR	All	All	-
Disability (broad and type)	HESA Student & SA, ILR	All	All	-
Ethnicity (2 groups, 5 groups, and 15 groups)	HESA Student & SA, ILR	UK	All	-
Sex	HESA Student & SA, ILR	All	All	-
Gender identity	HESA Student & SA	All	All	-
Religion or belief	HESA Student & SA	All	All	-
Sexual orientation	HESA Student & SA	All	All	
Parental higher education	HESA Student	All	All	-
Free school meals eligibility	NPD	All (Note that UK data is suppressed for data protection reasons)	UG	Under 21 on entry and found in the NPD KS4 data in 2009-10 or later
Participation of local areas (POLAR4)	OfS, HESA and ILR	UK	UG	Under 21 on entry
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	MHCLG, HESA and ILR	English	All	-
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)	MHCLG, HESA and ILR	English	All	-
Care experience	HESA Student	UK	UG	-
Household Residual Income (HRI)	SLC	English, Welsh, Northern Irish	UG	Full-time
Estrangement	SLC	English, Welsh, Northern Irish	UG	Under 25
Socioeconomic background	HESA Student	UK	UG	Full-time
Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)	OfS, HESA and ILR	English	UG	Under 21 on entry
Service child	NPD	UK	UG	Under 21 on entry

Characteristic	Data source(s)	Domicile	Level of study	Other
Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) quintiles	OfS, HESA and ILR	UK	UG	
Entry qualifications	HESA Student & SA, ILR & NPD	UK	UG	
Broad subject of study	HESA Student & SA, ILR	UK	UG	

Note: UG = Undergraduate students only. Other acronyms are defined in the paragraph above.

12. Table A2 shows the first year of data available for each characteristic, for each measure included in the dashboard.

**Table A2: Summary of years of available data for each student characteristic and lifecycle stage**

Characteristic	Continuation data available from	Completion data available from	Attainment data available from	Progression data available from
Age (broad and detailed)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Disability (broad and type)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Ethnicity (2 groups, 5 groups, and 15 groups)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Sex	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Religion or belief	2017-18	NA	2017-18	2017-18
Sexual orientation	2015-16	2015-16	2015-16	2017-18
Gender identity	2018-19	NA	2018-19	2018-19
Parental higher education	2012-13	2012-13	2012-13	2017-18
Free school meals eligibility <sup>^</sup>	2012-13	2012-13	2016-17	2017-18
Participation of local areas (POLAR4)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Care experience	2014-15	2014-15	2016-17	2017-18
Household Residual Income (HRI)	2011-12	2011-12	2013-14	2017-18
Estrangement	2014-15	2014-15	2016-17	2017-18
Socioeconomic background	2015-16	2015-16	2017-18	2017-18
Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Service child	2012-13	2012-13	2014-15	2017-18
Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS)	2015-16 (Full-time) 2014-15 (Part-time)	2012-13 (Full-time) 2010-11 (Part-time)	NA	2017-18 (Full-time) 2017-18 (Part-time)
Entry qualifications	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18
Broad subject of study	2010-11	2010-11	2010-11	2017-18

<sup>^</sup>Note that free school meals data was not available for all young entrants until 2014-15 and qualifiers until 2016-17. Therefore, earlier data points do not represent a full population and so caution should be taken when comparing these with data later in the time series.

# Annex B: Definitions

1. This annex defines the various populations and characteristics used in these statistics.

Throughout this annex, definitions of variables with the prefix 'IP' can be found in the OfS '2022 core algorithms' document.<sup>32</sup> You can find out more about the rates used in the OfS 'Description of student outcome and experience measures used in OfS regulation' document.<sup>33</sup>

## Outcome and population definitions

### Population used

2. To align with other OfS publications, students are included if they are either registered or taught at an OfS registered provider. For each lifecycle stage there are further restrictions to the population. These are detailed in the rebuild instructions for September 2022 data resources.<sup>34</sup> All definitions align with those agreed on following the 'Consultation on constructing student outcome and experience indicators for use in OfS regulation'.<sup>35</sup>

### Continuation rate

3. Continuation outcomes are measured by identifying a cohort of entrants to higher education qualifications at the provider and following them through the early stages of their course to track how many continue in active study, or qualify, in subsequent years.
4. The continuation rate is the proportion of students that were observed to be continuing in the study of a higher education qualification (or have gained a qualification) one year and 15 days after they started their course (two years and 15 days for part-time students).

