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Progression of College Students  
in England to Higher Education

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# Executive summary

This report presents the findings of research undertaken for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) into the progression to higher education of students from all the FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges in England. It is longitudinal research and the report relates to cohorts of students between the academic years 2007-08 and 2011-12 entering higher education (HE) between the years 2008-09 and 2012-13.

This research provides a unique and comprehensive picture of the very different factors underlying the progression behaviour of students progressing to higher education from colleges rather than from school sixth forms. It is unique because it traces progression into both full and part-time higher education and into higher education offered in colleges themselves as well as universities. It is comprehensive because it looks at both the college courses that students progress from and the HE courses they progress to and it analyses trends over time looking at underlying demographic data. It illustrates the added value that FE and Sixth Form Colleges contribute by looking at the GCSE results students leave school with before going to college and it looks at the achievement rates of those awarded degrees including those with First and Upper Second class honours.

The research findings are based on the matching of Individualised Learner Record (ILR) datasets for 2007-08 to 2011-12 for FE and Sixth Form College students that achieved Level 3 qualifications, with ILR and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) datasets for 2008-09 to 2012-13. They provide a detailed analysis of the progression of students to higher education over time and the report breaks down progression into prescribed and non-prescribed higher education as well as progression to university and to higher education offered by FE Colleges (HE in FE). The matched records contain course level data as well as demographic information about the student cohorts such as age, gender, ethnicity and domicile including deprivation. The course level data provides details of the institutions and types of courses students progressed from (A level, Access, BTEC, NVQ, etc) and the programmes and institutions they progressed to. This richness in the data provides a wide set of variables that can be intersected and compared and this report provides a selection of the key factors arising from the analysis. There is the opportunity to drill down further into the data to obtain more detailed regional, institutional or themed outputs.

The methodology underpinning the analysis has been developed with HESA and with HEFCE through previous research (Joslin & Smith, 2013), (Joslin & Smith, 2013a) and (Joslin & Smith, 2014). An important new element has been included in this report, which is matching with the Department for Education's Key Stage 4 (KS4) datasets. This has provided new information about the kinds of qualifications FE and Sixth Form College students leave school with and the role of colleges in transforming their life chances through providing the opportunity to achieve at Level 3 and to progress on to higher education.

## Terminology

The English qualification system is complex and as this report is based on tracking college students completing certain types of qualification into different qualifications in higher education institutions, the following is presented as a clarification of terms used in this executive summary and throughout the report.



Levels	Qualifications
FE College or Sixth Form College level three qualifications	<b>A levels; International Baccalaureate (IB)</b> <sup>1</sup> ; <b>BTEC; Access to HE; AS level</b> and <b>Other Vocational</b> qualifications (which include other qualifications like Art Foundation and Cache Diploma as well as other vocational full and part-time Certificate and Diploma programmes).
Higher education qualifications in Universities and FE Colleges	<b>Prescribed higher education</b> – Delivered in universities and FE Colleges with funding directed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) <sup>2</sup> . The following qualifications are included: <b>First degrees</b> (level 6) and <b>Other Undergraduate (OUG)</b> qualifications including <b>Higher National Certificates (HNC)</b> and <b>Certificates of Higher Education</b> at level 4; <b>Higher National Diplomas (HND)</b> , <b>Diplomas of Higher Education</b> and <b>Foundation degrees</b> at level 5.
	<b>Non-prescribed higher education</b> – Delivered in FE Colleges with funding directed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) up to 2010 and since then by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Qualifications include <b>NVQ</b> programmes and <b>Professional Certificates</b> and <b>Diplomas</b> at levels 4 and 5.

## Headlines

**Numbers:** A total of **1,855,050** Level 3 students from FE and Sixth Form Colleges were tracked over five years (2008-2012). **82%** were from FE Colleges and **18%** from Sixth Form Colleges. **70%** of the students tracked were aged 17-19, **30%** were adults over 20. **729,425** or **40%** of the students tracked were from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the country.

**Progression:** Between 2008 and 2012 a total of **795,470** FE College and Sixth Form College students progressed to higher education. The progression rate for those proceeding to study HE immediately following their college course averaged **34%** increasing to **48%** when tracked over a number of years.

**HE in FE:** **120,620** (15%) students elected to study higher education in an FE College over the period. **71%**, or **85,945** of these students progressed to degree and Other Undergraduate programmes in colleges and 29% or **34,675** of them progressed to “non-prescribed” HE which includes professional qualifications and NVQs at levels 4 and 5 offered by FE Colleges.

**Student characteristics:** Postcode analysis provides the basis for different indices of deprivation and educational disadvantage. **29%** of the FE and Sixth Form College students in 2011-12 who progressed, for example, came from the most educationally disadvantaged neighbourhoods in England. Of these, **42%** progressed to higher education in FE Colleges (HE in FE).

<sup>1</sup> In this report the International Baccalaureate (IB) is grouped with A levels

<sup>2</sup> Technically, the SFA can fund prescribed HE and it plans to when specified as part of a higher apprenticeship

**Progression of low attainers form school:** Looking at the students aged 19 and under who had achieved Level 3 qualifications between 2009 and 2011, **30%** had not achieved 5 GCSEs grade A\*-C and **39%** had not achieved 5 GCSE A\*-C including English and Maths at Key Stage 4 in school. **27%** of the students with less than 5 GCES grade A\*-C (described as low KS4 attaining students) were classified as disadvantaged, living in the lowest **20%** of neighbourhoods using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index. Despite this, **38%** of these previously lower attaining students progressed to higher education. That is nearly 87,000 young people entering HE through opportunities provided by FE.

**Achievement:** The 2008 and 2009 cohorts of students who went to university to study First degrees were tracked to check their HE results. **75%** of them achieved a First degree, a further **7%** achieved an Other Undergraduate qualification like a Foundation degree and **62%** of those who achieved First degrees got First or Upper Second class honours. Compared to figures for all school and college students in England, with rates of **79%** achieving their degrees (HESA, 2012), and **64%** of them getting Firsts and Upper Seconds (HESA, 2010), this report highlights the success of FE and Sixth Form College students when their demographic background is taken into account.

## Key Results

The following are the key findings, firstly about the cohorts of Level 3 students and secondly about those who progress to higher education.

### Key facts about the tracked student cohorts 2007-08 to 2011-12

#### *The tracked cohorts*

- In total across five year cohorts, **1,855,050** Level 3 achievers were tracked. Cohort numbers fluctuated for each of the five cohorts but between the first cohort in 2007-08 and the last cohort in 2011-12, there was an 8% growth in numbers.

#### *FE College and Sixth Form College breakdown*

- 82% were from FE Colleges and 18% from Sixth Form Colleges. Sixth Form College numbers increased by 33% across the tracked cohorts.
- The Sixth Form College cohort were studying predominantly A level whereas the FE College cohort were studying a whole range of Level 3 courses. In both institution types, there has been an increase in students achieving BTEC qualifications at Level 3.

#### *Age*

- The population of young Level 3 students tracked (17-19) grew considerably, up by +46% between 2007-08 and 2011-12. In contrast, the population of Level 3 students aged 25+ fell by -39%. By 2011-12, 70% of the tracked cohort were between 17 and 19 years old.

### ***Regions***

- There were big regional variations in Level 3 learner numbers in the tracked cohort. For example, the North West and the South East had 16% each of the Level 3 population in 2011-12 compared to London with 13% and the North East 5%.

### ***Educational disadvantage***

- **41%**, or **160,395** of the 2011-12 tracked cohort were from the lowest two groups representing the most educationally disadvantaged areas in England (HEFCE's POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2). This is slightly higher than in 2007-08 (38%).
- Educational disadvantage varies depending on qualification, for example, 44% of BTEC students were classified as most educationally disadvantaged (HEFCE's POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2) compared to 33% of A level students.

### ***Gender***

- The gender split has remained stable with more females than males; in 2011-12, 55% of Level 3 students were female.

### ***Ethnic groups***

- Around 24% of the students in each of the cohorts were from Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BME).
- Age is significant at ethnic group level, for example, 78% of the Bangladeshi cohort are aged 20 or under compared to 54% of the Black African cohort.
- The majority of FE Level 3 students from BME groups are domiciled in London (59% of London's 2011-12 cohort of Level 3 students were from BME groups).

### ***Programmes of study***

- In 2007-08, BTEC students made up 22% of the total students. By 2011-12, this had grown to 41%, or 158,955 of the tracked cohort studying BTEC qualifications, double the number of A level students.
- The number of students on Other Vocational Level 3 programmes, such as NVQs, certificates or diplomas dropped substantially, from 179,235 in 2007-08 to 123,570 in 2011-12. However this is still a considerable number and the second highest populated group in the cohort.

## Key facts about progression trends

### *Numbers progressing and progression rates*

- **795,470** FE College and Sixth Form College students progressed to higher education between 2007-08 and 2011-12.
- The 2010-11 cohort saw the highest rate of students progressing immediately to higher education at **37%**, mirroring the peak observed in national participation rates in 2011-12, the year before higher fees were introduced in 2012-13. After this, the immediate rate dropped to **33%** in 2011-12 for the cohort progressing into higher education in 2012-13.
- Apart from the peak 37% rate in 2010-11 (into HE 2011-12), the rate remained fairly stable at around 32% to 33%.
- **Longitudinal tracking** – significant numbers of FE students progressed in the years following achievement of their Level 3 qualifications. When tracked over 5 years, **48%** of the 2007-08 cohort progressed to higher education. This shows the importance of longitudinal tracking as the immediate progression rate for this cohort was **32%**.
- Young students between 2007-08 and 2011-12 had an immediate progression rate of between 47% and 50% but this dropped considerably to 37% for the last cohort in 2011-12 who entered higher education in 2012-13, showing that the introduction of higher fees impacted this group significantly. In contrast, progression rates for the older age groups did not appear, at first glance, to have been affected by the higher fee introductions and the progression rates for older students actually increased. This may be due to student numbers for both of the older age groups falling, especially students studying Other Vocational programmes at Level 3 which have lower progression rates in general.
- Progression of mature students appears also to have been bolstered by increased provision in 'Other Undergraduate' (OUG)<sup>3</sup> programmes delivered by FE Colleges. Mature students in the 25+ age group are just as likely to enter an Other Undergraduate programme as a First degree programme.

### *HE in FE*

- 20% (**25,665**) of the 2011-12 cohort that progressed into higher education in 2012-13 (128,780 in total) progressed to HE in FE Colleges. This is more than twice as many as those who went on to HE in FE in 2007-08 (**12,390**).
- The majority of First degree provision was delivered by Universities although FE Colleges increased their delivery of First degree courses to FE Level 3 students by 1,745 students between 2007-08 and 2011-12.

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<sup>3</sup> See p.7 for an explanation of 'Other Undergraduate' (OUG)

- FE Colleges also increased their provision of Foundation degree courses and HNC and HND courses and this was through direct funded HE provision where the college was directly funded by HEFCE rather than franchised through a university.
- There was significant growth in HE entrants to Other Undergraduate (OUG) programmes where the numbers increased by 7,945 between 2007-08 and 2011-12.
- Increases in Other Undergraduate HE entrants from courses in Leisure, Travel and Tourism and Business, Administration and Law were particularly high.
- HE in FE is more dominant in some regions than others. In London, **14%** of HE provision progressed to was delivered by FE Colleges (2011-12) compared to **30%** in the North East.
- In 2012-13, **42%** of students who entered HE in FE programmes were classified as educationally disadvantaged (POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2) compared to **36%** of students who went onto university.

### ***Educational disadvantage***

- **30%** of the 2011-12 cohort of students who came from the most educationally disadvantaged lower two quintiles (HEFCE's POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2), progressed to higher education with **42%** of them progressing to HE in FE.
- In 2012-13, **61%** of the most educationally disadvantaged POLAR3 Quintile (Q1) students entering higher education, progressed to Other Undergraduate programmes including Foundation degrees, HNDs, HNCs and other programmes. **19%** progressed to non-prescribed higher education in colleges.

### ***Trends in progression by different qualification types***

- The HE progression rates of Level 3 students studying Access to HE and GCE A level were higher than those studying vocational programmes (BTEC and Other Vocational). Around 64% of A level students progressed in 2011-12 compared to 29% of BTEC students. The majority of A level and Access to HE students went onto a First degree programme.
- The progression **rates** for 2011-12 BTEC students who entered in 2012-13 dipped substantially from earlier years and this was likely due to two key factors: a particularly large increase in the Level 3 BTEC population and the introduction of increased fees. Nevertheless, BTEC Level 3 HE entrant **numbers** were at their highest for the 2011-12 cohort.
- Meanwhile, average progression rates for Access to HE (69%) and A level students (64%) were not substantially affected by increased fees and cohort sizes remained fairly static for these groups.
- There was a large increase in the numbers of 2011-12 students progressing to non-prescribed higher education in colleges, three times the rate in 2007-08.

- Level 3 students on Other Vocational programmes showed a slightly higher progression rate over time, 9% in 2007-08 to 12% in 2011-12, but this was against a significantly decreased cohort number and increased provision in OUG programmes delivered by FE Colleges. Nearly half of those on Other Vocational Level 3 courses went onto study an OUG programme.

### ***HE achievement rates and grades of Level 3 students who progress to First degree programmes***

The 2008-09 and 2009-10 cohorts entering higher education were tracked to investigate their HE achievements.

- **75%** of them achieved their intended award of a First degree, just slightly lower than the **79%** reported for all England HE entrants.
- A further 7% of the tracked cohort did not achieve their First degree but did achieve an Other Undergraduate qualification such as a HNC, HND or Foundation degree, giving an overall **82%** HE achievement rate.
- There were differences in achievement rates depending on the type of FE qualification studied. A level entrants had an achievement rate at **83%**, Access to HE had a rate of **62%** and BTEC entrants achieved at a rate of **67%**.
- Degree classification data showed that **62%** of FE and Sixth Form College students who achieved their degrees, achieved a First or an Upper Second class honours. This is just under the **64%** good degree attainment rate reported by HESA for all UK qualifiers.
- There were differences by entry qualification type for the Level 3 cohort who achieved a First degree: 70% of A level students, compared to 50% of BTEC students, achieved a First or Upper Second class honours degree.

### ***Prior Key Stage 4 GCSE attainment at secondary school of the younger Level 3 cohort of FE and Sixth Form College students 2009-2011***

Key stage 4 (KS4) is measured by pupils in schools gaining GCSE qualifications. GCSEs are at Level 2 and the main performance measure adopted by the DfE is determined by the achievement of 5 GCSEs graded between A\* to C including English and Maths (DfE, 2014 b). However the strict definition of a “full Level 2” is through the achievement of qualifications “equivalent to 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C (BIS, 2015). In this study we refer to both but differentiate according to the DfE definition which, by including English and Maths, describes the group most likely to progress through Level 3 qualifications to higher education. Pupils without the 5 GCSEs A\*-C are considered to be “low attainers” at KS4. In this study we have used the term “**lower attainers**” to identify those who did not attain 5 GCSEs (A\*-C) **including English and Maths**. Many without 5 GCSEs progress from school to college and undertake Level 2 vocational programmes. Others, usually those who may have, or have nearly, achieved a full Level 2 are accepted on to vocational programmes. The Government, following recommendations in the Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011), has now introduced “Study Programmes”

(DfE, 2014 a) for all 16-19 students where English and Maths are compulsory for students yet to achieve an A\*-C grade.

- **30%** of the younger Level 3 achiever cohort had not attained 5 GCSEs at A\*-C at KS4 in secondary school and **39%** had not achieved 5 GCSEs including English and Maths GCSE at A\*-C (KS4 low attaining). Of these lower attainers 38% progressed to HE.
- 27% of the KS4 lower attaining students were classified as disadvantaged, living in the lowest 20% of neighbourhoods using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index.
- HE progression was higher for those who attained a full Level 2 at KS4 in secondary schools than for lower attaining students without a full Level 2 (**64%** compared to the **38% mentioned above**).
- BTEC, Access to HE, NVQ and Other Vocational Level 3 programmes provide important stepping stones for lower KS4 attaining students where over half or more of students who achieved these qualifications at Level 3 had not attained a full Level 2 at KS4 at secondary school.
- Of the **38%** of lower attaining students who progressed, **39%** went onto HE delivered in FE Colleges; a higher proportion of lower attaining KS4 students went onto HE in FE than those students who achieved a full Level 2 including English and Maths (**14%**).
- Lower attaining KS4 students who successfully progress to HE are less likely to go onto a First degree programme than their peers with a full Level 2 including English and Maths and more likely to go onto a Other Undergraduate programme such as a HNC, HND or Foundation degree.
- In London, **47%** of the cohort were classified as lower attaining students compared to, say, the South East, where **34%** of the cohort were lower attaining. Nevertheless, London still had the highest HE progression rates for lower attaining students, signifying the importance of place and provision. (London also has high proportions of BME students in the cohort who have generally higher HE progression rates).



# 1. Introduction

The findings in this report are based on longitudinal research tracking the progression to higher education of Level 3 students from all FE and Sixth Form Colleges in England. This was based on matching ILR data for Level 3 achievers from datasets comprising 297 FE Colleges and 85 Sixth Form Colleges<sup>4</sup> in England with both ILR HE levels and with HESA data sets. The findings differentiate between prescribed and non-prescribed higher education and between college-based higher education and university-based higher education.

This study is based on the longitudinal tracking methodology developed by the University of Greenwich team to address a gap in recent detailed knowledge about the progression to all forms of higher education (both prescribed and non-prescribed) for these students. As such, it provides a unique and comprehensive coverage for these groups.

## 1.1 Structure of the report

This report is structured simply. The first part examines factors relating to the cohorts which are being analysed and the second part relates to those who progressed to higher education, including eventual HE achievement and prior achievement of GCSEs at Key Stage 4 in school. The Executive Summary provides key messages from the report and the introduction, context and methodology sections situate the main analysis within its context. Finally, the conclusions relate to implications for policy and institutional and organisational strategies.

## 1.2 Research aims and objectives

In 2011-12, around 400,000 students achieved a Level 3 qualification in an FE College or Sixth Form College funded by the Skills Funding Agency. The Department for Education (DfE, 2014) reported that 25% of all students with a Level 3 qualification at age 19 are in an FE College or Sixth Form College. Unlike secondary schools, where the majority of students are young and studying either A levels or BTEC qualifications, in FE Colleges, students of all ages are studying a wider range of Level 3 qualifications including vocational programmes. Furthermore, a substantial number of students studying Level 3 in FE Colleges are studying flexible, part-time programmes. For these reasons, treating this group of students as a homogenous group is unhelpful and overall progression rates for FE students will mask the progression variances found within the cohort. Clearly, age and qualification type will be important predictors of progression.

Mature students have multiple motivations for studying courses at Level 3, including progression to higher education. This research aims to understand the differentials in progression rates for different groups of Level 3 students in FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges, presenting contextualised data on patterns of progression by learner characteristic, place of delivery and level of HE study.

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<sup>4</sup> This is the number of institutions of each type with a unique reference number in the ILR. Over the period of this study, there have been changes as colleges merged, closed or opened.



The research also explores progression longitudinally, so as well as examining immediate progression (the year after Level 3 qualification), the data also looks at longer term progression, following Level 3 achievement. This helps to explore the extent to which students are entering HE at different times in their life cycle and raises some questions regarding provision. Analysing patterns of progression for Level 3 students in FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges over time also enables inquiry into the achievement of these students showing their HE achievement rates and degree classifications.

Finally, the research also considers the importance of prior attainment at KS4 (GCSEs) in secondary schools. Here, prior attainment at Level 2 is explored comparing the progression to higher education of students who achieve at least 5 GCSEs or equivalent at grades A\*-C (full Level 2) those with 5 GCSEs (A\*-C) including English and Maths and those who achieve less than 5 GCSEs at these grades. This level of attainment is important as it signals a currency for progression where a full Level 2 is often a requisite for entering a Level 3 qualification, and, more so, for entering HE study. The research aims to identify groups of students with lower prior attainment, who achieved at Level 3 in FE, and who then successfully entered and achieved in higher education - an indication of the important role that the FE sector plays for this group of students.