### Completion rate

5. Completion outcomes are measured by identifying a cohort of entrants to higher education qualifications at the provider and following them through their course to track how many of them complete their studies or are still active in their studies.
6. The completion rate is the proportion of students that were observed to have gained a higher education qualification (or were continuing in the study of a qualification) four years and 15 days after they started their course (six years and 15 days for part-time students).

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<sup>32</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/institutional-performance-measures/technical-documentation/).

<sup>33</sup> See the 'Description of student outcome and experience measures used in OfS regulation' document available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/description-and-definition-of-student-outcome-and-experience-measures/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/description-and-definition-of-student-outcome-and-experience-measures/).

<sup>34</sup> Available from [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcome-and-experience-measures/documentation/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcome-and-experience-measures/documentation/).

<sup>35</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-outcomes-and-teaching-excellence-consultations/outcome-and-experience-data/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-outcomes-and-teaching-excellence-consultations/outcome-and-experience-data/).

## Attainment rate

7. Attainment rates express the number of qualifiers from Level 6+ undergraduate degrees who were awarded 'first' or 'upper second' (2:1) degree classifications as a percentage of all those qualifiers from Level 6+ undergraduate degrees who were awarded classified degrees.
8. Prior to September 2022, attainment data was published based on the mode at which students were studying when they completed their course. Following the 'Consultation on constructing student outcome and experience indicators for use in OfS regulation' the decision has been made to use the mode of study at which a student started their instance of study. This has had an impact on the number of students being reported as studying part-time when reporting attainment. For example, in 2020-21 there were 22,690 students who were over 21 at the start of their studies and complete those studies as part-time students. However, there were only 21,210 who were recorded as having started their studies as part-time students. This, along with the change in the number of those students who received a first or upper second class degree, results in a change in rate from 68.2 per cent when reporting the mode of study on completion to 70.1 per cent when reporting the mode of study on commencement of the course.

## Progression rate

9. Progression measures are constructed from data reported through the Graduate Outcomes survey.
10. The progression rate is the proportion of qualifiers that identify managerial or professional employment, further study or other positive outcomes among the activities that they were undertaking when responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey 15 months after they left higher education.

## Domicile

11. As well as reporting for all domiciles combined, UK domiciled and non-UK domiciled students are reported separately. Data on apprenticeships for non-UK domiciled students has been removed from the publication due to small numbers, resulting in much of the data being suppressed.

## Level of study

12. The level of study that can be examined varies by mode of study, as outlined below:
  - a. Groupings available for full-time and part-time mode of study:
    - i. First degree
    - ii. Undergraduate with postgraduate components
    - iii. Other undergraduate
    - iv. Postgraduate research
    - v. Postgraduate taught masters
    - vi. PGCE

vii. Other postgraduate.

b. Groupings available for apprenticeship mode of study:

i. All undergraduate

ii. All postgraduate.

13. These levels of study are defined by IPLEVEL for continuation, completion and progression and using IPAWARDLEVEL for attainment.

14. Note that only students aiming for a full qualification are included. This means that those studying only for credits are not in scope.

15. The 'Sector data dashboard' uses different modes of study. The 'Entry qualification' section focuses only on first degree students. The 'Broad subject' section groups all undergraduate students (which includes 'First degree', 'Undergraduate with postgraduate components' and 'Other undergraduate') and all postgraduate students (which includes 'Postgraduate research', 'Postgraduate taught masters', 'PGCE' and 'Other postgraduate').

### **Mode of study**

16. Mode of study is defined by IPSTARTMODE for all students. Modes of study included are:

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Apprenticeship.

## **Student characteristics: official statistics**

### **Age on entry**

17. Age (both broad and detailed) refers to the age of the student on 31 August in the year they commence their studies. See IPSTARTAGEBAND.