### 1.3 Terminology

The English qualification system is complex and as this report is based on tracking college students completing certain types of qualification into different qualifications in higher education institutions, the following is presented again as a clarification of terms used throughout the report.

Levels	Qualifications
FE College or Sixth Form College level three qualifications	<b>A levels; International Baccalaureate (IB)<sup>5</sup>; BTEC; Access to HE; AS level and Other Vocational</b> qualifications (which include other qualifications like Art Foundation and Cache Diploma as well as other vocational full and part-time Certificate and Diploma programmes).
Higher education qualifications in Universities and FE Colleges	<b>Prescribed higher education</b> – Delivered in universities and FE Colleges with funding directed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) <sup>6</sup> . The following qualifications are included: <b>First degrees</b> (level 6) and <b>Other Undergraduate (OUG)</b> qualifications including <b>Higher National Certificates (HNC)</b> and <b>Certificates of Higher Education</b> at level 4; <b>Higher National Diplomas (HND), Diplomas of Higher Education</b> and <b>Foundation degrees</b> at level 5.
	<b>Non-prescribed higher education</b> – Delivered in FE Colleges with funding directed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) up to 2010 and since then by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Qualifications include <b>NVQ</b> programmes and <b>Professional Certificates</b> and <b>Diplomas</b> at levels 4 and 5.

<sup>5</sup> In this report the International Baccalaureate (IB) is grouped with A levels

<sup>6</sup> Technically, the SFA can fund prescribed HE and it plans to when specified as part of a higher apprenticeship

## 2. Context

This new data on the progression of college students provides a dynamic picture of the journeys **1,855,050** FE and Sixth Form College students have made to higher education. It charts their demographic backgrounds, the courses they undertake in further education and the levels of courses and higher education institutions to which they progress. The picture is compelling because it is longitudinal: it looks at the progression behaviour of five different cohorts of college students from 2007-08 through to 2011-12, it includes progression to both prescribed and non-prescribed HE and HE delivered in FE and in universities. And because the matching includes entrants to part-time higher education, entrants to HE level non-prescribed professional courses and NVQs and other entrants who may have enrolled without making applications through UCAS, it enables analysis of rich, complex and comprehensive data that includes all Level 3 college entrants to higher education.

### 2.1 The FE sector

The FE sector in England is currently made up of 297 FE Colleges and 93 Sixth Form Colleges<sup>7</sup>. It offers a wide range of vocational, academic and adult education programmes for students, mainly 16-18 year olds and adults aged 19 plus studying both full and part-time. The Association of Colleges (AOC) states that 846,000 16-18 year olds study in colleges compared to 441,000 in school sixth forms and that over two million adults study or train in colleges (AOC, 2013). The latest available Level 3 figures released by the Department for Education in 2010 indicate that FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges have more 16-18 year students participating in Level 3 study than maintained schools and academies. (DfE, 2010)

FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges used to be controlled by local education authorities until they were incorporated in 1993. They range from large regional institutions to specialist colleges for agriculture and horticulture, for example. There are regional variations in the size and range of the programmes they offer and they usually co-exist alongside school sixth forms offering choice to school pupils on completion of their GCSEs. There is a tradition in further education of offering a second chance to students who did not achieve their full potential at school. This report shows how colleges are able to turn around the expectations of substantial numbers of school leavers lacking 5 GCES grade A\*-C passes at the end of Key Stage 4.

The AOC reports that 15% of 16-18 year olds in colleges were eligible for and claimed free school meals at age 15 pointing out that this compares to 9% in school sixth forms and academies (AOC, 2013)<sup>8</sup>. This gap suggests that colleges attract students from less advantaged backgrounds. This report identifies the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who end up progressing on to higher education.

The majority of 16-18 school leavers in FE and Sixth Form Colleges study full-time for qualifications (McCoshan & Hillage, 2013), ranging from basic skills and foundation level,

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<sup>7</sup> In this report the number of institutions with a unique reference number in the ILR amounts to 297 FE Colleges and 85 Sixth Form Colleges in England totalling 382 institutions. Over the period of this study, there have been changes as colleges merged, closed or opened and this explains the difference.

<sup>8</sup> Eligibility for free school meals in England is dependent on students under compulsory school age or their parent(s) receiving benefits

through Level 2 (GCSE equivalent level), Level 3 (A level equivalent) and higher education. Adult students are more likely to be part-time, studying while in work or unemployed. There is a wide range of qualifications on offer including A levels, Access to HE Diplomas, vocational qualifications such as BTECs and NVQs and Other Vocational certificates and diplomas. In preparing the data for this report, a total of 2,772 different Level 3 vocational qualifications were reported on the ILRs (Individualised Learner Records) for the period 2007-08 to 2011-12. Also during the period there were significant changes, including the introduction of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) which made it impossible robustly to discriminate between full and part-time students through the ILR. The number and complexity of the vocational qualification landscape has recently been the subject of critical comment by Alison Wolf (Wolf, 2011), the OECD (Musset & Field, 2013) and by UKCES (Whitehead, 2013). The government has responded by putting in place a further reform of vocational qualifications (BIS, 2014b).

In addition to the Level 3 qualifications which are the focus of this report, colleges are also significant providers of higher education, including “non-prescribed” HE qualifications like NVQ 4 and professional certificates and diplomas, and “prescribed” HE, including First degrees, Foundation degrees, HNCs and HNDs.

This report focuses on those students in FE and Sixth Form Colleges who achieved Level 3 qualifications between 2007-08 and 2011-12 and tracks their progression into higher education. It shows how students differ in their progression behaviour depending on the type of course they do and their demographic background, including age, gender, ethnicity and domicile.

## 2.2 Policy context

The patterns of progression behaviour of these students cannot be divorced from the historical context of policy changes during the period and the impact on peoples’ lives of realities like the economic recession. The following timeline highlights just some of the things that were occurring which help set a backdrop to the progression journeys of the students tracked in this research.

Year	Policy developments
1997	Dearing Report published (Dearing, 1997) recommending the development of Other Undergraduate programmes in FE Colleges
2003	Foundation Degree Forward (FdF) established to promote Foundation degrees set up in 2001/2
2004	University fees rise to £3,000 pa Aimhigher set up to increase widening participation Office for Fair Access (OFFA) set up to monitor fair access to higher education
2005	First Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) set up to improve progression rates to higher education for vocational students National Student Survey begins
2006	Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Consultation on HE in FE

Year	Policy developments
	<p>Colleges published (HEFCE, 2006)                      Train to Gain starts                      Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) qualifications end                      Leitch Report published (Leitch, 2006)                      Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) set up</p>
<p><b>2007</b></p>	<p>Department for Innovation Universities and Skills set up                      World Class Skills – Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills published (DIUS, 2007)</p>
<p><b>2008</b></p>	<p>Equivalent or Lower Qualifications (ELQ) policy introduced                      Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) established                      Connexions services transferred to Local Authorities                      14-19 Diplomas start                      Start of economic recession                      Start of decline in part-time HE numbers</p>
<p><b>2009</b></p>	<p>Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) set up                      National Apprenticeship Service set up                      Many LLNs close                      HEFCE request for HE Strategies from FE Colleges                      Unleashing Aspiration report published (Panel on Fair Access to the Professions, 2009)                      Higher Ambitions published (BIS, 2009a)                      Skills for Growth published (BIS, 2009b)                      Unemployment rate peaks (Oxford Economics, 2014, p. V)</p>
<p><b>2010</b></p>	<p>Coalition government comes to power                      Learning and Skills Council (LSC) closes                      Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency (SfA) set up                      Train to Gain closes                      14-19 Diplomas end                      Browne Review of higher education funding published (Browne, 2010)</p>
<p><b>2011</b></p>	<p>Aimhigher programme closes                      Foundation Degree Forward closes                      New Challenges, New Chances published (BIS, 2011)                      Students at the Heart of the System - the Higher Education White Paper published (BIS, 2011a)                      First Specification of Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE) including higher apprenticeship standards published (BIS, 2011b)                      Educational Maintenance Allowance(EMA) ends                      Introduction of 16-19 bursaries</p>
<p><b>2012</b></p>	<p>Higher Education fees rise to up to £9,000 pa and student number controls include Level 3 AAB grade exclusion and core and margin numbers, the majority of which go to FE Colleges</p>

Year	Policy developments
	Part-time higher education loans start with no student number controls on part-time numbers National Careers Service formed - statutory responsibility for impartial careers advice passes to schools YPLA replaced by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) Richard Review of Apprenticeships published (Richard, 2012) Higher Apprenticeship Fund projects start Employer Ownership Pilots start Marked decline in part-time HE numbers down 42% from 2008 figures (Oxford Economics, 2014, p. 10)
<b>2013</b>	24+ Advanced Learning Loans start for Access courses and non-prescribed HE New SASE document setting out new standards for higher apprenticeships at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 published (BIS, 2013) Participation age raised to 17 Study Programmes introduced for all 16-19 year olds
<b>2014</b>	Participation age raised to 18

It is evident that in the five years over which this report charts the progression of students there have been economic and policy changes with important impacts, the ramifications of which are still being played out in 2015. The complex policy environment within which FE Colleges in particular exist can mean year on year funding changes which have strategic effects on provision for different groups of students. A recent report by City and Guilds (City and Guilds, 2014) tracks and surveys the changing policy landscape surrounding vocational education and training since the 1980s and draws out the implications for young people, adults in work and unemployed adults. The effects on students of some policy changes are not obvious and there is evidence that some policy initiatives such as the establishment of the Foundation degree in 2001 might have had unintended consequences linked to the decline in HNC provision (Parry, Callender, Scott, & Temple, 2012).

## 2.3 Progression

A small number of previous research studies have analysed the differential progression rates of A level and vocational students. In 2010, a report by UKCES highlighted the disparity in higher education progression between students studying traditional A level qualifications and those studying vocational programmes (UKCES, 2010). More detailed figures provided by BIS derived from the Youth Cohort Survey (BIS, 2009), show that 82% of students who attained A levels had entered higher education by the time they reached 19 years. This compared with a figure of 36% of those with vocational Level 3 qualifications. Previously, in 2007, HEFCE examined the progression of BTEC students (HEFCE, 2007) and found that 41% of BTEC qualifiers progressed to higher education level study and the majority of these progressed to full-time higher education. The report also found that over 80% went onto a university delivered higher education course. In 2011, the Sutton Trust published a report analysing differential progression rates from different types of school (independent schools, selective and non-selective schools, FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges (Sutton Trust, 2011). Studies exploring progression



patterns of Level 3 students in FE Colleges in Kent and Medway (Joslin & Smith, 2010) and London (Joslin & Smith, 2013a) also found differences by type of vocational qualification.

## 2.4 HE in FE

The recent OECD report on post-secondary vocational education and training (Musset & Field, 2013) looks at vocational provision at levels 4 and 5. It makes recommendations about expanding this provision and also about rationalising qualifications at these levels and introducing more employer involvement. In 2011, the UK Government had coined a new term “Higher Vocational Education” (BIS, 2011) to describe the range of higher education found in colleges and called for clear and articulated progression routes across the qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6. Hitherto, higher education in colleges had been segmented by terms defined by funding streams. “Prescribed higher education”, including degrees, Foundation degrees, HNDs and HNCs, was funded via HEFCE (now through the Student Loan Company) for provision which might be directly funded or franchised through a university. “Non-prescribed higher education”, including professional qualifications like the CMI Diploma in Management and Leadership, for example, and NVQs at higher levels, was funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and now by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) or through 24+ Advanced Learning Loans. These terms are still used to describe the different forms of higher education offered but there may be some form of sector and funding rationalisation if HNC and HND qualifications are moved out of prescribed HE and into the scope of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans (BIS, 2014a). Systematic national figures for volumes of prescribed and non-prescribed HE delivered by colleges are not available.

The AOC states that 154,000 students study HE in FE Colleges (AOC, 2013) but the source is not referenced. In their 2012 study, Parry et al state that in 2009-10, there were 177,260 students studying HE in FE Colleges (Parry, Callender, Scott, & Temple, 2012). The FE Data Library provides figures which identify level 4 and above courses between 2005-06 and 2012-13 (SFA, 2014) and this source is quoted in the 2012 report of both the 157 Group and the Mixed Economy Group of colleges (157 Group and MEG, 2012) which also refers to difficulties with comparative figures including the effects of colleges increasingly switching to full cost recovery for courses which might hitherto have been funded by SFA or its predecessor, the LSC (and not therefore appearing on the ILR). The SFA figures for level 4 and above break down SFA funded level 4 and above into higher apprenticeships, NVQs, HND/HNC and Other. They show that numbers of higher apprenticeships rose from **300** in 2008-09 to **12,900** in 2012-13, that numbers studying NVQs dropped from **27,400** in 2008-09 to **200** in 2012-13, that HNC and HND numbers maintained an average figure of about **1,000** and that Other, which refers to professional qualifications, increased from **30,000** in 2008-09 to **38,400** in 2012-13. While these figures give a good indication of large scale changes over the period (the increase in higher apprenticeships and drop off of NVQ numbers, (probably associated with the closure of Train to Gain), they cannot be said to be *wholly* related to colleges as some of the delivery of the qualification element of higher apprenticeships, for example, might be based with employers, private providers or universities and *full-cost higher education courses in FE Colleges do not have to be recorded in the ILR*.

Historically, FE Colleges provided high volumes of higher education programmes. In an article in 2003, Parry points out that in 1993 between them, HEFCE and FEFC funded 146,000 higher education students on both prescribed and non-prescribed HE programmes (Parry, 2003). In his later report on HE in FE, Parry includes the figures franchised to FE Colleges by universities in

1994, giving a total of 176,000 higher education students studying in FE Colleges (Parry, Callender, Scott, & Temple, 2012). Since then, there has been a decline in HE in FE Colleges and partly that has been due to the decline in HNC and HND numbers following the introduction of the Foundation Degree in 2001-02. Parry et al argue that:

“the two higher national qualifications constituted the dominant provision in colleges at the undergraduate levels..... Today, they represent less than one-quarter of the undergraduate population.” (Parry, Callender, Scott, & Temple, 2012, p. 45)

Despite the general **overall** decline in non-prescribed HE described above, this report shows that the proportion of **FE students progressing to non-prescribed HE** had nearly trebled between 2007-08 and 2011-12<sup>9</sup>. There was also an increase in numbers of FE students progressing to OUG programmes in FE Colleges in 2012. This was when the government introduced higher fees and student number controls which included unrestricted intake of students with AAB grades at A level or equivalent, and 20,000 “core and margin” places. 155 FE Colleges successfully bid for 10,357 of the core and margin places (Bolton, 2014) and these were to be directly funded through student loans.

Another major change in 2012 was the opening up of student loans to part-time students for the first time with no cap on student numbers. However, these proposals did not change the decrease in part-time higher education numbers that had started in 2008 when part-time HE study was affected by both the change in Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ) policy and the global recession (Oxford Economics, 2014). HEFCE point to the 59% drop in franchised part-time numbers in FE Colleges between 2010 and 2012, but point out that directly funded part-time HE numbers in colleges have actually increased from 5% to 7% “reflecting a shift towards more courses being provided directly by further education colleges” (HEFCE, 2014c, p. 5). In 2013, 24+ Advanced Learning Loans were introduced for SFA funded provision including non-prescribed higher education, but it is not possible at this time to estimate the effects of this on numbers.

Most recently, HEFCE has undertaken an analysis of recent trends in higher education (HEFCE, 2014) and specific research on the decline in numbers of entrants to Other Undergraduate (OUG) programmes like HNC, HND and Foundation degrees (HEFCE, 2014a). HEFCE’s report showed a decline in entrants to Other Undergraduate programmes between 2010 and 2012 for both part-time and full-time entrants. The data shows that numbers of full-time entrants to higher education fell between 2010-11 and 2012-13 by 33,000 and these falls were felt disproportionately in OUG, where, even though the great majority of full-time entrants are degree students, two-thirds of the overall decrease in full-time entrants was in OUG. From 2009-10 there was a rapid decline in numbers of entrants to Foundation degrees at universities, and a continued erosion of HND and HNC provision at colleges as noted in the report by Parry, et al (Parry, Callender, Scott, & Temple, 2012).

The HEFCE report shows that the general pattern of decline in OUG since 2009 covers all types of study and all modes and hence it is difficult to pinpoint one causal factor that affects all equally. The report suggests there is a “general turn in sentiment against OUG” either on the

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<sup>9</sup> See Table 27 in this report

supply side or the demand side and the qualification most dramatically affected by the turning point in 2009 was the Foundation degree. But during the period of this decline in OUG entrants between 2010-11 and 2012-13, this report shows that the overall pattern was partly offset by an increase of 5,000 FE students registering for HE in FE Colleges, made up of around 3,000 additional entrants to Foundation degree courses and 2,000 additional entrants to HNDs. This report includes an analysis of who these students are and where they come from providing further evidence on disadvantaged students such as those HEFCE identified in their recent report (HEFCE, 2014b), where they show that the most disadvantaged HE entrants were three times more likely to have attended an FE College than the most advantaged and that furthermore, nearly 20% of the most disadvantaged were studying OUG, twice the proportion of the most advantaged.



## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Who are the tracked cohort?

Data for Level 3 students studying in an English FE College or Sixth Form College, for academic years 2007-08 to 2012-13, was mined to identify a Level 3 achiever cohort. Students were grouped using their last year of Level 3 study. There were five cohorts of students in this study: 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12. Where students were found in the dataset studying more than one Level 3 programme, a classification system was used to decide a primary Level 3 qualification for each student, based on type of programme and duration of study. For example, if a learner studied both a BTEC Diploma and an AS qualification, they were classified as BTEC. If a learner studied a Vocational Certificate programme and 2 A levels, they were classified as A level. Those Level 3 students who completed and achieved their primary Level 3 aim were tracked. In the report, the cohort will be referred to as the FE Level 3 cohort although this includes students who achieved their qualification in either an FE College or a Sixth Form College.

### 3.2 How was the cohort tracked?

Two matching exercises were undertaken to obtain the total number of students who entered higher education study:

ILR Level 3 student data was linked to **HESA student data** to identify FE Level 3 Students progressing to prescribed higher education study

ILR Level 3 student data was linked to **ILR level 4 student data** to identify FE Level 3 students progressing to higher education study in FE (non-prescribed HE and directly funded prescribed HE).

The absence of a unique learner number attached to students moving from one provider to another, means that individual students were tracked using a number of personal characteristics. A fuzzy matching exercise was undertaken by HESA to identify students on the first year of their HE programme and a second match was undertaken for the tracked cohort to FE level 4 and above student data using either the ILR student unique reference or through fuzzy matching.

Longitudinal tracking was undertaken, so the first Level 3 cohort in 2007-08 was tracked into HE for 5 years, whilst the last Level 3 cohort in 2011-12 was only tracked for one year. Progression trends are available by examining immediate progression rates for each of the five cohorts, reflecting the progression of students in the year following their Level 3 study on a like for like basis.

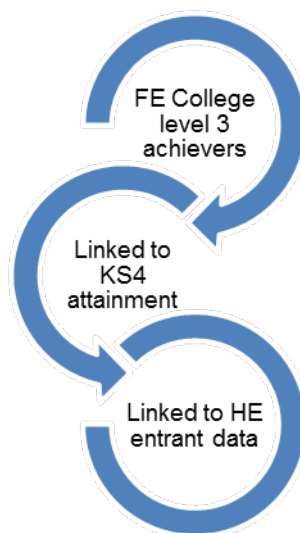
### 3.3 The ILR – changes over time and classification and coding

Changes to the way data is recorded for different academic years requires data cleaning to ensure standardisation of coding and classifications systems. For example, ethnic group classifications changed in 2011 and a decision was taken to map ethnic groups for 2011 to reflect the previous classification system.

Learning aim references in the ILR map to over 1,300 learning aim type descriptors and so to enable a meaningful analysis, a 'programme type' classification was developed to re-categorise ILR types into 4 main categories: A level, Access to HE, BTEC and Other Vocational (this enabled BTEC qualifications to be distinguished from other certificate and diploma qualifications).