### **Disability**

18. Disability (both broad and detailed) is self-reported by students at the point of starting their course. See IPDISABLETYPE.

### **Ethnicity**

19. Ethnicity information is provided by the student on the basis of their own self-assessment. See IPETHNICDETAIL. For this release, we report ethnicity in three different groupings: two groups, five groups, and 15 groups.

20. Ethnicity information is restricted to UK domiciled students in this release, as it is collected in the HESA Student record.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ethnic>.

## Sex

21. Sex is reported by the student as 'Male', 'Female', or 'Other sex'. See IPSEX.

## Gender identity

22. Gender identity information is collected on the HESA Student record<sup>37</sup> and HESA Student Alternative (SA) record<sup>38</sup> only. Students should, according to their own self-assessment, indicate if their gender identity is the same or different to the sex assigned at birth. The field is collected for all students, having become compulsory in 2019-20.

23. Having assessed the quality of this data against the OfS data quality framework,<sup>39</sup> it was decided to report this data for all students from 2018-19 onwards.<sup>40</sup>

## Religion or belief

24. Religion or belief is collected on the HESA Student record<sup>41</sup> and HESA SA record<sup>42</sup> only. It records the religious belief of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment. The field is collected for all students, having become compulsory in 2017-18.

25. Having assessed the quality of this data (see previous report), it was decided to report this data for all students from 2017-18 onwards.<sup>43</sup>

## Sexual orientation

26. Sexual orientation information is collected on the HESA Student record<sup>44</sup> and HESA SA record<sup>45</sup> only. It records the sexual orientation of the student, on the basis of their own self-assessment. The field is collected for all students, having become compulsory in 2019-20.

27. Having assessed the quality of this data,<sup>46</sup> it was decided to report this data for all students from 2015-16 onwards.<sup>47</sup> See IPSEXORT.

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<sup>37</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/genderid>.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054/a/genderid>.

<sup>39</sup> See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>40</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>41</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/reblf>.

<sup>42</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054/a/reblf>.

<sup>43</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sexort>.

<sup>45</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19054/a/sexort>.

<sup>46</sup> See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

## Parental higher education

28. Parental higher education data was collected on the HESA Student record only up to 2019-20. From 2020-21 onwards it is collected on the HESA Student record and the HESA SA record. It indicates whether one or more of the student's parents has a higher education qualification. On the HESA Student record this data is primarily collected as part of UCAS applications. Providers are also expected to collect this information for eligible students who did not use UCAS. Predecessor publications had restricted parental higher education data to students who could be matched to their UCAS application, but this did not make a substantial impact on outcomes or data quality, so was not used this time around. See IPPARED.
29. Having assessed the quality of this data,<sup>48</sup> it was decided to report this data for all students from 2012-13 onwards.<sup>49</sup>
30. However, as a result of changes to data collection requirements, the reporting of parental higher education data for most postgraduate students and non-UK domiciled students dropped considerably in 2020-21. Because of this change, from 2020-21 onwards, parental higher education data is only provided in this release for UK-domiciled undergraduate students.
31. As noted in paragraph 28, in 2020-21 parental higher education data was included on the HESA Student Alternative (SA) record for the first time. An initial assessment of the quality of this data showed low disclosure rates for some levels of study. Our data quality framework recommends that 'caution should be applied when using newly collected characteristic data as applying this framework has shown that the first year of reporting is often of inconsistent quality.' This being the case, we will assess the quality of this new source of data once we have more years available, but in this 2022 release the HESA SA data for parental higher education is not included.

## Free school meal eligibility

32. A student's eligibility for free school meals (FSM) can be used as an individual measure of disadvantage. To generate information on students' FSM eligibility, we have linked HESA Student, HESA Student Alternative and ILR data with schools' NPD data using person-based linking.<sup>50</sup> We link to NPD school census data at key stage 4, from 2009-10 onwards. This has information on pupils attending maintained schools in England. From spring 2013-14, this includes local authority maintained Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision academies, including alternative provision free schools. Students are included in the FSM data if they were under 21 on commencement of their studies and were successfully linked to records from the

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<sup>47</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>48</sup> See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>49</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>50</sup> See paragraphs 199-201 of 'Technical algorithms for student outcome and experience measures' available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/description-and-definition-of-student-outcome-and-experience-measures/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/description-and-definition-of-student-outcome-and-experience-measures/).