### 3.4 Linking to the Department for Education Key Stage 4 dataset

A linked dataset was obtained for the FE Level 3 cohort from the Department for Education to enable analysis of KS4 attainment in secondary schools. It was expected that KS4 data would not be available for all students in the Level 3 cohort, for example, non-England students as well as those students who did not attend an institution that is required to report attainment data through the Department for Education. Due to changes in KS4 data across years, a decision was made to restrict the analysis of the linked set and explore prior attainment for young students (aged less than 20 years) in the latest three FE Level 3 cohorts: 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12. This ensured optimisation of the attainment records available for the cohort and ensured that the same KS4 indicators were available across the years.



### 3.5 Tracking HE achievement

HESA provided indicators of prescribed HE qualification achievement for those HE programmes funded through universities only. These flags allow an interrogation of achievement rates in terms of students who enrolled and completed their intended qualification and their attainment (classification). Achievement rates take into consideration those students who do not achieve their First degree in HE and who complete instead with an Other Undergraduate qualification (e.g. Foundation degree). Attainment classification is restricted to those students who start and finish their First degree.

**NB:** Tracking of achievement for the cohort who undertake HE qualifications in FE has not been included in this report.

## 4. Characteristics of Level 3 college students<sup>10</sup> in England 2007 - 2011

English FE Level 3 students are a diverse group of students studying on a myriad of programmes leading to traditional academic qualifications and vocational programmes. There are students across all age groups: young students who entered straight from school, students who work and study part-time, as well as students who return to study after some time. Before examining patterns of progression to higher education, it is helpful to describe the tracked population of Level 3 college students in terms of learner characteristics. It is interesting to see how the profile of students has changed across academic years and this helps set a context from which to interpret trends in patterns of progression.

### 4.1 Age

Table 1 illustrates that the student population increased by 8% between the earliest Level 3 cohort and the last cohort, from around 363,000 in 2007-08, to around 392,000 in 2011-12. The age composition of the cohort changed considerably, the numbers of Level 3 students aged 25+ fell by -39%. Meanwhile, the number of students under 19 increased by +46% and by 2011-12, this age group represented 70% of the total compared to 52% in 2007-08. There were around 87,000 more young Level 3 students in the 2011-12 cohort than the 2007-08 cohort.

**Table 1: Cohort breakdown by age**

Age	FE Level 3 cohort - population tracked						
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Difference 2007 to 2011	% growth
<b>17-19</b>	188660	192030	202835	210130	275795	87135	46%
<b>20-24</b>	36180	37555	39370	34265	32635	-3545	-10%
<b>Over 25</b>	138630	142235	140095	100710	83925	-54705	-39%
<b>Total</b>	363470	371820	382295	345105	392360	28890	8%

### 4.2 Qualifications

Table 2 shows that there was a notable dip in tracked students in 2010-11 caused by a significant drop in the number of vocational students studying Certificate, Diploma and NVQ programmes. In 2007-08 students studying Other Vocational programmes made up the highest proportion of Level 3 students but by 2011-12 numbers had dropped by -33%. This might in part

<sup>10</sup> All references to level 3 college students in this report refer to the cohorts that have been derived from the ILR using the methodology described in section three

be explainable by numbers on Train to Gain which operated from 2006 until it was discontinued in 2011. The numbers of Level 3 BTEC students increased substantially across the tracked cohorts from **79,600** in 2007-08 to **158,955** in 2011-12. A level and BTEC student numbers were similar for the 2007-08 cohort at around 77,000 but by 2011-12, BTEC learner numbers in the tracked cohort were more than double the A level group. Meanwhile, the numbers of Other Vocational students (studying NVQ, Certificate and Diploma programmes), dropped by -33%.

**Table 2: Cohort breakdown by Level 3 qualification type**

Qualification type	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		% growth
	Cohort number	% of total cohort	Cohort number	% of total cohort	Cohort number	% of total cohort	Cohort number	% of total cohort	Cohort number	% of total cohort	
<b>Access</b>	18965	5	19925	5	24545	6	24465	7	23000	6	21
<b>BTEC</b>	79600	22	82490	22	90205	24	10130	29	15895	41	104
<b>GCE A2 -IB</b>	77625	21	80360	22	80710	21	80465	23	80075	20	4
<b>GCE AS</b>	8045	2	5735	2	5025	1	5280	2	6755	2	-
<b>Other Vocational</b>	179235	49	18331	49	18181	48	13360	39	12357	31	-
<b>Total</b>	363470		37182		38229		34510		39236		8

### 4.3 Age and Level 3 qualification type

Across the five year period, the majority of Level 3 students on GCE A level and BTEC programmes were aged under 20 whereas the majority of Other Vocational students were 25+. However, the proportion of Other Vocational students aged 16-19 grew from **19%** (2007-08 cohort) to **36%** (2011-12 cohort).

**Table 3: Age and Level 3 qualification type**

Level 3 Qualification	Age group	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<b>Access to HE</b>	16-19	14%	13%	12%	12%	12%
	20-24	32%	34%	34%	34%	35%
	25 plus	54%	53%	54%	54%	53%
<b>BTEC</b>	16-19	88%	87%	88%	88%	90%
	20-24	8%	8%	8%	8%	6%
	25 plus	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
<b>A level</b>	16-19	98%	98%	99%	98%	98%
	20-24	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%
	25 plus	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Other Vocational</b>	16-19	19%	19%	20%	26%	36%
	20-24	12%	12%	12%	12%	11%
	25 plus	69%	69%	67%	62%	53%

## 4.4 Gender

Table 4 shows that in 2007-08 females made up 57% of the Level 3 tracked cohort compared to 43% of males. This was similar for the last tracked cohort in 2011-12 (55% female, 45% male) although there was a +14% growth in males across the period compared to just +4% of females.

**Table 4: Cohort breakdown by gender**

Gender	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		Growth in numbers 2007-2011
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
<b>Female</b>	207880	57	209660	56	217865	57	192085	56	215240	55	4%
<b>Male</b>	155590	43	162160	44	164435	43	153025	44	177120	45	14%

## 4.5 Gender and Level 3 qualification type

Table 5 demonstrates that across the Level 3 tracked cohorts, many more females were likely to study Access to HE, A level and Other Vocational programmes than males. Males, however, were more likely to study BTEC qualifications.

**Table 5: Cohort breakdown by gender and Level 3 qualification type**

Level 3 qualification	Gender	FE Level 3 cohort				
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Access to HE	Female	73%	73%	71%	71%	72%
	Male	27%	27%	29%	29%	28%
BTEC	Female	48%	48%	48%	47%	47%
	Male	52%	52%	52%	53%	53%
A level	Female	57%	57%	58%	58%	58%
	Male	43%	43%	42%	42%	42%
Other Vocational	Female	60%	58%	59%	58%	60%
	Male	40%	42%	41%	42%	40%

## 4.6 FE College and Sixth Form College breakdown

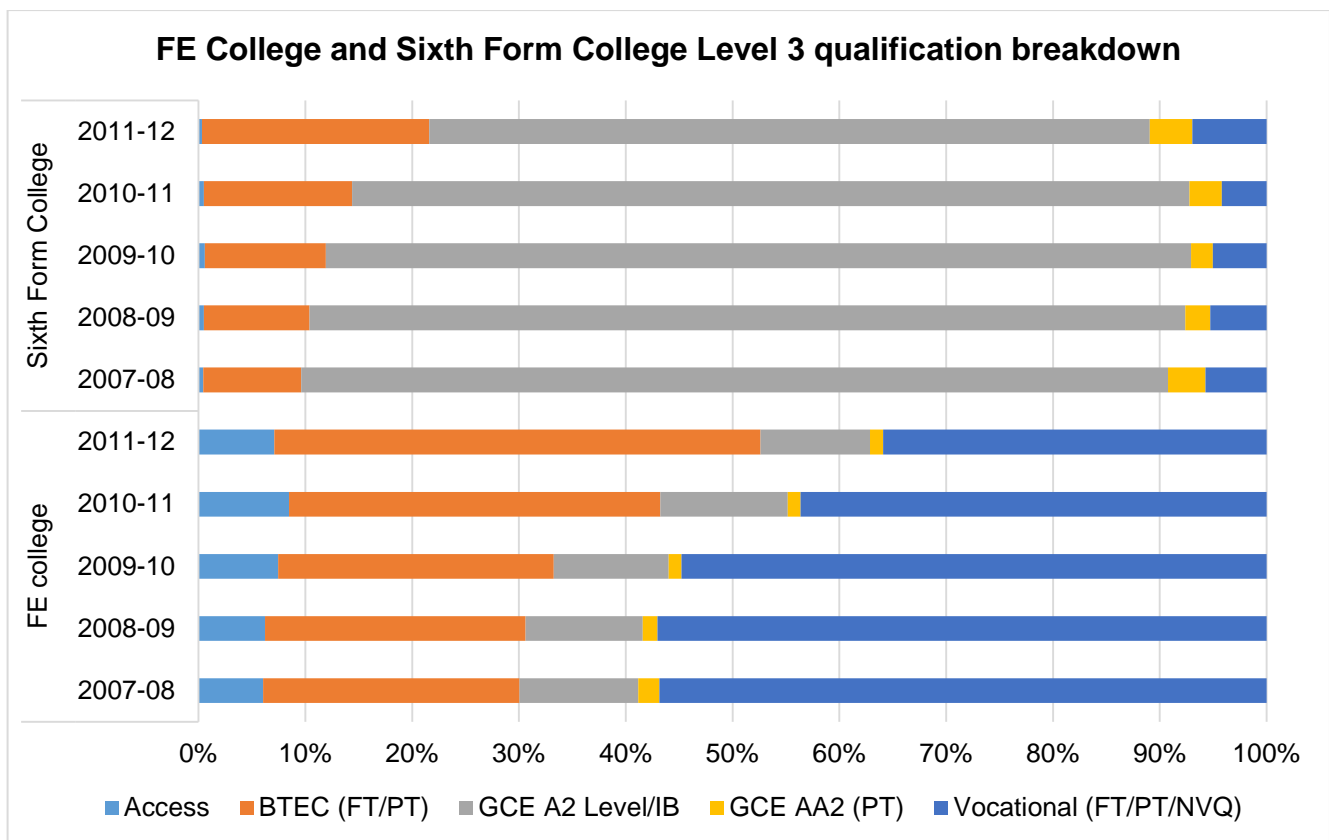
Table 6 shows that students in Sixth Form Colleges grew substantially between 2007-08 and 2011-12, +33% compared to a smaller growth in numbers in FE Colleges at +4%.

**Table 6: Cohort breakdown between FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges**

Provider type	Level 3 cohort population					% growth 2007-2011
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	
<b>FE College</b>	310115	315520	324985	284930	321585	4%
<b>Sixth Form College</b>	53360	56300	57310	60180	70775	33%
<b>Total</b>	363470	371820	382295	345105	392360	8%

Figure 1 illustrates the Level 3 course breakdown by institution type, showing clearly that the Sixth Form College cohort tracked were studying predominantly A level, whereas the FE College cohort were studying a whole range of Level 3 courses.

**Figure 1: Chart showing breakdown of cohort by Institution type and Level 3 course**



#### 4.7 Regional differences

The 8% growth in the number of Level 3 students tracked between the 2007-08 cohort and the 2011-12 cohort is not evenly distributed geographically, as the figures in Table 7 show. In fact, in two regions, numbers have decreased (North East and South West). Yorkshire and the Humber, the East Midlands, East of England, North West and the South East have all seen a significant growth in FE Level 3 students tracked.

**Table 7: Cohort breakdown by region**

REGION	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		% Population growth
	Level 3 cohort	% of population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	
East Midlands	28315	8	30275	8	30715	8	27705	8	31845	8	13%
East of England	33295	9	34745	9	38415	10	33660	10	37690	10	13%
London	47475	13	48625	13	48035	13	45760	13	50500	13	6%
North East	20360	6	20605	6	19595	5	16865	5	19410	5	-5%
North West	56595	16	56670	15	61160	16	56605	16	64690	16	14%
South East	56570	16	59205	16	62065	16	54220	16	63420	16	12%
South West	38255	11	37580	10	38570	10	33345	10	35650	9	-7%
West Midlands	42685	12	44510	12	45480	12	40085	12	46035	12	8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	35235	10	35945	10	34940	9	33930	10	40385	10	15%
Other	4685	1	3655	1	3325	1	2925	1	2740	1	-41%
Totals	363470		371820		382295		345105		392360		8%

#### 4.8 Cohort breakdown by educational disadvantage

Educational disadvantage is analysed in this report using HEFCE's POLAR3 indicator (HEFCE, 2014b) where the tracked cohorts are profiled according to their home neighbourhood. Students living in an area classified as POLAR3 Quintiles 1 and 2 (Q1 and Q2) are in the lowest 40% in the country in terms of HE participation rates and educational disadvantage. The population of students classified as disadvantaged (Q1 and Q2) grew from 138,025 to 160,395, a 16% increase in population numbers. There was a 19% growth in numbers of students classified as Q1 and a 13% growth in the population of students classified as Q2. Table 8 also shows that the proportion of the Level 3 cohort classified as living in one of the *most* educationally disadvantaged areas in England (POLAR3 Q1) grew from 18% in 2007-08 to 20% in 2011-12.

**Table 8: Breakdown of the college cohorts by educational disadvantage (POLAR3)**

POLAR3 Quintile	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		% Population growth
	Level 3 cohort	% of population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	
<b>Q1 - most disadvantaged</b>	65400	18	68140	18	72005	19	65775	19	77980	20	19%
<b>Q2</b>	72625	20	75240	20	78310	20	71535	21	82415	21	13%
<b>Q3</b>	77765	21	79920	21	81670	21	74300	22	84365	22	8%
<b>Q4</b>	75495	21	76660	21	78885	21	70430	20	78355	20	4%

POLAR3 Quintile	2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		% Population growth
	Level 3 cohort	% of population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	Level 3 cohort	% of total population	
<b>Q5 - most advantaged</b>	69375	19	70005	19	69890	18	61620	18	67845	17	-2%
<b>Unknown</b>	2815	1	1860	0	1545	0	1445	0	1400	0	
<b>Total</b>	363470		371820		382295		345105		392360		8%

## 4.9 Deprivation and qualifications studied

Table 9 shows that a higher proportion of students studying Access to HE, Other Vocational and BTEC qualifications are classified as disadvantaged using POLAR3 than those on A level programmes. 44% of the 2011-12 Level 3 cohort who were studying BTEC qualifications were classified as POLAR3 Q1 and Q2 compared to 33% of those studying for A levels. The table also shows that 44% of BTEC students in 2011-12 were classified as disadvantaged compared to 38% for the 2007-08 cohort.

**Table 9: Educational disadvantage and qualifications type**

Level 3 qualification type	% classified as disadvantaged POLAR3 Q1 and Q2				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<b>Access</b>	42%	41%	42%	43%	43%
<b>BTEC</b>	38%	39%	40%	42%	44%
<b>GCE A level</b>	32%	32%	32%	32%	33%
<b>Other Vocational</b>	40%	41%	42%	43%	42%

## 4.10 Ethnicity

A breakdown of Level 3 tracked students by ethnic group in Table 10 shows that around 24% of the cohort are classified as coming from Black and Minority ethnic groups (BME). Proportionally the ethnic mix has remained fairly constant across the five tracked cohorts although there has been growth in numbers of students from specific ethnic groups progressing to higher education. For example, the number of Level 3 students classified as of Pakistani origin has increased by +42% between 2007 and 2011, whereas White British students have increased by only 5%.



**Table 10: Cohort breakdown by ethnic group**

Ethnic group	% of total by cohort year					Population number change	% change
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12		
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2035	55%
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1040	31%
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	200	2%
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%	3515	42%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	805	38%
Black or Black British – African	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	2995	25%
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-90	-1%
Chinese	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	-150	-7%
Mixed - any other Mixed	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	885	39%
Mixed - White and Asian	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	680	36%
Mixed - White and Black African	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	560	44%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1685	52%
Any other ethnic group	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	455	9%
White – British	78%	75%	76%	77%	76%	15195	5%
White - any other White	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	2550	20%
<b>Total number</b>	<b>363470</b>	<b>371820</b>	<b>382295</b>	<b>345095</b>	<b>392360</b>	<b>28890</b>	<b>8%</b>

#### 4.11 Ethnic group and age

There are differences in age profiles at ethnic group level. For example, there is a much higher proportion of young students from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnic groups than, say, from the African and Caribbean groups (who have a higher proportion of students age 25+). Clearly, age profiles will explain variances in the HE progression behaviour of ethnic group cohorts, explored in Tables 34 and 35.

**Table 11: Cohort breakdown by ethnic group and age**

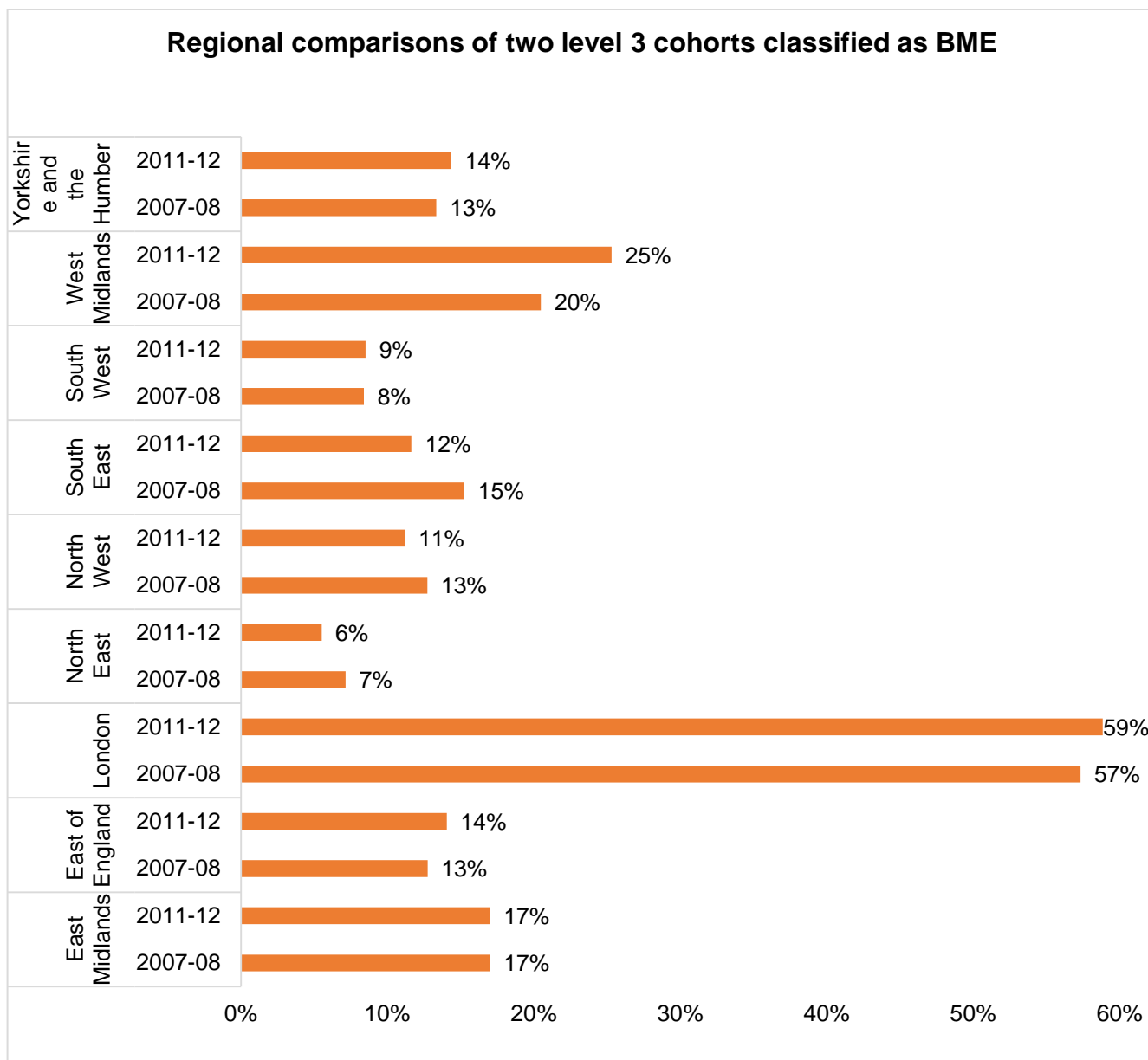
Ethnic group	Cohort pop.	16-19	20-24	25 +
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	28810	58%	14%	28%
Asian or Asian British –Bangladeshi	20535	78%	9%	13%
Asian or Asian British –Indian	54035	67%	8%	25%
Asian or Asian British –Pakistani	53650	74%	11%	15%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	15620	51%	13%	36%

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Cohort pop.</b>	<b>16-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25 +</b>
Black or Black British –African	86935	54%	12%	34%
Black or Black British –Caribbean	48770	55%	11%	34%
Chinese	12310	71%	10%	19%
Any other ethnic group	33635	49%	13%	38%
Mixed - any other Mixed background	15410	67%	11%	22%
Mixed - White and Asian	12235	73%	10%	16%
Mixed - White and Black African	9590	57%	12%	31%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	22605	70%	13%	17%
White - any other White background	104310	38%	12%	50%
White –British	1896895	58%	9%	33%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2460655</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>33%</b>

### 4.12 Regional comparison of black and minority ethnic FE cohorts

In 2011-12, just under 60% of the tracked BME students were domiciled in London. In contrast, only 6% in the North East and 9% in the South West are classified as BME as shown in Fig 2.

**Figure 2: Regional comparisons of percentages of two cohorts (2007-08 and 2011-12) who come from BME groups**



### 4.13 Ethnic group and Level 3 qualification type

Table 12 shows that Other Vocational Level 3 programmes are more popular with White students than other ethnic groups whilst A levels are more popular with Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi students, for example. However, there has been a change in the breakdown of FE Level 3 qualifications studied by different ethnic group across the five cohorts. Table 12 shows,

for example, that for many minority ethnic groups the proportion of students studying BTEC qualifications increased considerably by 2011-12 and for some groups the growth in BTEC numbers was particularly high, especially amongst Asian ethnic groups.

**Table 12: Ethnic group and qualification type**

Ethnic group	FE Level 3 qualification	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Change 2007-2011	% population growth
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	Access	7%	8%	9%	10%	9%	265	98%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	21%	22%	26%	34%	42%	1635	210%
	GCE A2 level-IB	30%	29%	27%	27%	22%	145	13%
	GCE AS level	4%	3%	2%	2%	3%	0	0%
	Other Vocational	38%	38%	36%	26%	25%	-10	-1%
Asian or Asian British -Bangladeshi	Access	5%	6%	7%	5%	5%	30	16%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	23%	23%	25%	34%	42%	1045	133%
	GCE A2 level-IB	43%	44%	39%	38%	33%	0	0%
	GCE AS level	4%	3%	3%	2%	3%	-10	-9%
	Other Vocational	25%	24%	26%	21%	18%	0	-3%
Asian or Asian British -Indian	Access	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	35	13%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	21%	22%	23%	30%	38%	1615	88%
	GCE A2 level-IB	38%	36%	33%	36%	31%	-520	-16%
	GCE AS level	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-65	-22%
	Other Vocational	35%	37%	39%	28%	25%	-860	-28%
Asian or Asian British -Pakistani	Access	5%	6%	6%	6%	4%	75	17%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	24%	26%	29%	36%	46%	3485	172%
	GCE A2 level-IB	34%	36%	33%	32%	27%	335	12%
	GCE AS level	4%	3%	3%	2%	2%	-90	-27%
	Other Vocational	33%	29%	29%	23%	20%	-295	-11%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	Access	15%	15%	17%	19%	15%	130	41%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	25%	27%	28%	36%	44%	755	145%
	GCE A2 level-IB	16%	16%	14%	16%	14%	60	19%
	GCE AS level	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-20	-13%
	Other Vocational	41%	40%	39%	28%	25%	-235	-16%
Black or Black British - African	Access	18%	19%	21%	22%	22%	1170	56%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	25%	25%	27%	33%	39%	2825	94%
	GCE A2 level-IB	24%	22%	22%	24%	19%	-15	-1%
	GCE AS level	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	-120	-35%
	Other Vocational	30%	32%	29%	19%	18%	-865	-24%
Black or Black British -Caribbean	Access	12%	12%	12%	14%	11%	-45	-5%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	29%	29%	31%	36%	47%	1255	59%
	GCE A2 level-IB	17%	18%	17%	18%	15%	-195	-16%
	GCE AS level	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	-40	-31%
	Other Vocational	40%	41%	39%	31%	26%	-1065	-36%

Ethnic group	FE Level 3 qualification	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Change 2007-201	% population growth
Chinese	Access	6%	4%	6%	6%	6%	0	-2%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	18%	17%	17%	21%	25%	125	31%
	GCE A2 level-IB	44%	47%	48%	52%	44%	-65	-7%
	GCE AS level	6%	3%	4%	5%	8%	40	31%
	Other Vocational	27%	28%	25%	16%	17%	-245	-40%
Mixed - any other Mixed background	Access	9%	9%	10%	10%	8%	55	28%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	27%	28%	27%	33%	43%	750	124%
	GCE A2 level-IB	29%	30%	29%	31%	24%	110	17%
	GCE AS level	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-5	-9%
	Other Vocational	33%	32%	33%	24%	23%	-25	-3%
Mixed - White and Asian	Access	6%	6%	7%	8%	5%	25	20%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	25%	27%	25%	28%	42%	605	130%
	GCE A2 level-IB	37%	36%	38%	40%	32%	105	14%
	GCE AS level	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-15	-24%
	Other Vocational	29%	29%	28%	23%	20%	-40	-7%
Mixed - White and Black African	Access	15%	14%	15%	15%	14%	60	32%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	25%	25%	28%	34%	44%	500	158%
	GCE A2 level-IB	20%	22%	22%	24%	18%	75	30%
	GCE AA2 (PT)	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	10	32%
	Other Vocational	38%	38%	34%	25%	22%	-85	-17%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	Access	9%	10%	11%	11%	7%	55	19%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	31%	32%	33%	39%	50%	1485	147%
	GCE A2 level-IB	23%	24%	22%	22%	19%	165	22%
	GCE AS level	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	5	4%
	Other Vocational	34%	33%	33%	27%	22%	-20	-2%
Any other ethnic group	Access	10%	11%	11%	12%	10%	45	10%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	22%	23%	22%	31%	42%	1130	103%
	GCE A2 level-IB	19%	18%	18%	20%	18%	20	2%
	GCE AS level	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	-50	-26%
	Other Vocational	44%	45%	47%	35%	28%	-700	-32
White - any other White background	Access	8%	7%	8%	8%	7%	2135	18%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	15%	16%	18%	30%	40%	60405	98%
	GCE A2 level-IB	14%	14%	14%	16%	14%	2650	5%
	GCE AS level	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	-815	-15%
	Other Vocational	61%	60%	58%	44%	37%	-49180	-34%
White - British	Access	4%	4%	5%	6%	5%	145	15%
	BTEC (FT/PT)	22%	22%	23%	31%	41%	4260	229%
	GCE A2 level-IB	20%	21%	21%	23%	20%	370	21%
	GCE AS level	2%	1%	1%	1%	2%	-75	-20%
	Other Vocational	52%	51%	49%	39%	32%	-2155	-28%

## 5. Higher education progression trends

Trend data enables an examination of patterns of progression over time, comparing cohorts across years. In Section 4, learner characteristics for the individual cohort years were examined to explore differences in composition of the populations. It is important that progression trends are considered in the context of such population changes in addition to other changes to the FE and HE landscape discussed in Section 2. It is worth noting that rates for the latest cohort tracked in the study (2011-12) reflect progression into higher education in 2012-13, the year that higher fees were introduced for prescribed higher education in England.

### 5.1 Overall longitudinal progression across the cohorts

Table 13 shows immediate progression<sup>11</sup>, patterns of progression and the final rates of progression for each cohort. Overall, the immediate HE progression rate of Level 3 students in FE and Sixth Form Colleges has remained fairly stable. An increase is seen in 2010-11 (into HE 2011-12) then the rate falls back to a similar rate seen for earlier cohorts. To some extent, the increased rate for the 2010-11 cohort may be due to the significant fall in the overall Level 3 cohort population that year when numbers of students who achieved an Other Vocational programme in 2010-11 were 30% less than in previous years. However, a key contributory factor will be the fact that this cohort entered higher education in 2011-12, the year before fee increases, when a general increase in entrants to HE was observed. The overall progression rate for the 2011-12 cohort tracked to 2012-13 HE entry dipped to 33% but this is no surprise given that 2012-13 was the year of higher fee introductions and it is noted that the rate fell to a similar rate to that of the earlier cohorts.

Longitudinal progression is also shown in Table 13, where the last column shows the number of years the FE Level 3 cohort is tracked into HE, so for example, the first cohort in 2007-08 is tracked for 5 years into HE datasets and the analysis shows that the progression rate of this cohort, for example, increases from an immediate rate of 32% to a rate of 48% when tracked over time.

The figures show that there were **1,855,050** students in the study over the five cohort years, with **623,735** of them progressing to higher education the year following attainment of their Level 3 qualifications and 795,470, or an average of **43%** of them progressing when tracked for the maximum number of years in this study. It also shows the significant numbers progressing up to several years following attainment of their college qualifications. Given the diverse make-up of the FE student body, this can be explained by a range of factors most importantly by reference to the reality of the lives being lived beneath these statistics – people in work holding down jobs, people whose employment has been affected by the recession, people having babies or with school age children, people being made redundant who are seeking a new start and young people heading straight for university for example.

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<sup>11</sup> Immediate progression is progression to HE in the next academic year following level 3 results.

**Table 13: Longitudinal progression of five FE Level 3 cohorts to higher education**

FE Cohort Year	Population of tracked cohort	Into HE 2008-09	Into HE 2009-10	Into HE 2010-11	Into HE 2011-12	Into HE 2012-13	Immediate entry to HE (following year)		Progression to HE - all tracked to date		
		Number progressing					Number	%	Number	%	Years tracked
2007 -08	363,470	117,995	31,065	12,785	5,985	5,075	117,995	32	172,905	48	5
2008 -09	371,820		124,770	30,570	11,070	6,640	124,770	34	173,050	47	4
2009 -10	382,295			126,070	29,090	13,080	126,070	33	168,240	44	3
2010 -11	345,105				126,120	26,370	126,120	37	152,495	44	2
2011 -12	392,360					128,780	128,780	33	128,780	33	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,855,050</b>						<b>623,735</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>795,470</b>	<b>43</b>	

## 5.2 Overall longitudinal progression across the cohorts by age

The next table provides progression by age for each of the five Level 3 cohorts illustrating trends in progression by age and differences in progression patterns. It shows the significant decrease in immediate progression of the young 16-19 Level 3 cohort in 2012-13 where progression was lowest ever at 37%. This lower rate may reflect the general reduction of entrants in the year HE fees increased but may also be due to the fact that the young Level 3 population in this year is significantly higher than any other year (**275,795** students) and progression rates have not been sustained for this larger population. This is explored further in this section.

**Table 14: Longitudinal progression of five FE Level 3 cohorts to higher education by age**

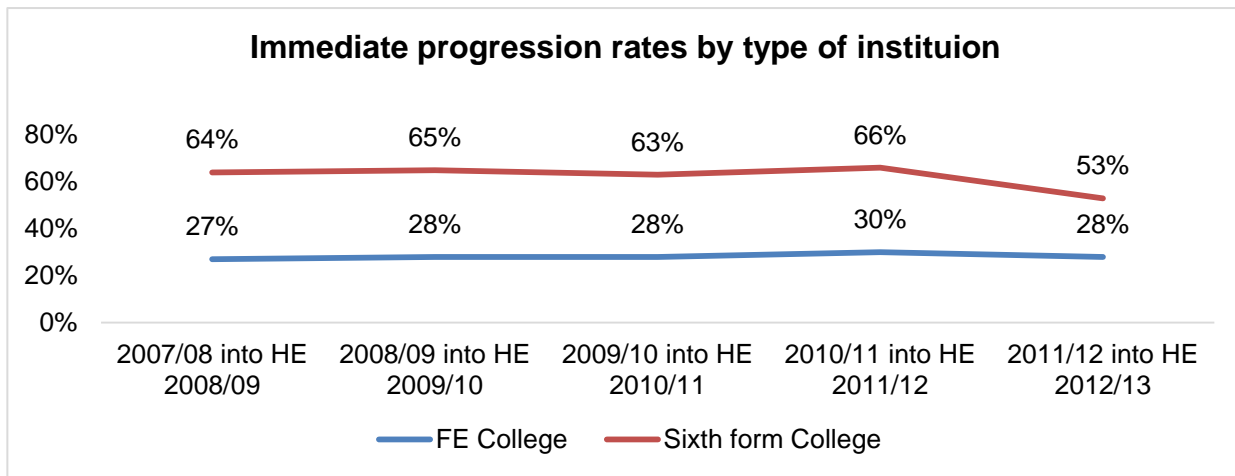
FE Level 3 cohorts	Age group	Population	Into HE 2008-09	Into HE 2009-10	Into HE 2010-11	Into HE 2011-12	Into HE 2012-13	Immediate entry to HE		Progression to HE - all tracked to date		
			Number					HE Immediate Progression	% HE progression	Total number to HE	% HE progression	Number of years tracked
2007 -08	16-19	188660	<b>92080</b>	20930	6785	2725	1970	92080	<b>49%</b>	124485	<b>66%</b>	5 years
	20-24	36180	<b>10070</b>	2470	1320	710	565	10070	<b>28%</b>	15130	<b>42%</b>	
	25 plus	138630	<b>15845</b>	7665	4680	2555	2540	15845	<b>11%</b>	33285	<b>24%</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>363470</b>	<b>117995</b>	31065	12785	5985	5075	117995	<b>32%</b>	172905	<b>48%</b>	
2008 -09	16-19	192030		<b>97700</b>	21070	6250	2885	97700	<b>51%</b>	127905	<b>67%</b>	4 years
	20-24	37555		<b>12735</b>	2580	1245	825	12735	<b>34%</b>	17390	<b>46%</b>	
	25 plus	142235		<b>14510</b>	6920	3575	2930	14510	<b>10%</b>	27930	<b>20%</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>371820</b>		<b>124945</b>	30570	11070	6640	124945	<b>34%</b>	173050	<b>47%</b>	
2009 -10	16-19	202835			<b>95860</b>	20815	7385	124060	<b>61%</b>	124060	<b>61%</b>	3 years
	20-24	39370			<b>11625</b>	2475	1475	15580	<b>40%</b>	15580	<b>40%</b>	
	25 plus	140095			<b>18585</b>	5800	4220	28605	<b>20%</b>	28605	<b>20%</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>382295</b>			<b>126070</b>	29090	13080	126070	<b>33%</b>	168240	<b>44%</b>	
2010 -11	16-19	210130				<b>99315</b>	17980	117295	<b>56%</b>	117295	<b>56%</b>	2 years
	20-24	34265				<b>11165</b>	2660	13830	<b>40%</b>	13830	<b>40%</b>	
	25 plus	100710				<b>15640</b>	5730	21370	<b>21%</b>	21370	<b>21%</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>345105</b>				<b>126120</b>	26370	126120	<b>44%</b>	152495	<b>44%</b>	
2011 -12	16-19	275795					<b>101510</b>	101510	<b>37%</b>	101510	<b>37%</b>	1 year
	20-24	32635					<b>11270</b>	11270	<b>35%</b>	11270	<b>35%</b>	
	25 plus	83925					<b>16005</b>	16005	<b>19%</b>	16005	<b>19%</b>	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>392360</b>					<b>128780</b>	128780	<b>33%</b>	128780	<b>33%</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>1855050</b>						<b>623735</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>795470</b>	<b>43%</b>		

### 5.3 Immediate progression by institution type

The overall progression rate masks differences at institution type. Although students in Sixth Form Colleges make up just 16% of the total tracked cohort, students at these institutions are studying mainly A level courses full-time, and their progression rate is higher than students in FE Colleges who are studying a wide range of Level 3 courses both full and part-time. Figure 3 shows HE progression rate trends for both types of institution. Whilst rates dipped in 2012-13 for FE College students, the decline was small, from 30% to 28% but the dip was larger for Sixth Form Colleges, from 66% to 53%.



**Figure 3: HE progression rates by type of institution**



### 5.4 Immediate progression by age group

Longitudinal tracking showed that when the 2007-08 Level 3 cohort was tracked for 5 years, their progression rate was 48% which means that just under half of students progressed to HE when tracked over time (5 years). Table 15 gives an immediate progression rate (ie, the year following college) broken down by age.

Young students (16-19) on Level 3 programmes between 2007-08 and 2010-11 progressed at a rate around 47%-50% but there was a drop to 37% for the young cohort in 2011-12 who entered HE in 2012-13. Given the decline in HE entrants overall in 2012-13, a decrease in rates would be expected. Further investigation will explore the decrease in more detail, including whether falls are disproportionately in progression to Other Undergraduate (OUG) programmes as reported by HEFCE. Interestingly, Level 3 students in the age groups 20-24 and 25+ saw an increase in HE progression although their progression is from a much lower rate and liable to fluctuation (particularly for 25+). The progression rate for Level 3 students aged 20-24 grew by 7% points from 28% to 35%, while the rate for 25+ students increased by 8% points from 11% to 19%. This is explained in part by the drop in Level 3 numbers in the cohort population of these age groups in 2011-12 when the number of 20-24 year olds fell by -10% and the 25+ year group fell by -39% (between 2007-08 and 2011-12).

**Table 15: Immediate progression rates to HE for Level 3 cohorts by age**

Age group	% point difference 2007-08 – 2011-12	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
17-19	-12%	49%	50%	47%	47%	37%
20-24	7%	28%	29%	30%	33%	35%
25 +	8%	11%	13%	13%	16%	19%
Total	0%	32%	34%	33%	37%	33%

## 5.5 Progression by age and funding type

Table 16 shows that the increase in progression rates of students over the age of 20 was found in both progression to non-prescribed HE and prescribed HE. Neither of the over 20 age groups saw the decrease in progression rates that were found in the younger 2011-12 cohort who entered higher education in 2012-13.

**Table 16: Trends in progression rates by age and funding type**

Age group	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	% point difference 2007-08 to 2011-12
<b>Non-prescribed higher education</b>						
<b>Under 20</b>	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	+2%
<b>20-24</b>	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	+1%
<b>25 +</b>	2%	3%	4%	3%	6%	+4%
<b>Total</b>	1%	2%	2%	2%	3%	+2%
<b>Prescribed higher education</b>						
<b>Under 20</b>	49%	49%	46%	47%	35%	-14%
<b>20-24</b>	26%	26%	27%	30%	31%	+5%
<b>25 +</b>	10%	9%	10%	12%	13%	+3%
<b>Total</b>	31%	32%	31%	35%	30%	-1%
<b>All higher education progression</b>						
<b>Under 20</b>	49%	50%	47%	47%	37%	-12%
<b>20-24</b>	28%	29%	30%	33%	35%	+7%
<b>25 +</b>	11%	13%	13%	16%	19%	+8%
<b>Total</b>	32%	34%	33%	37%	33%	+1%

## 5.6 Progression by age and HE qualification

Table 17 examines the rise in HE progression rates for Level 3 students aged 20 and above in further detail, providing progression rates by HE qualification. For example, it shows that 26% of the 2011-12 age 20-24 year group progressed to First degrees compared to 20% of the same age group in 2007-08. Similarly, the progression rates to First degrees for 25+ age group also saw an increase: 5% of students aged 25+ went onto a First degree in 2007-08 and this rate had doubled to 10% for the 2011-12.