NPD. The DfE does not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the NPD data by third parties.

### **Participation of local areas (POLAR4)**

33. The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification<sup>51</sup> groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education. It looks at how likely young people are to participate in higher education across the UK and shows how this varies by area. POLAR classifies local areas into five groups – or quintiles – based on the proportion of 18-year-olds who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old. Quintile 1 shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile 5 shows the highest rate of participation. In England it is calculated at middle-layer super output area (MSOA). See IPPOLAR4.

### **Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)**

34. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 is a measure of deprivation for small areas within England. It is calculated at lower-layer super output area (LSOA) level and uses a number of different measures to determine levels of deprivation. It is produced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).<sup>52</sup> In this analysis, we group areas into quintiles (as opposed to deciles), where the most deprived areas are in quintile 1 and the least deprived are in quintile 5. See IPIMDNATION.

### **Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)**

35. This field shows the 2019 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)<sup>53</sup> quintile of a student for students with a home postcode in England. The index is based on all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.

36. Values are assigned as 1 to 5, with 1 being the quintile of highest deprivation. See IPIDACI.

### **Care experience**

37. Data on care experience is collected for entrants on the HESA Student record only.<sup>54</sup> See IPCARELEAVER.

38. For English providers, care experience can be recorded as one of two categories. Firstly, data is recorded as part of the UCAS application via student self-disclosure. Providers are then able to verify care status and, where they confirm the student was in care, this is recorded as a different category which takes precedence over the UCAS category. Providers can choose to what extent they verify care status and they may use different verification criteria. For the purposes of this analysis these two categories are combined into one called 'care experienced'.

39. Since collection of this data began in 2013-14 for entrants only, and the quality for entrants is deemed sufficient from 2014-15 onwards, it was decided that coverage for qualifiers and all students (for whom collection will be lagged) should begin from 2016-17 onwards.

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<sup>51</sup> For more details of the POLAR measure, see [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/).

<sup>52</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

<sup>53</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>.

<sup>54</sup> See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/careleaver>.

40. For providers in England, HESA collects care experience information for all Home/EU undergraduate and PGCE students. However, to maintain consistency and avoid misrepresenting the non-UK domiciled and postgraduate populations, it was decided to report for UK domiciled undergraduate students only.
41. The June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' report<sup>55</sup> gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of care experience data in this analysis.

### **Household Residual Income (HRI)**

42. Household Residual Income (HRI) is assessed based on gross income (before tax and National Insurance) after accounting for certain costs such as dependants and pensions. It is based on Student Loans Company (SLC) data, and so is only available for those who have applied for income-dependent financial support. Further details of the collection of HRI are published by the SLC.<sup>56</sup>
43. HRI data is collected on continuous scale so we have condensed the data into four groups for this analysis. The groups we have chosen are: £0, £1-£25,000, £25,001-£42,600 and £42,601 and over. These boundaries were determined based on values of HRI used when assigning loans and bursaries.
44. The assessment of HRI differs depending on the student's dependency status. If a student is dependent on their parents, then HRI is based on parental income. However, if the student is independent then HRI is based on their income (and their partner's income, if they have one). Dependency status is determined by the SLC. Examples of why a student may be considered independent include being 25 years old and over, not living with their parents, being married, having children, and being a care leaver. A full list of reasons is published by the SLC.<sup>57</sup> The background, experiences and outcomes of dependent and independent students are different, so we treat the HRI data for these two groups of students separately, creating separate measures for each.
45. The disclosure of HRI is not a compulsory part of a student loan application. If a student or their parents are aware that their HRI is at a level that means their student loan entitlement will not be increased by income assessment, or if they have other evidence of low income which means submitting income is not necessary, then their financial information will not be recorded. This leads to a reduction in disclosure rates, which could mean the data presented is not representative of the wider student population.