All increases are despite the increased fee introduction in 2012-13.

The figures in this table also show increases in progression rates to Other Undergraduate HE programmes, especially for the 25+ age group, where the progression rate of the 2011-12 cohort is double that of the 2007-08 cohort (3% against 6%).

**Table 17: Progression by age and HE qualification**

Age and HE qualification	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<b>16-19</b>					
First degree	39%	39%	38%	38%	28%
Foundation degree	2%	3%	3%	2%	2%
HNC and HND	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Undergraduate	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
<b>20-24</b>					
First degree	20%	21%	21%	26%	26%
Foundation degree	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
HNC and HND	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
NVQ	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Other Undergraduate	3%	4%	5%	4%	4%
<b>25 +</b>					
First degree	5%	5%	6%	9%	10%
Foundation degree	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
HNC and HND	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other Undergraduate	3%	5%	6%	4%	6%

## 5.7 Progression of older students 20+ by HE subject and qualification level

The increase in HE progression for students aged 20+ is examined further by looking at the subject area studied and growth in numbers of Level 3 entrants to these subjects. It should be remembered that any growth in numbers is set against a context of a reduction in the total population of Level 3 students in these age groups (see Table 1). Table 18 looks at the main HE subject areas progressed to by age group broken down between First degree programmes and Other Undergraduate programmes.

For both 20-24 and 25+ year groups, Nursing had the highest growth in numbers and this is irrespective of the change to First degree from Diploma in Nursing (which would previously have been categorised in Other Undergraduate). The rise in the number of entrants to Nursing from FE and Sixth Form College students contributed to the rise in progression rates to First degree for both age groups.

Other First degree subject areas saw a growth too, such as, Sociology and Computer Science. Other Undergraduate subject areas such Business Administration and Law and Health, Public Services and Care also saw a growth in HE entrant numbers for both older age groups.

**Table 18: Progression by age, main subject areas and qualification level**

	First degree	Other Undergraduate
20-24	Nursing	Business, Administration and Law
	Sociology	Health, Public Services and Care
	Sports science	Arts, Media and Publishing
	Computer science	Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies
	Other subjects allied to Medicine	Retail and Commercial Enterprise
	Academic studies in Education	Leisure, Travel and Tourism
	Hospitality, Leisure, Sport, Tourism and Transport	Construction, Planning and the Built Environment
25+	Nursing	Business, Administration and Law
	Computer science	Health, Public Services and Care
	Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	Arts, Media and Publishing
	Sociology	Retail and Commercial Enterprise
	Health, Public Services and Care	Construction, Planning and the Built Environment
	Other subjects allied to Medicine	Leisure, Travel and Tourism
	History, Philosophy and Theology	Languages, Literature and Culture

### 5.8 Immediate progression by age and gender

Table 19 shows that the progression rate dip for the 2011-12 cohort was higher for young male students than young female students (-13% points for males, -11% points for females).

**Table 19: Immediate HE progression by gender and age comparing the 2007 and 2011 cohorts**

Gender	2007-08			2011-12			Difference in HE progression % points
	Population	%	% HE progression rate	Population	%	% HE progression rate	
<b>Female</b>	<b>207880</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>215240</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34%</b>	
16-19	103845	50%	49%	145380	68%	38%	-11.0%
20-24	19740	9%	29%	17705	8%	34%	5.3%
25+	84300	41%	14%	52150	24%	21%	7.4%
<b>Male</b>	<b>155590</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>177120</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32%</b>	
16-19	84815	55%	49%	130415	74%	36%	-13.1%
20-24	16440	11%	27%	14930	8%	35%	8.4%
25+	54330	35%	7%	31775	18%	15%	7.8%

## 5.8 Progression rates by qualification type

Tables 20 and 21 shows that progression rates are highest for Level 3 students studying Access to HE and GCE A levels whilst rates for those on Other Vocational Level 3 programmes are lowest.

**BTEC:** Immediate HE trends show the progression rate for BTEC students decreased as the Level 3 population grew. The dip in rates of 2011-12 students progressing to HE in 2012-13 was most pronounced for BTEC students, falling from 38% for the 2010-11 cohort to 29% for the 2011-12 cohort. The age breakdown shows that the decrease was most pronounced in younger age groups. This dip is against a backdrop of a particularly large rise in numbers of young BTEC tracked students between 2010 and 2011 (the population grew by 57%). Progression rates of older BTEC students aged 25+ actually grew from 23% 2007-08 to 34% 2011-12 and further investigation revealed a significant increase in entrants to HE from Business Administration and Law. Despite a fall in overall progression rates, BTEC Level 3 HE entrant numbers are at their highest for the 2011-12 cohort at around 45,000 students. Moreover, a higher proportion of BTEC students were classified as disadvantaged using POLAR3 in 2011-12, where 44% of the tracked cohort are profiled as Q1-Q2.

**A LEVEL:** Although A level/IB entrants are in the majority (around 51,000 of the 2011-12 cohort entered HE), the gap between BTEC and A level HE entrant numbers is closing. There were around 17,300 more A level entrants than BTEC entrants in the 2007-08 cohort but this difference was only around 5,800 for the 2011-12 cohort. A Level/IB overall progression rates saw a small drop in 2011/12 (into HE 2012/13) however, looking at age, the progression rates of A level entrants aged 20-24 saw a higher decrease than 16-19 A Level entrants.

**ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION:** Access to HE progression trends were fairly stable across the tracked cohorts and across age groups.

**OTHER VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES:** The immediate HE progression rates for vocational students actually grew and were at their highest for the 2011-12 cohort at 12%, but this is with a drastically reduced population of Level 3 students.

**Table 20: Progression rate trends by Level 3 qualification type**

FE Level 3 cohort		Access	BTEC	GCE A2/IB	GCE AS level	Other Vocational
<b>2007-08 into HE 2008-09</b>	Tracked cohort	18965	79600	77625	8045	179235
	HE entrants	12910	34605	51920	3295	15260
	% Total HE	<b>68%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>2008-09 into HE 2009-10</b>	Tracked cohort	19925	82490	80360	5735	183310
	HE entrants	14010	37865	53945	2070	16885
	% Total HE	<b>70%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>2009-10 into HE 2010-11</b>	Tracked cohort	24545	90205	80710	5025	181810
	HE entrants	16575	38825	52795	1510	16370
	% Total HE	<b>68%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>2010-11</b>	Tracked cohort	24465	101300	80465	5280	133600

FE Level 3 cohort		Access	BTEC	GCE A2/IB	GCE AS level	Other Vocational
into HE 2011-12	HE entrants	16705	38645	57175	1500	12100
	% Total HE	<b>68%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>9%</b>
2011-12 into HE 2012-13	Tracked cohort	23000	158955	80075	6755	123570
	HE entrants	15590	45545	51410	1205	15030
	% Total HE	<b>68%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>12%</b>

**Table 21: Progression rate trends by Level 3 qualification type and age band**

FE Level 3 Cohort	Access			BTEC			GCE A2-IB			GCE AS level			Other Vocational		
	16-19	20-24	25 +	16-19	20-24	25 +	16-19	20-24	25 +	16-19	20-24	25 +	16-19	20-24	25 +
2007-08 into HE 2008-09	68%	69%	67%	45%	41%	23%	67%	66%	55%	47%	47%	17%	15%	10%	6%
2008-09 into HE 2009/10	70%	68%	68%	39%	38%	33%	71%	60%	51%	29%	31%	24%	11%	7%	5%
2009-10 into HE 2010/11	66%	69%	67%	44%	41%	24%	66%	58%	45%	33%	35%	17%	13%	10%	7%
2008-09 into HE 2009-10	70%	68%	68%	39%	38%	33%	71%	60%	51%	29%	31%	24%	11%	7%	5%
2011-12 into HE 2012/13	71%	68%	67%	29%	37%	34%	64%	55%	51%	17%	29%	22%	13%	10%	7%

## 5.9 Longitudinal progression breakdown for Access to HE students

While the immediate progression rate is the best to use comparatively, the matched data also provides the opportunity to provide longitudinal breakdowns at qualification level giving overall progression rates over a number of years. Table 22 details progression rates for Access to HE students with a breakdown by age and gender. At each age group level, there are less males studying Access to HE programmes but males have slightly higher progression rates to HE.

**Table 22: Detailed breakdown of Access to HE students and longitudinal HE progression by age group and gender**

Access to HE FE Level 3 cohort	Age	Gender	Population	HE Entry Year (immediate progression)					% HE rate					No. years tracked		
				2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13		Total %HE	
2007-08	16-19	F	1695	1130	100	55	15	20	67%	6%	3%	1%	1%	78%	5	
		M	975	690	60	20	10	5	71%	6%	2%	1%	0%	81%	5	
	20-24	F	4130	2775	240	100	50	35	67%	6%	2%	1%	1%	78%	5	
		M	1965	1440	130	35	15	10	73%	7%	2%	1%	1%	83%	5	
	25+	F	8110	5445	500	250	110	85	67%	6%	3%	1%	1%	79%	5	
		M	2085	1425	120	70	20	20	68%	6%	3%	1%	1%	79%	5	
2008-09	16-19	F	1755		1205	120	40	20		69%	7%	2%	1%	79%	4	
		M	935		660	60	30	15		71%	7%	3%	1%	82%	4	
	20-24	F	4445		3070	295	100	55		69%	7%	2%	1%	79%	4	
		M	2275		1725	125	45	20		76%	5%	2%	1%	84%	4	
	25+	F	8340		5770	575	225	110		69%	7%	3%	1%	80%	4	
		M	2180		1580	150	40	20		72%	7%	2%	1%	82%	4	
2009-10	16-19	F	1935			1230	155	55			63%	8%	3%	74%	3	
		M	1040			735	65	20			71%	6%	2%	79%	3	
	20-24	F	5400			3555	395	160			66%	7%	3%	76%	3	
		M	2920			2180	140	70			75%	5%	2%	82%	3	
	25+	F	10020			6575	730	360			66%	7%	4%	77%	3	
		M	3235			2305	175	95			71%	5%	3%	80%	3	
2010-11	16-19	F	1800				1220	120				68%	7%	75%	2	
		M	1045				770	70				74%	7%	80%	2	
	20-24	F	5545				3565	440				64%	8%	72%	2	
		M	2790				2130	130				76%	5%	81%	2	
	25+	F	10010				6630	860				66%	9%	75%	2	
		M	3275				2385	200				73%	6%	79%	2	
2011-12	16-19	F	1875					1315						70%	70%	1
		M	995					730						73%	73%	1
	20-24	F	5490					3490						64%	64%	1
		M	2505					1915						76%	76%	1
	25+	F	9280					6090						66%	66%	1
		M	2860					2050						72%	72%	1



## 5.10 Progression rates comparing FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges by qualification type

Table 23 examines immediate progression rate trends for students studying different types of qualification, disaggregating FE College data from Sixth Form Colleges. BTEC students in both types of institution saw decreases in progression rates to HE in 2012-13, and in Sixth Form Colleges this group saw a decline of -25% points from the rate in 2008-09, a higher decline than found in FE Colleges (-13% points). BTEC learner numbers in both institutions saw particularly high growth but progression has not been sustained at the same rate.

**Table 23: Progression rates by institution type and Level 3 qualification type**

FE provider type	FE course type	2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13
<b>FE College</b>	Access	68%	71%	68%	68%	68%
	BTEC	43%	45%	42%	38%	30%
	GCE A level/IB	64%	64%	61%	68%	61%
	Other Vocational	8%	9%	9%	7%	9%
<b>Sixth Form College</b>	Access	57%	53%	53%	58%	56%
	BTEC	56%	57%	54%	47%	31%
	GCE A level/IB	69%	69%	68%	73%	66%
	Other Vocational	21%	22%	18%	17%	18%

## 5.11 Level 3 qualification type and HE qualification destinations

The majority of A level and Access to HE students who enter HE progress onto First degrees.

The drop in Access to HE students studying OUG programmes is likely due to the shift of Nursing Diploma (categorised as OUG) to a Degree level.

78% of the BTEC cohort in 2010-11 who entered HE went onto a First degree but this dropped to 69% for the 2011-12 cohort entering HE in 2012-13. A higher proportion of HE entrants went onto Other Undergraduate programmes than in previous years: this may be due to the introduction of higher fees and a shift in provision to FE Colleges that are delivering more Other Undergraduate programmes than universities. It may also be explained by the large rise in numbers of BTEC Level 3 students in specific pathways where OUG programmes are seen as a main route into higher education. Nearly half of those students on Other Vocational Level 3 programmes who entered HE progressed onto an Other Undergraduate programme in HE, as well as Certificate and Diploma programmes and NVQ level 4.

Table 24 examines what levels of higher education programme FE and Sixth Form College students progress to, broken down by the different types of FE qualification they studied.

**Table 24: Level 3 qualification type and HE qualification destinations**

FE course type	HE qualification level	FE Level 3 course cohorts and HE qualification destinations				
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<b>Access</b>	First degree	83%	83%	85%	92%	93%
	Foundation degree	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%
	HNC	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	HND	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	14%	14%	12%	5%	2%
	Postgraduate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>BTEC</b>	First degree	79%	78%	80%	78%	69%
	Foundation degree	11%	12%	11%	10%	11%
	HNC	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%
	HND	3%	3%	2%	2%	4%
	NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	6%	6%	6%	9%	13%
	Postgraduate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>GCE A level/IB</b>	First degree	96%	96%	96%	96%	95%
	Foundation degree	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
	HNC	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	HND	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
	NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%
	Postgraduate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Other Vocational</b>	First degree	36%	27%	25%	39%	40%
	Foundation degree	12%	12%	11%	17%	14%
	HNC	1%	1%	1%	1%	5%
	HND	2%	1%	1%	2%	4%
	NVQ	16%	15%	2%	1%	1%
	Other Undergraduate	27%	40%	55%	35%	33%
	Postgraduate	7%	5%	4%	4%	2%

## 5.12 HE progression rate trends by FE course type and HE qualification level

Table 25 shows progression rates by FE course type into the different levels of HE qualification.

Up until the 2011-12 cohort, BTEC students progressed to First degrees at a rate of between 32%-36% but this then fell to just 21% for the much larger 2011-12 cohort who entered HE in 2012-13. Similarly, the progression rate of BTEC students to Foundation degrees dropped. Despite the fact that a higher proportion of BTEC students that entered HE progressed to HNC

or HND (see Table 21), the progression rate to these HE qualifications is still low at around 1% each. Progression rates to OUG was at its highest for the 2010 and 2011 cohort at 4%.

**Table 25: Progression rates by FE course type and HE qualification level**

FE course type	HE qualification level	FE Level 3 cohort progression rates to HE				
		2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<b>Access</b>	First degree	56%	58%	57%	63%	63%
	Foundation degree	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
	HNC	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	HND	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	9%	10%	8%	3%	2%
	Postgraduate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>BTEC</b>	First degree	34%	36%	35%	32%	21%
	Foundation degree	5%	5%	5%	4%	3%
	HNC	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	HND	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	3%	3%	2%	4%	4%
	Postgraduate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>GCE A2 level-IB</b>	First degree	64%	65%	63%	69%	61%
	Foundation degree	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
	HNC	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	HND	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	NVQ	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
	Postgraduate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>Other Vocational</b>	First degree	4%	4%	4%	4%	5%
	Foundation degree	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
	HNC	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	HND	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	NVQ	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%
	Other Undergraduate	3%	6%	8%	4%	4%
	Postgraduate	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

### 5.13 HE progression rate trends by FE subject Area and HE qualification

Progression rates by FE Level 3 subject area vary considerably and the lower rates seen for the 2011-12 cohort who entered in 2012-13 are more pronounced for some subject areas than others. For example, Table 26 shows that progression rates for Level 3 students studying a

subject related to Tourism and Leisure halved (between 2007-08 and 2011-12) whereas there was a smaller but nevertheless significant fall for those studying subjects in Business Admin., Finance and Law.

**Table 26: Progression rates by FE course type and HE qualification level**

FE Subject Area	Level 3 cohorts	HE Immediate progression rate							% Total progressing to HE	% Not progressing to HE
		First degree	Foundation degree	HNC	HND	NVQ	Other Undergraduate	Postgraduate		
Health, Public Services and Care	2007-08	13%	4%	0%	0%	1%	11%	1%	31%	69%
	2008-09	14%	4%	0%	0%	1%	11%	1%	29%	71%
	2009-10	15%	3%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	27%	73%
	2010-11	20%	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	29%	71%
	2011-12	17%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	23%	77%
Science and Maths	2007-08	80%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	85%	15%
	2008-09	80%	2%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	85%	15%
	2009-10	77%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	82%	18%
	2010-11	76%	2%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	80%	20%
	2011-12	55%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	58%	42%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	2007-08	15%	7%	0%	1%	0%	5%	1%	29%	71%
	2008-09	13%	8%	0%	1%	0%	6%	0%	29%	71%
	2009-10	15%	8%	0%	1%	0%	5%	0%	28%	72%
	2010-11	13%	8%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	25%	75%
	2011-12	8%	4%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	14%	86%
Engineering and Manuf. Technologies	2007-08	7%	2%	3%	1%	0%	5%	0%	20%	80%
	2008-09	7%	2%	3%	1%	0%	6%	0%	19%	81%
	2009-10	7%	2%	3%	1%	0%	5%	0%	18%	82%
	2010-11	8%	2%	3%	1%	0%	3%	0%	17%	83%
	2011-12	8%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%	0%	15%	85%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	2007-08	8%	1%	5%	1%	0%	7%	0%	23%	77%
	2008-09	7%	2%	4%	1%	0%	7%	0%	22%	78%
	2009-10	7%	2%	4%	1%	0%	6%	0%	20%	80%
	2010-11	6%	1%	3%	1%	0%	3%	0%	15%	85%
	2011-12	6%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%	0%	14%	86%
Information and Comm. Technology	2007-08	39%	5%	0%	3%	0%	5%	1%	53%	47%
	2008-09	42%	6%	0%	3%	0%	4%	1%	57%	43%
	2009-10	42%	6%	0%	2%	0%	3%	0%	54%	46%
	2010-11	38%	6%	1%	2%	0%	2%	0%	49%	51%
	2011-12	22%	3%	1%	2%	0%	2%	0%	31%	69%

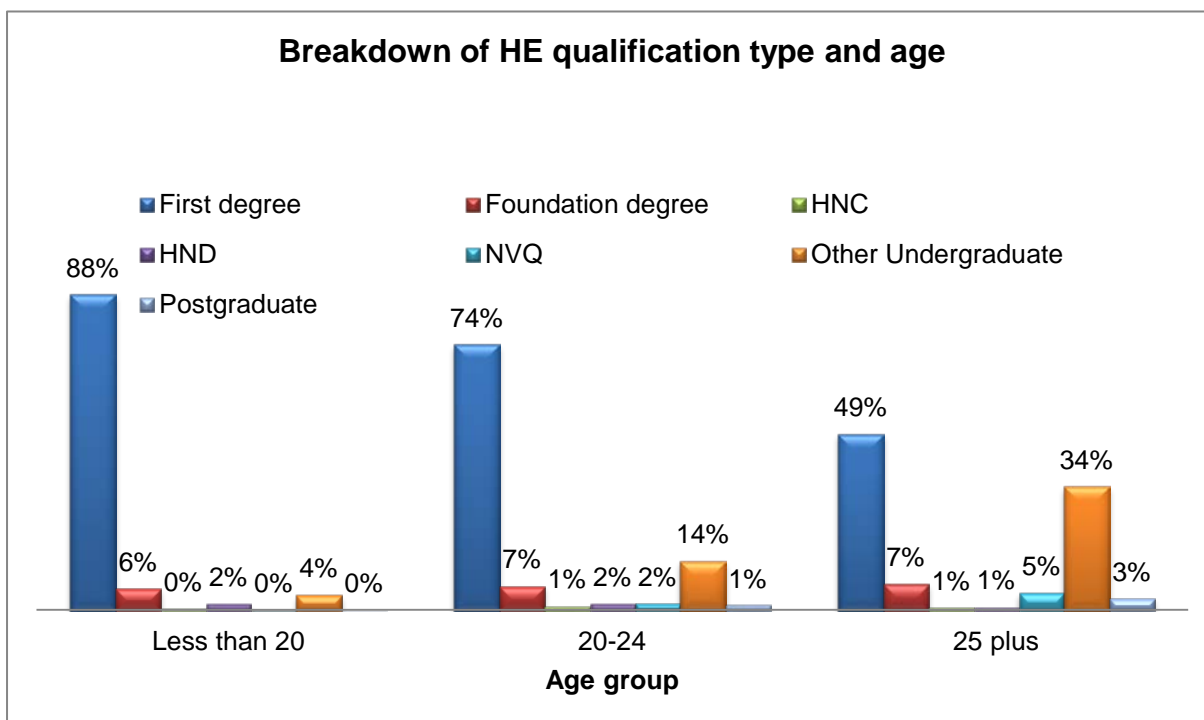
FE Subject Area	Level 3 cohorts	HE Immediate progression rate							% Total progressing to HE	% Not progressing to HE
		First degree	Foundation degree	HNC	HND	NVQ	Other Undergraduate	Postgraduate		
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	2007-08	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%	6%	1%	13%	87%
	2008-09	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	12%	88%
	2009-10	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	9%	91%
	2010-11	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	8%	92%
	2011-12	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	6%	94%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	2007-08	35%	7%	0%	2%	0%	3%	0%	47%	53%
	2008-09	36%	7%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	48%	52%
	2009-10	34%	6%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	45%	55%
	2010-11	29%	6%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	40%	60%
	2011-12	17%	4%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	24%	76%
Arts, Media and Publishing	2007-08	53%	6%	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%	65%	35%
	2008-09	55%	6%	0%	1%	0%	4%	0%	67%	33%
	2009-10	52%	6%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	62%	38%
	2010-11	48%	6%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	58%	42%
	2011-12	30%	3%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	37%	63%
History, Philosophy and Theology	2007-08	66%	1%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	71%	29%
	2008-09	67%	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	74%	26%
	2009-10	66%	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	72%	28%
	2010-11	72%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	76%	24%
	2011-12	59%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	62%	38%
Social Sciences	2007-08	77%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	82%	18%
	2008-09	77%	2%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	82%	18%
	2009-10	75%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	80%	20%
	2010-11	74%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	79%	21%
	2011-12	62%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	65%	35%
Languages, Literature and Culture	2007-08	68%	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%	1%	74%	26%
	2008-09	68%	1%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	74%	26%
	2009-10	66%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	71%	29%
	2010-11	63%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	67%	33%
	2011-12	58%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	60%	40%
Education and Training	2007-08	8%	3%	0%	0%	0%	15%	5%	32%	68%
	2008-09	10%	3%	0%	0%	0%	13%	4%	30%	70%
	2009-10	12%	2%	0%	0%	0%	9%	3%	27%	73%
	2010-11	13%	3%	0%	0%	0%	7%	1%	25%	75%
	2011-12	13%	2%	0%	0%	0%	5%	1%	20%	80%

FE Subject Area	Level 3 cohorts	HE Immediate progression rate							% Total progressing to HE	% Not progressing to HE
		First degree	Foundation degree	HNC	HND	NVQ	Other Undergraduate	Postgraduate		
Business Admin., Finance and Law	2007-08	33%	2%	0%	2%	8%	8%	1%	53%	47%
	2008-09	33%	2%	0%	1%	7%	8%	1%	53%	47%
	2009-10	31%	2%	0%	1%	1%	14%	0%	49%	51%
	2010-11	31%	2%	0%	1%	0%	12%	0%	48%	52%
	2011-12	28%	1%	0%	1%	0%	9%	0%	39%	61%

### 5.14 HE qualification level and age

The chart in Figure 4 illustrates a breakdown of HE qualification level by age showing that 88% of young Level 3 students (16-19), who enter HE, go onto a First degree and this compares to 74% of the 20-24 year group and just 49% of the age 25+ year group enrolling on a First degree. Mature students in the 25+ age group are just as likely to enter an Other Undergraduate programme as a First degree programme.

Figure 4: Breakdown of HE qualification level by age



## 5.15 Progression into prescribed and non-prescribed HE

There was a significant change in the recording of HE entrants for the 2011-12 cohort who entered HE in 2012-13, where many more students on prescribed HE programmes were in FE Colleges directly funded by HEFCE. Previously, a much smaller proportion of students on prescribed HE were on directly funded FE College provision as most were funded through franchised activity. But 8% of the 2011-12 HE entrants were HE in FE students directly funded by HEFCE (many as a result of the take-up by colleges of core and margin numbers in 2012-13). Table 27 shows the effects of this change.

**Table 27: Share of Immediate HE entrants by HE funding type**

HE funding type	2007-08 into HE 2008-09		2008-09 into HE 2009-10		2009-10 into HE 2010-11		2010-11 into HE 2011-12		2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	HE entrants	% of total entrants	HE entrants	% of total entrants	HE entrants	% of total entrants	HE entrants	% of total entrants	HE entrants	% of total entrants
<b>Non-prescribed HE funded by the Skills Funding Agency</b>										
Non-prescribed	3780	3%	7415	6%	8295	7%	5325	4%	10580	8%
<b>Prescribed HE including FE directly funded HE, Franchised HE and Universities</b>										
All prescribed HE	114215	97%	117355	94%	117775	93%	120800	96%	118200	92%
Prescribed - FE direct HEFCE funded	1310	1%	1420	1%	1360	1%	1485	1%	10490	8%
Other prescribed – HEFCE funded	112910	96%	115940	93%	116415	92%	119310	95%	107715	84%

## 5.16 Progression to HE delivered by universities and FE Colleges

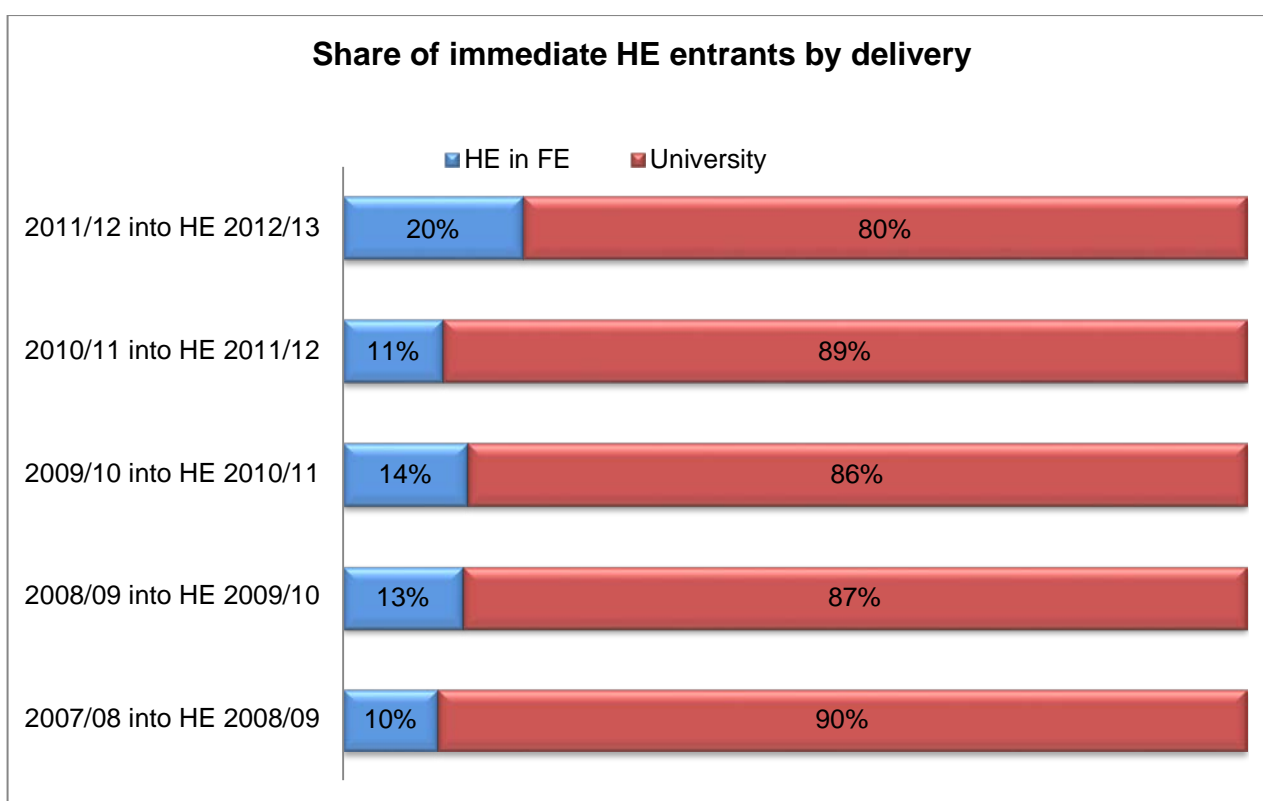
10% of the 2007-08 Level 3 cohort who entered HE went onto HE in FE but by the 2011-12 cohort this had increased to 20% of total HE entrants reflecting the additional direct funded numbers colleges successfully bid for in 2012. Colleges of FE, through an increase in non-prescribed progression, have increased their “share” of HE students and in 2012-13 they are delivering HE to many more students than before. This is explored in Table 28 and Figure 5 below.



**Table 28: Immediate entrants to HE in FE and to university**

Delivery	2007-08 into HE 2008-09		2008-09 into HE 2009-10		2009-10 into HE 2010-11		2010-11 into HE 2011-12		2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>HE in FE</b>	12390	10%	16560	13%	17370	14%	13960	11%	25665	20%
<b>University</b>	105610	90%	108210	87%	108705	86%	112160	89%	103115	80%

**Figure 5: Share of immediate HE entrants to HE in FE and university**



### 5.17 Progression to HE by delivery and qualification level

Table 29 explores delivery of HE provision for FE Level 3 students who progress, and examines entrant numbers at HE qualification level. Overall, for the FE tracked cohort in this study, the numbers of entrants to First degrees, Foundation degrees, HNC and HND and other OUG programmes increased and the delivery breakdown shows that FE Colleges rather than Universities delivered the majority of this provision.

Clearly, FE Colleges strengthened their role as providers of HE level programmes where entrant numbers for all HE qualification levels, apart from NVQ, increased considerably, and much of

this provision was part-time rather than full-time. Universities, however, saw a drop in the number of HE entrants from the tracked FE Level 3 cohorts, not to First degrees but to Other Undergraduate programmes.

**Table 29: Delivery by qualification level**

Delivery	HE qualification level	FE Level 3 cohort, numbers of HE entrants					Change 2007-2011
		2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
All	First degree	96105	99120	101200	107815	102685	6580
	Foundation degree	6810	8015	7725	7470	8885	2075
	HNC	515	450	460	455	2050	1535
	HND	1910	1705	1455	1385	2840	930
	NVQ	2425	2505	395	110	120	-2305
	Other Undergrad.	9105	12105	14120	8475	11865	2760
HE in FE	First degree	1470	1720	1830	1695	<b>3215</b>	1745
	Foundation degree	4380	5020	4935	5015	<b>7170</b>	2790
	HNC	430	310	380	375	<b>2015</b>	1585
	HND	865	800	625	680	<b>2460</b>	1595
	NVQ	2425	2505	395	110	<b>120</b>	-2305
	Other Undergrad.	2695	6085	9125	6040	<b>10640</b>	7945
University	First degree	94635	97400	99370	106120	99470	4835
	Foundation degree	2430	2995	2790	2455	1715	-715
	HNC	85	135	80	80	35	-50
	HND	1050	905	830	700	380	-670
	Other Undergrad.	6410	6020	4995	2430	1225	-5185

## 5.18 Progression to prescribed and non-prescribed HE programmes

An increasing proportion of Level 3 students in FE Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges who progress to HE progressed to First degree programmes rather than OUG and this mirrors findings by HEFCE. 82% of the 2007-08 cohort went onto HE studies at degree level compared to 85% of the 2011-12 cohort. Numbers of Level 3 students going onto study OUG prescribed HE programmes dropped considerably.

Table 30 shows that against a decrease in OUG prescribed HE programmes there was a large increase in numbers of entrants to non-prescribed HE programmes, such as Certificate, Diploma and NVQ programmes at level 4 and above. The numbers of entrants to these programmes were at their highest for the 2011-12 cohort when they were more than triple the entrant figure for the 2007-08 cohort. Further investigation showed a number of areas where the increase in

this type of qualification is concentrated in particular subject areas: Diploma in Accounting, Sport and Leisure, and Teaching. The Level 4 Diploma in Accounting was not available for the early 2007-08 cohort yet accounted for a third of all progression to non-prescribed study for the 2011-12 cohort.

**Table 30: Progression of immediate HE entrants by FE Level 3 cohort year and prescribed and non-prescribed qualification level**

HE qualification level	FE Level 3 cohort									
	2007-08 into HE 2008-09		2008-09 into HE 2009-10		2009-10 into HE 2010-11		2010-11 into HE 2011-12		2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	Number of entrants	% total	Number of entrants	% total	Number of entrants	% total	Number of entrants	% total	Number of entrants	% total
<b>Prescribed HE</b>										
First degree	96170	82	99040	80	101195	81	109440	86	10245	85
Foundation degree	6825	5	8024	6	7740	6	7475	5	8885	4
HND	1920	1	1705	1	1455	1	1385	1	2840	1
OUG *	8230	7	7760	6	6725	5	3735	3	3700	1
Post-graduate	1125	1	875	1	720	1	410	0	340	0
<b>Non-prescribed HE</b>										
Cert., Dip., NVQ 4/5	3735	3	7225	6	8170	7	5240	4	10305	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>117995</b>		<b>124770</b>		<b>126070</b>		<b>126120</b>		<b>128780</b>	

\*(here meaning - HNC, Dip HE, Certificate in Education, Diploma in Teaching)

## 5.19 Sector skills area and HE entrants

In order to understand the increases in HE entrant numbers from the FE Level 3 tracked cohorts in this study, it is helpful to examine the sector skills area from which students have progressed. Table 31 presents HE entrant numbers by HE qualification level for each of the 5 tracked Level 3 cohorts and also shows the change in entrant numbers across the cohorts. Increases are seen in the following sectors:

**First degree:** Health, Public Services and Care; Engineering and Manufacturing Technology; Arts, Media and Publishing; History, Philosophy and Theology; Languages, Literature and Culture; Business, Administration and Law.

FE Level 3 students on programmes in the Arts, Media and Publishing sector had a particularly large increase in HE entrant numbers across the five FE cohorts (+2,480).

**Foundation degree:** Health, Public Services and Care; Science and Mathematics; Leisure, Travel and Tourism; Arts, Media and Publishing; History, Philosophy and Theology; Business, Administration and Law.

**HNC:** Engineering and Manufacturing Technology; Construction, Planning and Built Environment; Arts, Media and Publishing.

**HND:** Health, Public Services and Care; Engineering and Manufacturing Technology; Information and Communication Technology; Arts, Media and Publishing.

**Other Undergraduate:** Information and Communication Technology; Retail and Commercial Enterprise; Leisure, Travel and Tourism; Arts, Media and Publishing; Business, Administration and Law.

FE Level 3 students on programmes in the Business, Administration and Law sector saw particularly large increase in HE entrant numbers across the tracked cohort (+3,100).

**NB** - The large increase in First degree entrant numbers and decrease in OUG numbers to Health, Public Services and Care is due to the change in Nursing HE provision.

**Table 31: HE entrants by HE qualification level and sector skill area**

HE qualification level	Level 3 Sector Skill Area	FE Level 3 cohort, numbers of HE entrants					Change 2007-08 to 2011-12
		2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
First degree	Health, Public Services and Care	6975	8085	9055	11150	11960	4985
	Science and Mathematics	16580	16465	16780	19370	16300	-285
	Agric., Horticulture and Animal Care	815	690	800	865	800	-10
	Engineering and Manufacturing Tech.	1460	1700	1640	1770	1815	355
	Const., Planning and Built Environ.	540	690	655	620	710	170
	Information and Communication Tech.	5380	5060	5150	5130	4155	-1225
	Retail and Commercial Enterprise	350	290	280	250	240	-110
	Leisure, Travel and Tourism	5255	5570	5655	5740	5325	75
	Arts, Media and Publishing	19115	21535	21215	21525	21595	2480
	History, Philosophy and Theology	4295	7035	8320	8465	6080	1785
	Social Sciences	6485	6215	6320	7020	5725	-660
	Languages, Literature and Culture	9435	8970	8680	9075	10960	1520
	Education and Training	905	1290	1660	1345	1020	115
	Preparation for Life and Work	7100	3670	3465	4120	2735	-4365
Business, Administration and Law	11415	11640	11475	11325	13185	1770	

HE qualification level	Level 3 Sector Skill Area	FE Level 3 cohort, numbers of HE entrants					Change 2007-08 to 2011-12
		2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
Foundation degree	Health, Public Services and Care	1180	1375	1315	1370	1525	340
	Science and Mathematics	255	290	315	410	375	120
	Agric., Horticulture and Animal Care	380	410	440	455	430	50
	Engineering and Manufacturing Tech.	335	395	490	355	345	10
	Const, Planning and Built Environ.	95	200	150	70	105	10
	Information and Communication Tech.	570	595	545	485	625	55
	Retail and Commercial Enterprise	275	360	270	235	270	-10
	Leisure, Travel and Tourism	750	945	880	840	1155	405
	Arts, Media and Publishing	1880	2130	2050	1930	2490	610
	History, Philosophy and Theology	60	90	150	190	170	110
	Social Sciences	110	100	115	160	120	10
	Languages, Literature and Culture	95	145	155	190	180	85
	Education and Training	225	235	210	230	180	-45
	Preparation for Life and Work	180	120	85	70	245	65
Business, Administration and Law	415	615	550	475	665	255	
HNC	Engineering and Manufacturing Tech.	190	180	125	130	765	570
	Construction, Planning and Built Environ.	165	120	120	120	395	230
	Arts, Media and Publishing	50	60	100	65	280	235
HND	Health, Public Services and Care	80	60	60	85	350	270
	Science and Mathematics	80	90	80	95	100	20
	Engineering and Manufacturing Tech.	100	90	95	85	205	105
	Const., Planning and Built Environ.	85	75	85	80	125	40
	Information and Communication Tech.	300	295	145	160	450	150
	Retail and Commercial Enterprise	30	25	25	25	50	20
	Leisure, Travel and Tourism	210	135	135	90	190	-20
	Arts, Media and Publishing	420	430	375	320	750	335
	Preparation for Life and Work	50	30	20	20	30	-20
	Business, Administration and Law	425	320	295	295	390	-30
OUG	Health, Public Services and Care	3395	4500	4365	1640	1885	-1510
	Science and Mathematics	385	410	435	330	475	90
	Agric., Horticulture and Animal Care	100	155	165	115	140	35
	Engineering and Manufacturing Tech.	530	980	995	530	540	15
	Const., Planning and Built Environ.	325	540	480	230	285	-40
	Information and Communication Tech.	225	270	290	190	350	130

HE qualification level	Level 3 Sector Skill Area	FE Level 3 cohort, numbers of HE entrants					Change 2007-08 to 2011-12
		2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	Retail and Commercial Enterprise	195	485	475	375	530	330
	Leisure, Travel and Tourism	115	240	275	295	790	675
	Arts, Media and Publishing	545	875	970	660	1515	970
	History, Philosophy and Theology	140	370	460	185	150	10
	Social Sciences	135	150	135	80	100	-30
	Languages, Literature and Culture	265	295	265	150	265	0
	Education and Training	860	995	780	430	380	-480
	Preparation for Life and Work	675	260	265	120	115	-560
	Business, Administration and Law	1210	1520	3750	3145	4310	3100

## 5.20 Geography and HE progression

Regional trends in HE progression rates are presented in Table 32. Many regions saw a dip in rates for the 2011-12 cohort (compared to 2010-11), probably due to increased fees. The table also shows that HE progression rates in London saw the highest decrease. In the South West and the West Midlands, the 2011-12 HE progression rate was higher than the 2007-08 rate despite seeing a dip (from the 2010-11 rate).