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<sup>55</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>56</sup> See <https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/>.

<sup>56</sup> See document 'How you're assessed and paid', available at [www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents).

<sup>57</sup> See document 'How you're assessed and paid', available at [www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents](http://www.gov.uk/student-finance/new-fulltimestudents).

46. For some courses, such as nursing prior to 2017-18, a student may have an SLC record but receive finance that is not assigned using HRI. Again, these students would not be required to provide this information.
47. Income-dependent maintenance loans were only introduced for part-time students from 1 August 2018 onwards.<sup>58</sup> This means that, before this point, very few part-time students reported any HRI information. We are therefore waiting for a consistent time series to be established before reporting HRI data for part-time students. In addition, because part-time distance learners are only eligible for a maintenance loan if they are studying long distance because of a disability,<sup>59</sup> it may be that the data will still not be a fair reflection of the profile of part-time students, even once a time series is well established.
48. While HRI data is collected for those studying towards a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), we do not report this information in this release, since these courses are not representative of the wider postgraduate population.
49. The HRI data in this release applies to students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. Students domiciled in Scotland are not included because they do not submit their financial information to the SLC as part of their student support applications.
50. The June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' report<sup>60</sup> gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of HRI data in this analysis. It was decided to report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish full-time undergraduates from 2011-12 onwards, with separate measures according to dependency status.

## **Estrangement**

51. Student estrangement is recorded by the SLC on a case-by-case basis. To be recorded as estranged, a student must be irreconcilably estranged from their living biological or adoptive parents for a considerable period of time (usually at least 12 months). This being the case, there will be students who are estranged but are not recorded as such, because they do not have an SLC record or have chosen not to declare their estrangement to the SLC. There may also be students who consider themselves to be estranged from their parents but do not fulfil the requirements of the SLC to be recorded as estranged.
52. Furthermore, the SLC only records estrangement for students under 25 years of age and there will be students who are 25 and over who are estranged from their parents but not recorded as such in the data. For this reason, these statistics are limited to students who are under 25 as of 31 August in their academic year reported.

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<sup>58</sup> See 'Student finance: how you're assessed and paid', page 25, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid>.

<sup>59</sup> See 'Student finance: how you're assessed and paid', page 25, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid>.

<sup>60</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

53. Estrangement status can change during a student's course, but if a student was recorded as estranged at any point during their time at the provider we include them as part of the estranged population.
54. The SLC data is a record of the estranged students in the current year and does not record students as not estranged. We have therefore assumed that all students with a linked SLC record who are not recorded as 'estranged' are not estranged. This results in us calculating a disclosure rate of 100 per cent for students with an SLC record relating to their current provider when applying our data quality framework. As mentioned above, there may be cases where a student considers themselves to be estranged but they are not recorded as such with the SLC and will be included in the 'not estranged' population in these calculations.
55. For more information on our use of estrangement data from the SLC, see 'Annex G: Estrangement' to our report 'Differences in student outcomes – further characteristics'.<sup>61</sup> Note that, while the methodology behind estrangement information is the same, the population coverage in that report differs from this release.
56. While estrangement data is collected for those studying towards a PGCE, we do not report this information in this release, since these courses are not representative of the wider postgraduate population.
57. The estrangement data in this release applies to students domiciled in England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. Students domiciled in Scotland are not included because of a lack of data availability. Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales and Student Finance Northern Ireland have the same criteria for a student to be considered estranged.
58. Annex A of the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' report<sup>62</sup> contains an assessment of the use of estrangement data against the data quality framework. It was decided to report for English, Welsh and Northern Irish undergraduates aged under 25 in the academic year reported, from 2014-15 onwards.

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<sup>61</sup> Available at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>62</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

## Socioeconomic background

59. National Statistics socioeconomic classification (NS-SEC)<sup>63</sup> data is collected on the HESA Student record and further details regarding its collection can be found on their website.<sup>64</sup> NS-SEC data is also available on the ILR; however, this data is not currently considered useable by the OfS due to quality concerns.<sup>65</sup> See IPSEC.
60. The collection of the NS-SEC data differs depending on the student's entry age. For students aged 21 and over at entry, it is based on their occupation prior to starting their course. For students under 21, it is based on the occupation of their parent, step-parent or guardian who earns the most. However, because collection of socioeconomic background data by HESA is limited to UK domiciled undergraduates who entered their higher education instance via a UCAS scheme,<sup>66</sup> and only the minority of mature students enter higher education in this way, we report this information for young students (under 21 on entry) only.
61. In addition, because there are few young part-time students entering higher education through UCAS, socioeconomic background data is reported for full-time (or apprenticeship) students only.
62. The June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' report<sup>67</sup> gives a summary of the data quality framework conclusions for use of socioeconomic background data in this analysis. It was decided to report this data for young full-time UK domiciled undergraduates, who entered their higher education instance via a UCAS scheme, from 2015-16 onwards.

## Tracking underrepresentation by area (TUNDRA)

63. TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) is an area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England to calculate young participation.<sup>68</sup>
64. TUNDRA classifies local areas across England into five equal groups – or quintiles – based on the proportion of 16-year-old state-funded mainstream school pupils who participate in higher education aged 18 or 19 years. Quintile 1 shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile 5 shows the highest rate of participation.
65. TUNDRA is a different measure to POLAR4 because it focuses on the participation rate of state-funded mainstream school pupils and only applies to England.

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<sup>63</sup> See

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassificationnssecrebasedonsoc2010>.

<sup>64</sup> See [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sec](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/sec).

<sup>65</sup> See 'Annex F: Socioeconomic background' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).

<sup>66</sup> Defined by the HESA field 'UCASAPPID'. See <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c19051/a/ucasappid>.

<sup>67</sup> See the June 2021 OfS 'Equality, diversity and student characteristics data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/equality-diversity-and-student-characteristics-data-2010-11-to-2019-20/).

<sup>68</sup> See [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-tundra/).

66. In this release, we use both available definitions of a local area for TUNDRA quintiles, the Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and the Middle-layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs)
67. Although TUNDRA is calculated using data from English state-funded mainstream schools only, TUNDRA quintiles exist for all local areas in England, which means they can be applied to any pupil with a known English postcode, even if they did not attend a state-funded mainstream school. For this reason, in this release, we present two versions of the measure: one for all young English undergraduates (from 2010-11 onwards), and one restricted to young English undergraduates from state-funded mainstream schools only.
68. For the version of this measure that is restricted to pupils from state-funded mainstream schools in England, this can only be applied to students with a linked NPD record. Therefore, for the same reason that free school meals data is reported for different years for entrants and qualifiers, we report from 2014-15 onwards for entrants and from 2016-17 onwards for the qualifiers and all students populations.
69. Throughout this release, state-funded mainstream schools in England are defined by the NPD field 'KS4\_NFTYPE'.<sup>69</sup>
70. TUNDRA quintiles are assigned according to home postcodes, for which coverage exceeds 99 per cent of young English undergraduates. See last year's report for a summary of applying the data quality framework against this measure. For the version of this measure which is restricted further to young English undergraduates from state-funded mainstream schools only, the conclusions of the data quality framework were the same as for other linked NPD data used.

### **Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) quintiles**

71. Associations between characteristics of students (ABCS) is a set of measures that seeks a better understanding of how outcomes vary for groups of students with different sets of characteristics (for example, ethnicity, sex and background).
72. According to a given combination of these characteristics, students were assigned to one of five groups – or quintiles – based on the likelihood of young people with that combination of characteristics having a positive outcome in higher education.
73. In this publication, we report six different ABCS measures: Continuation (Full-time), Continuation (Part-time), Completion (Full-time), Completion (Part-time), Progression (Full-time), Progression (Part-time). Each of these measures refers to a different population and will use a different set of characteristics.
74. ABCS data is reported from 2015-16 for Continuation (Full-time), from 2014-15 for Continuation (Part-time), from 2012-13 for Completion (Full-time), from 2010-11 for Completion (Part-time), from 2017-18 for Progression (full-time) and from 2017-18 for progression (Part-time).