**Table 32: Progression trends by region**

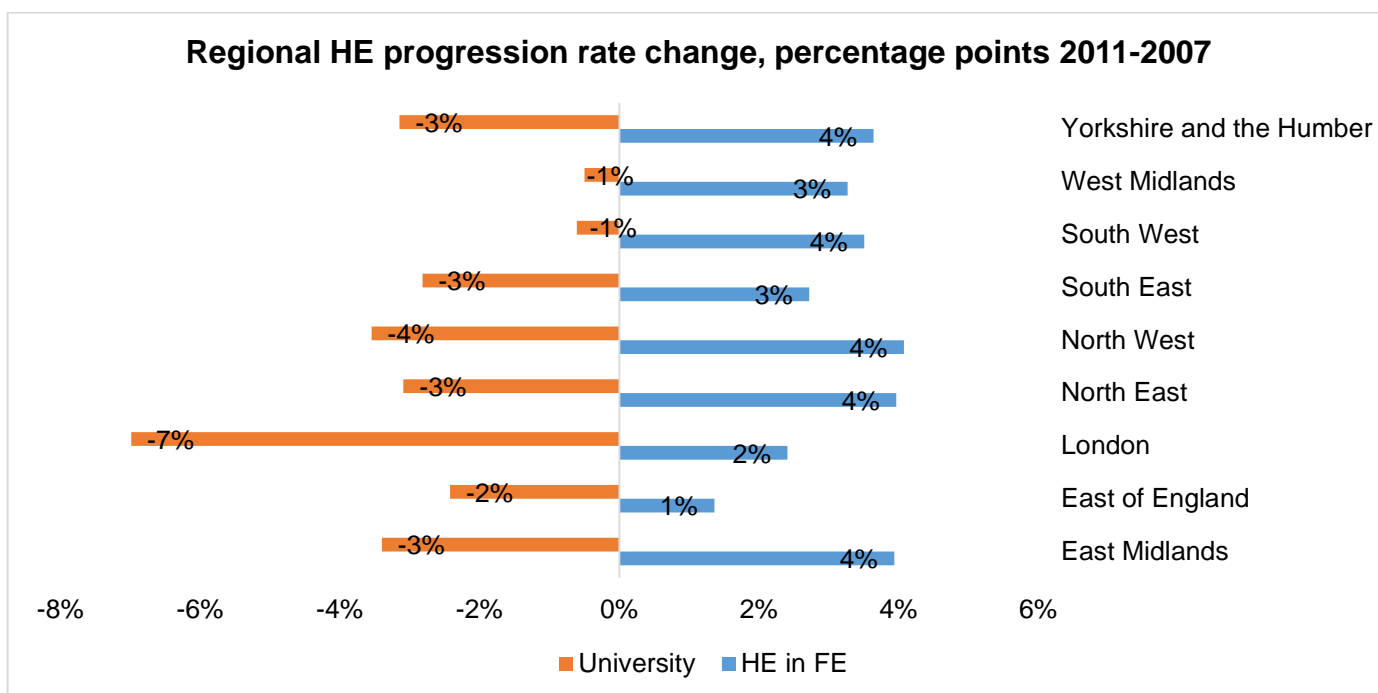
REGION	2007-08 into HE 2008-09		2008-09 into HE 2009-10		2009-10 into HE 2010-11		2010-11 into HE 2011-12		2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression
East Midlands	28315	29	30275	29	30715	28	27705	29	31845	29
East of England	33295	30	34745	31	38415	29	33660	33	37690	29
London	47475	42	48625	41	48035	41	45760	43	50500	37
North East	20360	31	20605	32	19595	33	16865	35	19410	32
North West	56595	39	56670	41	61160	39	56605	43	64690	39
South East	56570	30	59205	31	62065	30	54220	36	63420	30
South West	38255	25	37580	27	38570	28	33345	32	35650	28

REGION	2007-08 into HE 2008-09		2008-09 into HE 2009-10		2009-10 into HE 2010-11		2010-11 into HE 2011-12		2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression	Population	% HE progression
West Midlands	42685	32	44510	34	45480	33	40085	37	46035	35
Yorkshire and the Humber	35235	31	35945	33	34940	33	33930	35	40385	32
Other	4685	18	3655	16	3325	17	2925	21	2740	25
<b>Total</b>	363470	32	371820	34	382295	33	345105	37	392360	33

### 5.21 Region and HE progression rate change by delivery

Figure 6 provides more detail on HE progression rate trends, looking at progression rates at HE delivery level. The chart illustrates the percentage point change in rates for different regions by comparing 2007 rates with 2011 rates. For example, it shows that for every region, the progression rates to university for the Level 3 cohort have decreased and London saw the highest decrease at -7 percentage points. In contrast, it also shows the positive change in HE in FE progression rates, where for every region, the rates have increased. The East of England and London saw the smallest increase in rates to HE in FE at just 1% and 2% points respectively.

**Figure 6: Regional trends in progression by delivery in universities and colleges**





## 5.22 Region and HE entrants by delivery

The extent of the role that HE in FE plays in each region is shown in Table 33. By 2011-12, 23% of HE entrants from the Level 3 FE cohort in the East Midlands, went onto study an HE programme in FE. This is much higher than the proportion in 2007-08, where only 10% went onto HE in FE in this region. The effect of higher fees in universities compared to HE delivered in FE Colleges is likely to have been a significant factor in this increase.

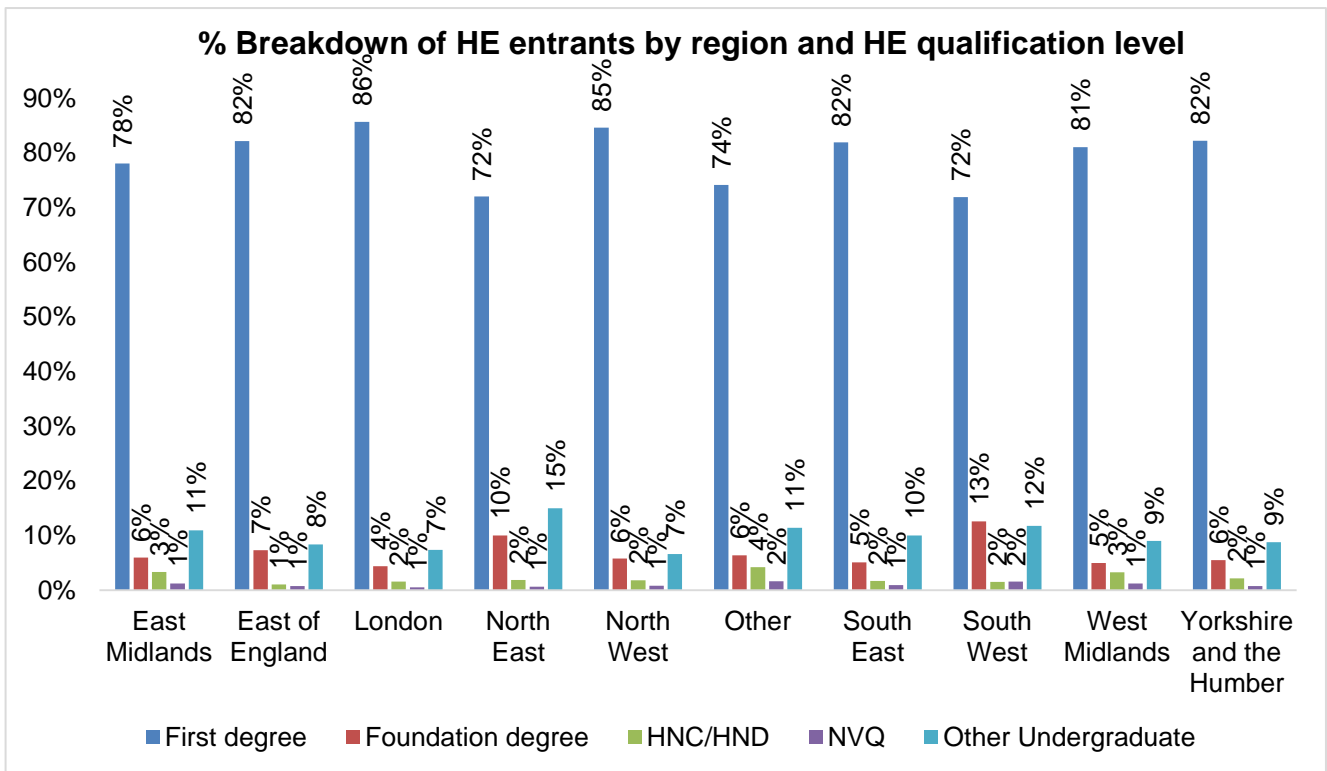
**Table 33: Regional comparison of HE delivery by colleges and universities**

REGION	2007-08 into HE 2008-09		2008-09 into HE 2009-10		2009-10 into HE 2010-11		2010-11 into HE 2011-12		2011-12 into HE 2012-13	
	HE in FE	University	HE in FE	University	HE in FE	University	HE in FE	University	HE in FE	University
East Midlands	10%	90%	13%	87%	13%	89%	11%	89%	23%	77%
East of England	13%	87%	15%	85%	18%	85%	15%	85%	18%	82%
London	7%	93%	9%	91%	9%	92%	8%	92%	14%	86%
North East	18%	82%	24%	76%	23%	83%	17%	83%	30%	70%
North West	8%	92%	11%	89%	11%	91%	9%	91%	18%	82%
South East	11%	89%	13%	87%	13%	89%	11%	89%	20%	80%
South West	20%	80%	23%	77%	26%	81%	19%	81%	31%	69%
West Midlands	9%	91%	13%	87%	13%	90%	10%	90%	18%	82%
Yorkshire and the Humber	9%	91%	9%	91%	10%	92%	8%	92%	20%	80%

## 5.23 Region and HE qualification level

Figure 7 shows differences in the dominance of HE qualification levels by region. For example, in the North West 85% of Level 3 students enter a First degree compared to 72% progressing to this level in the North East. In the North East, a much higher proportion of entrants progress onto Other Undergraduate programmes.

**Figure 7: Breakdown of HE entrants by region and qualification level**



### 5.24 Ethnic group and HE progression

Table 34 shows that there are differences in progression rates for different ethnic groups. For example, FE and Sixth Form College Level 3 students from a Bangladeshi background are much more likely to progress than White British students. In fact, White FE Level 3 students had the lowest progression rates. However, the progression rate for the White cohort in 2011-12 did not dip to the same extent as the decrease found for other ethnic groups. Bangladeshi students studying Level 3 in FE had the highest decline in progression rates (across the 5 cohorts). It is interesting to note that Level 3 Bangladeshi student numbers grew by +31% during the period 2007 to 2011. Moreover, as Table 12 showed (page 33), for some ethnic groups there was a particularly high growth in the number of BTEC Level 3 students whilst the number of A level students remained stable or even decreased. This was found for most of the Asian and African ethnic groups. White students, in contrast, saw an increase in both BTEC students and A level students.

There are likely to be cultural, linguistic and religious factors involved in these changes regarding taking on loans for student fees and leaving home to study, for example.

**Table 34: Progression rate trends by different ethnic groups**

ETHNIC GROUPS	Immediate HE progression rate trends				
	2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	49%	50%	48%	53%	41%
Asian or Asian British –Bangladeshi	61%	58%	55%	63%	49%
Asian or Asian British –Indian	49%	50%	48%	52%	46%
Asian or Asian British –Pakistani	54%	56%	55%	60%	47%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	44%	45%	46%	53%	40%
Black or Black British –African	54%	52%	56%	57%	49%
Black or Black British –Caribbean	43%	41%	38%	40%	37%
Chinese	47%	55%	51%	53%	48%
Mixed - any other Mixed background	47%	42%	48%	48%	38%
Mixed - White and Asian	44%	50%	54%	49%	42%
Mixed - White and Black African	47%	40%	48%	49%	39%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	43%	44%	41%	42%	33%
Any other ethnic group	40%	38%	35%	40%	39%
White –British	29%	31%	30%	34%	30%
White - any other White background	28%	30%	30%	33%	31%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>33%</b>

## 5.25 Ethnic group and HE qualification level studied

The results in Table 35 examine a breakdown of HE qualification levels by ethnic group (for all five HE cohorts) and show that White students are more likely to study Other Undergraduate programmes than any other ethnic group. 80% of White students in FE and Sixth Form Colleges went onto study a First degree and this compares to, say, 89% of Chinese students or 91% of Bangladeshi students. These figures may be explained by the age profile of the ethnic group, where, for example, a third (33%) of White students are aged 25+ compared to 13% of Bangladeshi students.

**Table 35: Progression by HE qualification level and ethnic group**

Ethnic group	First degree	Foundation degree	HNC	HND	NVQ	Other Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Asian or Asian British - any other Asian background	85%	4%	0%	2%	1%	7%	1%
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	91%	4%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%
Asian or Asian British –Indian	88%	4%	0%	2%	1%	5%	0%
Asian or Asian British –Pakistani	88%	5%	0%	3%	0%	4%	0%
Black or Black British - any other Black background	84%	5%	1%	2%	0%	8%	0%
Black or Black British –African	86%	4%	0%	2%	0%	7%	0%
Black or Black British –Caribbean	85%	5%	1%	2%	0%	7%	1%
Chinese	89%	3%	0%	1%	1%	5%	1%
Any other ethnic group	83%	5%	1%	2%	1%	8%	1%
Mixed - any other Mixed background	87%	4%	1%	2%	0%	6%	0%
Mixed - White and Asian	88%	5%	0%	1%	1%	4%	0%
Mixed - White and Black African	85%	5%	1%	1%	0%	7%	0%
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	85%	6%	1%	2%	0%	7%	0%
White –British	80%	7%	1%	1%	1%	10%	1%
White - any other White background	75%	6%	1%	1%	2%	14%	1%

## 5.26 Progression by relative educational disadvantage

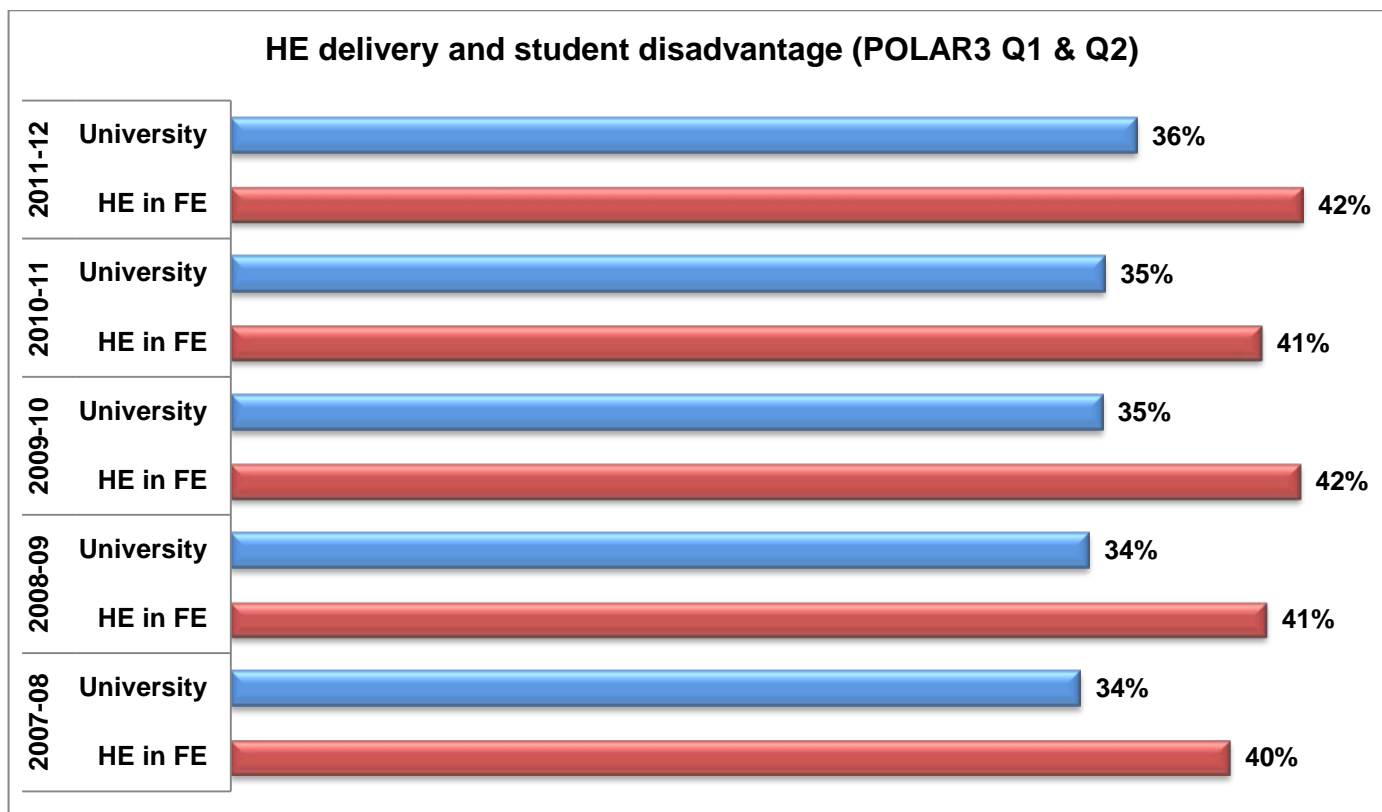
Using HEFCE’s POLAR3 indicator as a metric for educational disadvantage, the tracked cohort is profiled according to their home neighbourhood. Students living in an area classified as POLAR3 Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 are in the lowest 40% of the country in terms of HE participation rates and educational disadvantage. Table 36 displays HE progression rates by quintile for the five tracked cohorts. Mirroring national trends, HE progression rates for College Level 3 students in Quintile 5 are higher than for students living in the most disadvantaged Quintile 1.

**Table 36: HE progression rate trends by educational disadvantage**

POLAR quintile	HE immediate progression rate					
	2007-08 into HE 2008-09	2008-09 into HE 2009-10	2009-10 into HE 2010-11	2010-11 into HE 2011-12	2011-12 into HE 2012-13	% point difference
Q1 – Most disadvantaged	28%	29%	29%	31%	29%	0.6%
Q2	30%	32%	31%	34%	31%	0.6%
Q3	34%	35%	34%	37%	34%	0.2%
Q4	35%	35%	35%	39%	35%	0.0%
Q5 – Most advantaged	36%	37%	36%	42%	37%	1.0%
Unknown	21%	19%	19%	24%	27%	6.0%
Grand Total	32%	34%	33%	37%	33%	0.4%

Figure 8 shows that a higher proportion of Level 3 students who go onto study HE delivered in FE Colleges (HE in FE) are classified as disadvantaged using POLAR3, evidence of the role that FE Colleges have to play in delivering higher education to students from educationally disadvantaged areas. 42% of the 2011-12 cohort who went onto HE in FE were from POLAR3 Q1 and Q2 areas compared to 36% of those who went onto HE in a university.

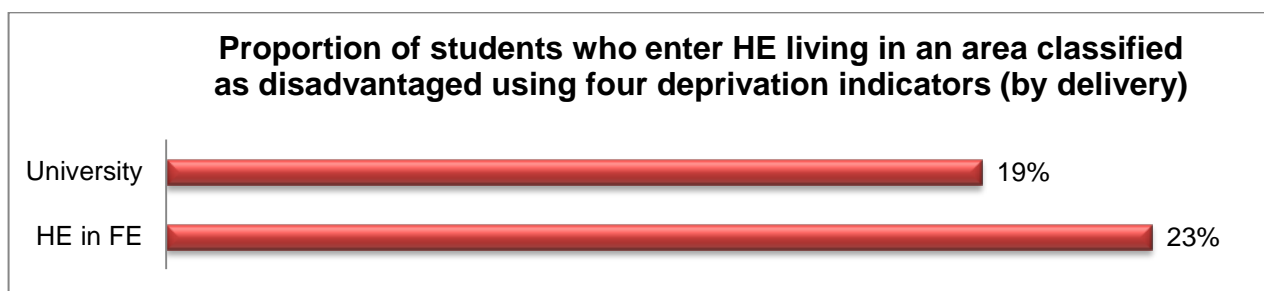
**Figure 8: Progression to college and university by relative disadvantage**



### 5.27 Progression by other indices of deprivation

The chart in Figure 8 above examined the profile of HE entrants by delivery using POLAR3, an indicator of educational disadvantage. Figure 9 explores disadvantage further using four indicators of disadvantage: Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), Education and Skills Disadvantage (EST) and POLAR3 thus determining how many of the population live in areas classified by all four of these deprivation indicators. The chart illustrates that 23% of Level 3 students who went onto HE in FE are classified as disadvantaged using all four indicators and this compares to 19% who went to university.