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<sup>69</sup> This includes the values: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 51, 52, 57, 58, 59, 63 and 64. See [https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data\\_elements/1267f84a-3913-4358-bebe-17959988bf26](https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/en/data_elements/1267f84a-3913-4358-bebe-17959988bf26).

## Entry qualifications

75. This field categorises students, where the student has A-levels, Scottish Highers, Scottish Advanced Highers, International Baccalaureate or BTECs on entry, into groups according to the highest grades for these qualification types. See IPGRADECOMB.

## Broad subject of study

76. A new subject coding system, the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS), was introduced in the 2019-20 academic year. This replaced the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) used in previous years. In this analysis, subject codes (both JACS and HECoS) are mapped to Version 1.3 of the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH).

77. Level 2 categorisation (CAH2) codes are used, which are then further aggregated into 10 groups for 'Subject of study (broad)'. See IPSBJ\_BROAD.

78. The change from JACS to HECoS causes some additional variation in the distribution of subjects between 2018-19 and 2019-20 on top of the usual year-on-year variation, which can also be due to changes in the providers reporting to HESA. Therefore, this should be taken into consideration when drawing comparisons between these two academic years.

## Student characteristics: experimental statistics

**We are keen to receive feedback on these experimental statistics. If you have any queries or suggestions, please contact Jim Owen at [official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk](mailto:official.statistics@officeforstudents.org.uk).**

## Service child

79. The children of military services personnel (service child) measure is based on the population of students matched to the Department for Education's National Pupil Database (NPD).<sup>70</sup> It indicates if a pupil had parent(s) who were serving in regular military units of any forces and exercising parental care and responsibility, when the child was in key stage 4.

80. The NPD census for key stage 4 covers pupils attending maintained and independent schools in England and includes the 'ServiceChild' field that we use from 2007-08. For service child data, censuses for academic years from 2007-08 (the first year in which the data was collected) to the latest have been matched to HESA and ILR student records. From academic year 2013-14, the NPD data includes local authority-maintained Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision academies, including alternative provision free schools. Since pupils are generally 15 years old in their last year of key stage 4, 2012-13 is the earliest academic year that a full cohort of young entrants (under 21 on entry) can be tracked back to the NPD.

81. Consequently, service child measures are reported for 2012-13 onwards for entrants (students included in the continuation and completion measures). For the qualifier populations (those used in the attainment and progression measures), the first year reported is 2014-15, since these cohorts are older and so fewer students can be linked to an NPD record in earlier years.

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<sup>70</sup> See <https://find-npd-data.education.gov.uk/>.

82. A summary of applying our data quality framework<sup>71</sup> to the service child data eligibility can be found in Table C1.

**Table C1: Summary of applying data quality framework to service child data**

<b>Framework criteria</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Data source	National Pupil Database (ServiceChild_[term][yy])
Year data collection started	2007-08
Summary of data field	Whether a pupil has parent(s) who are Service personnel serving in regular military units of all forces and exercising parental care and responsibility
Student population data available for	UK-domiciled students who attended school in England
<b>Part I – Data availability</b>	
I.A – documentation	Well-documented
I.B – disclosure rate	Available for >95 per cent of appropriate student population
I.C – provider response	NA
<b>Part II – Data quality</b>	
II.A – identified data issues	Data not reported by providers but linked via NPD.
II.B – reporting consistency	Data not reported by providers so does not reflect whether data is being reported inconsistently. However, inconsistency scores are below 0.3 for all years, indicating that there is low variability in the proportions of students who did and did not have a parent(s) who were Service personnel during their GCSE year.
II.C – comparisons to public	Comparable statistics for the general population could not be found.
<b>Outcome</b>	Data used for 2012-13 entrants onwards

<sup>71</sup> See 'Annex A: Data quality framework – a method for assessing the quality of student characteristic data' at [www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/](http://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/differences-in-student-outcomes-further-characteristics/).



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