**Figure 9: Delivery of higher education for most disadvantaged students**



### 5.28 Educational disadvantage and HE qualification level

A higher proportion of entrants to OUG programmes and vocational HE programmes are domiciled in POLAR3 Quintile 1 than in Quintile 5. For example, 21% of HE entrants from the 2011-12 Level 3 cohort who went onto OUG were classified as Q1, compared to 17% classified as Q5. This is evidence that OUG programmes are more attractive to students classified as disadvantaged. The converse is found with degree level programmes where a higher proportion of entrants to this level were Q5, 20%, compared to 16% Q1.

**Table 37: POLAR 3 breakdown by HE qualification level comparing 2007-08 to 2011-12**

FE Level 3 cohort	HE level	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Not known	Total
2007-08	Non-prescribed HE	19%	20%	22%	20%	19%	0%	100%
	First degree	15%	18%	22%	23%	22%	0%	100%
	Foundation degree	18%	21%	22%	20%	18%	0%	100%
	HND	18%	21%	22%	20%	17%	1%	100%
	Other Undergraduate	20%	20%	22%	20%	17%	1%	100%
	Postgraduate	13%	17%	22%	21%	25%	2%	100%
2011-12	Non-prescribed HE	19%	21%	22%	20%	17%	1%	100%
	First degree	16%	19%	22%	22%	20%	0%	100%
	Foundation degree	20%	22%	21%	20%	17%	0%	100%
	HND	20%	20%	23%	20%	16%	1%	100%
	Other Undergraduate	21%	22%	21%	18%	17%	1%	100%
	Postgraduate	13%	16%	22%	20%	28%	1%	100%

## 5.29 Summary of Level 3 cohort and progression by age

Table 38 is provided to enable easier comparisons of the Level 3 cohort and their HE progression by age group.

**Table 38: Age summary: characteristics of the combined cohorts 2007 – 2011 and breakdown of their HE progression**

Breakdown of the combined cohorts	Age groups		
	16-19	20-24	25+
<b>Key characteristics of the combined Level 3 cohorts</b>	<b>16-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25+</b>
Combined Level 3 tracked cohorts 2007- 2011	1069450	180005	605595
Change in Level 3 achiever population 2007-2011	87135 (+46%)	-3545 (-10%)	-54705 (-39%)
% studying Access to HE	1%	22%	10%
% studying BTEC	43%	23%	5%
% studying A level	38%	1%	1%
% studying Other voc.	18%	55%	85%
% Female	54%	55%	60%
% Male	46%	45%	40%
% White	57%	9%	34%
% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)	62%	11%	27%
<b>Progression summaries of the Level 3 cohorts</b>	<b>16-19</b>	<b>20-24</b>	<b>25+</b>
Combined number of HE entrants of tracked cohort 2007-2011	484730	55155	83900
% immediate progression rate to HE	45%	31%	14%
% progression rate for Access to HE	69%	69%	68%
% progression rate for A level	67%	61%	53%
% progression rate for BTEC	39%	40%	30%
% progression rate for Other Vocational	13%	10%	7%
% of 2007-08 cohort entering HE within 3 years of Level 3 qual	96%	92%	82%
% of 2007-08 cohort who entering HE 4-5 years from Level 3 study	4%	8%	15%
% of combined HE entrants who study First Degree	88%	74%	49%
% of combined HE entrants who study Sub Degree	12%	26%	51%
% of combined HE entrants studying in University	91%	81%	63%
% of combined HE entrants studying HE in FE	9%	19%	37%



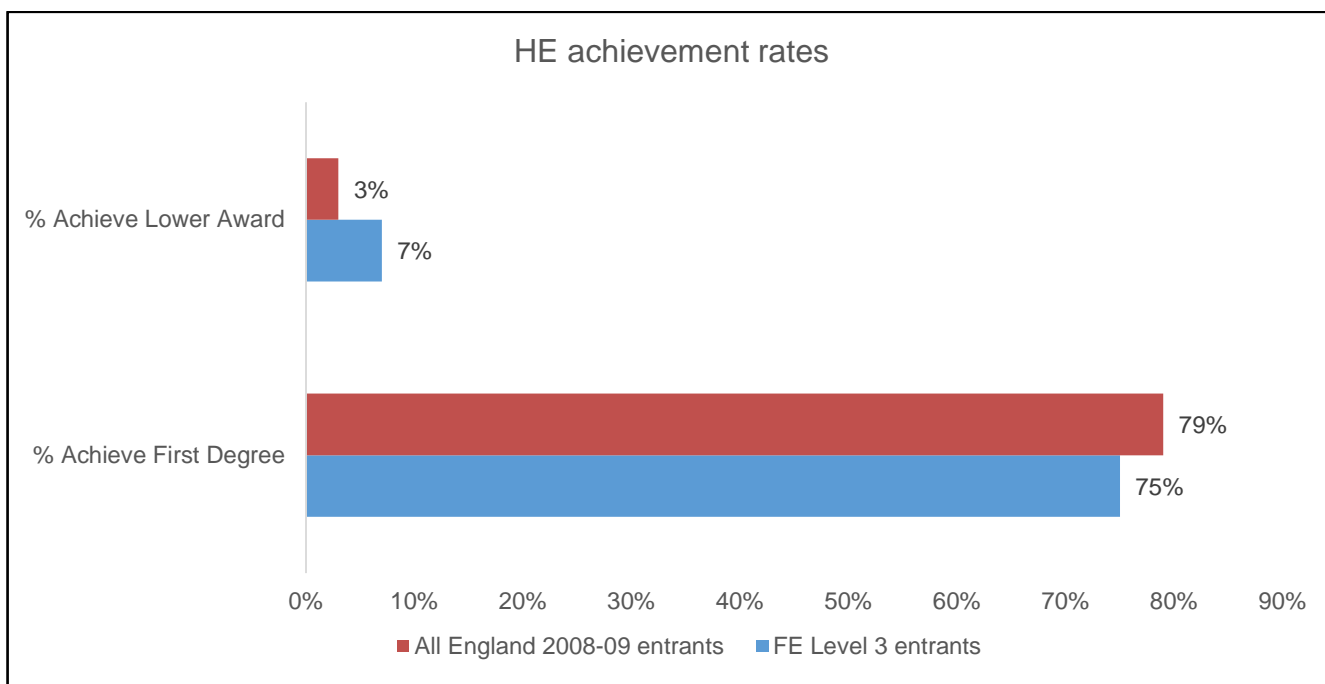
## 6. HE achievement

In this section, the HE achievement of the tracked Level 3 FE cohort who progressed to **university** is examined. In order to ensure reliability of achievement rates, the population for our analysis is limited to two cohorts of full-time First degree entrants, 2008-09 and 2009-10, who would have expected to have completed their degree by 2012-13.

### 6.1 Overall achievement rates

Figure 10 shows a 75% achievement rate for the two cohorts of students who enrolled on a full-time First degree and were expected to have graduated by 2012-13. There is a slightly lower rate for the FE Level 3 cohort compared to the national projected rate for all HE students in England (HESA, 2012).

**Figure 10: HE achievement of 2008-09 and 2009-10 Level 3 cohorts of First degree entrants**



### 6.2 Achievement rates of different Level 3 qualification types

The figures in Table 39 present the varying achievement rates for groups of students entering higher education with different FE Level 3 qualifications, showing that students studying A levels had an achievement rate of 83% while Access to HE and NVQ students had achievement rates of 62%. They also show students who started a First degree, but finished with a lower degree.

**Table 39: HE achievement rates by FE qualification type 2008-09 and 2009-10**

Type of FE Level 3 qualification	Number First degree entrants	% Achieve First degree	% Achieve lower award, eg, FD, Dip HE, HNC
Access	18630	62%	10%
BTEC	46010	67%	10%
GCE A level	81625	83%	4%
NVQ	1085	62%	10%
Other Vocational	8315	73%	5%

### 6.3 Achievement rates by age of Access to HE students

Table 40 details the achievement of Access to HE students who progress to first degree programmes with a breakdown by age group. It shows that the older age group have a higher achievement rate than their younger peers. Around one in ten Access to HE students do not achieve their intended degree but end up with a lower degree and this is mostly at Other Undergraduate level.

**Table 40: HE Achievement of 2007-08 and 2008-09 FE Level 3 cohort starting FT First Degree course in 2008-09 and 2009-10 (Access to HE cohort)**

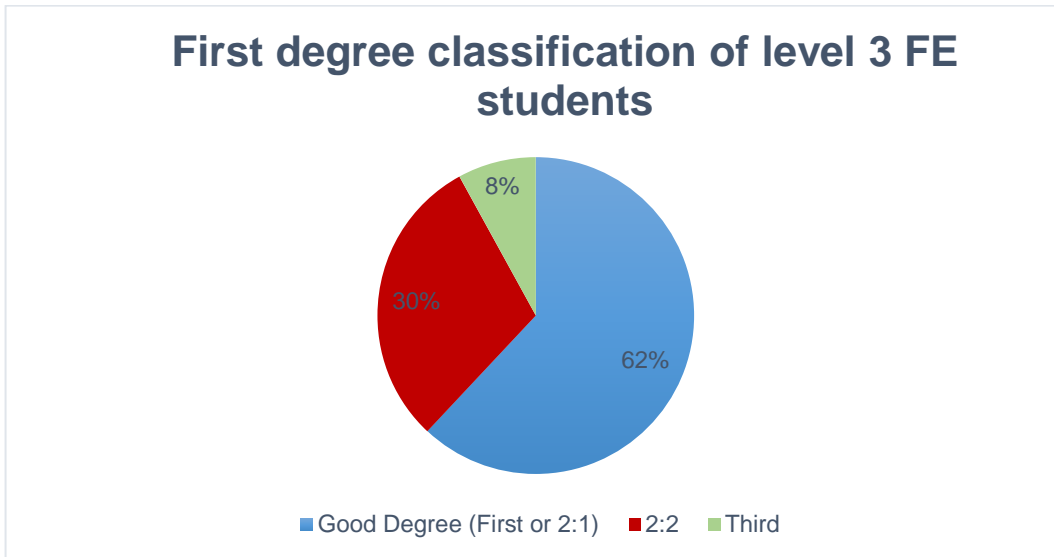
Access to HE: Higher education entrants by age group	Total First degree entrants	Number achieved First degree	% Achieved of First degree	Achieved lower: sub degree		Breakdown of sub degree by level		
				Number achieved sub degree	% Achieved sub degree	Foundation degree	HND	Other Undergraduate (HNC, Dip HE, Cert HE)
<b>17-19</b>	2685	1595	59%	275	10%	1%	1%	98%
<b>20-24</b>	6600	3875	59%	660	10%	1%	0%	99%
<b>25+</b>	9350	3110	65%	885	9%	1%	0%	99%
<b>Total</b>	18630	11485	62%	1820	10%	1%	0%	99%

### 6.4 Degree classification

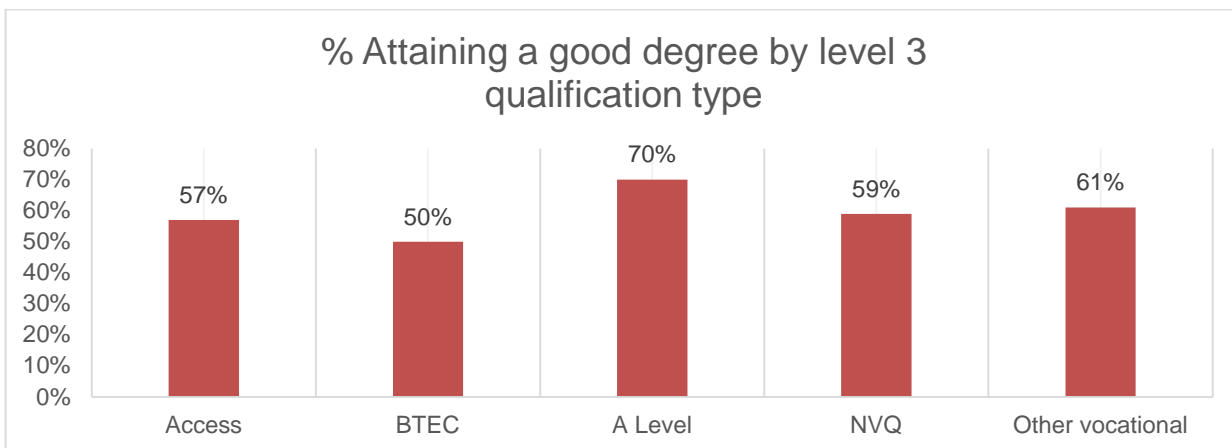
Figures 11 and 12 show that 62% of the FE Level 3 cohort who achieved a First degree, passed with a good degree, that is, with First or Upper Second class honours. HESA reported in 2008-09 that 64% of all UK First degree qualifiers attained a good degree (HESA, 2010). Figure 12

shows that there are differentials at entry qualification type where of those who attained a good degree with a First or Upper Second, 70% were A level entrants compared to 50% of BTEC entrants.

**Figure 11: First degree classification of the FE Level 3 cohort who enrolled on full-time First degrees in 2008-09 and 2009-10**



**Figure 12: FE Level 3 cohort who enrolled on full-time First degrees in 2008-09 and 2009-10 and achieving Firsts and Upper Second class honours degrees**



### 6.5 Success rates of Level 3 students who enter HE by FE subject area

HE success rates of First degree entrants are explored further at FE subject area level in Table 41. Success rate differentials may be partly due to entry pathways, most students who entered HE from a Languages pathway were studying A levels at Level 3, whereas many students entering HE from an Information Technology pathway enter with a BTEC (and A level).

**Table 41: Table showing HE success for students who enter HE by their Level 3 subject area, 2008 and 2009 full-time, First degree entrants**

FE Level 3 Sector Skills Area	% Achieving First degree	% Achieving lower award	% Attainment of "Good" Degree (1st or 2:1)
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	73%	8%	56%
Arts, Media and Publishing	75%	7%	61%
Business, Administration and Law	75%	7%	59%
Const., Planning and the Built Environment	65%	10%	55%
Education and Training	64%	11%	63%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	56%	9%	58%
Health, Public Services and Care	65%	10%	49%
History, Philosophy and Theology	75%	6%	67%
Information and Communication Technology	66%	9%	55%
Languages, Literature and Culture	83%	4%	72%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	70%	10%	47%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	63%	8%	59%
Science and Mathematics	79%	5%	68%
Social Sciences	80%	5%	66%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>62%</b>

## 6.6 Success rates of Level 3 students by POLAR3 Quintile

There are also success rate differentials for FE Level 3 students who enter HE by POLAR3 group. Table 42 shows lower achievement and attainment rates for students classified as POLAR3 Q1 or Q2 than their POLAR3 Q5 peers. These differentials may be due to type of qualification favoured by POLAR3 Q1 groups (Q1 and Q2 are more likely to study Access to HE, BTEC and Other Vocational (Table 9, page 30), which have lower attainment (Figure 12).

**Table 42: 2008 and 2009 First Degree entrants success rates by POLAR3**

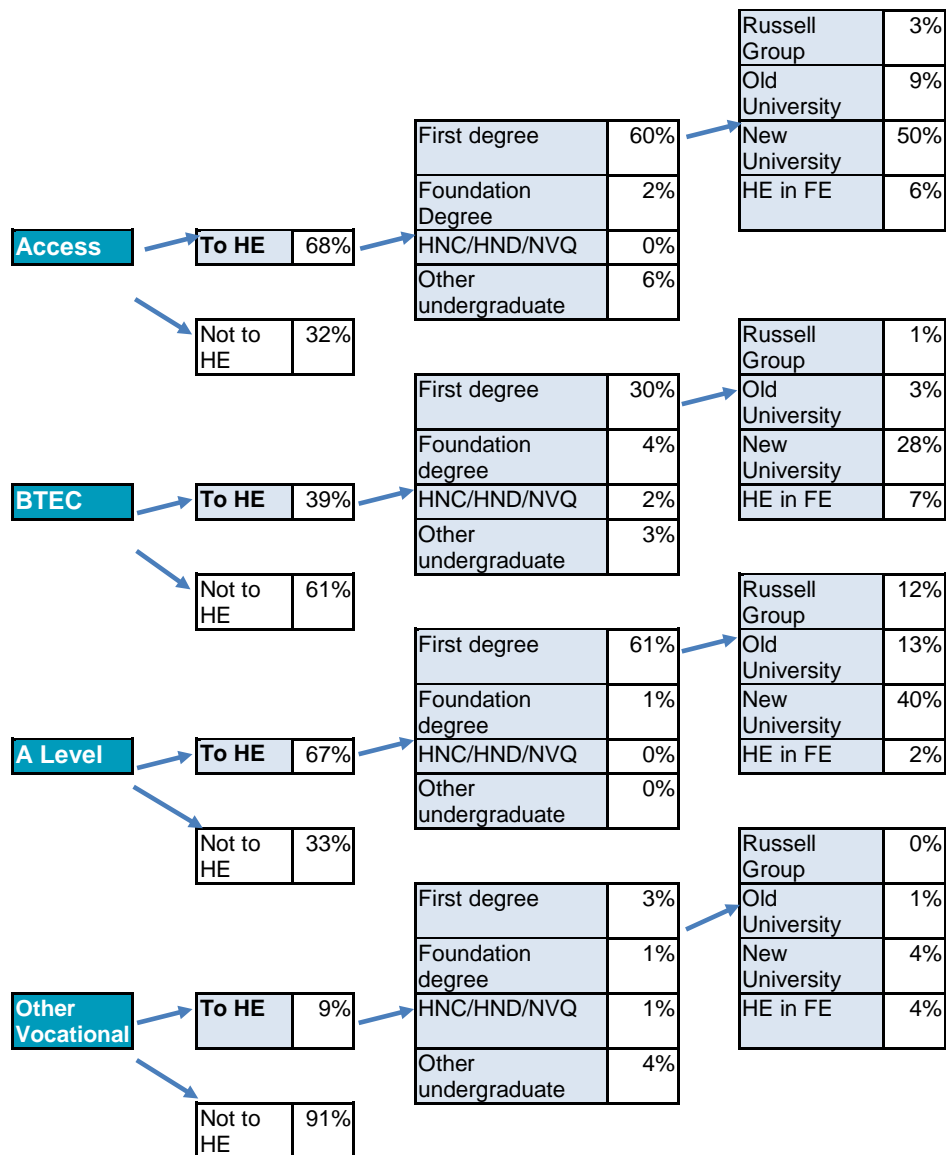
POLAR3 Quintile	% Achieve First Degree	% Achieve lower award	% Attainment of Good Degree (1st or 2:1)
1 – Most disadvantaged	72%	10%	59%
2	74%	7%	61%
3	74%	7%	60%
4	75%	6%	64%
5 – Most advantaged	78%	5%	67%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>62%</b>

### 6.7 FE Level 3 student HE progression summary by FE qualification

Figure 13 summarises HE progression by Level 3 qualification type and identifies the types of HE institutions students progress to. In this chart universities are categorised as follows:

- Russell Group** – Universities that are current members of the “Russell Group”;
- Old Universities** – Universities established pre 1992 that are not members of the Russell Group
- New Universities** – Universities that have been established since 1992

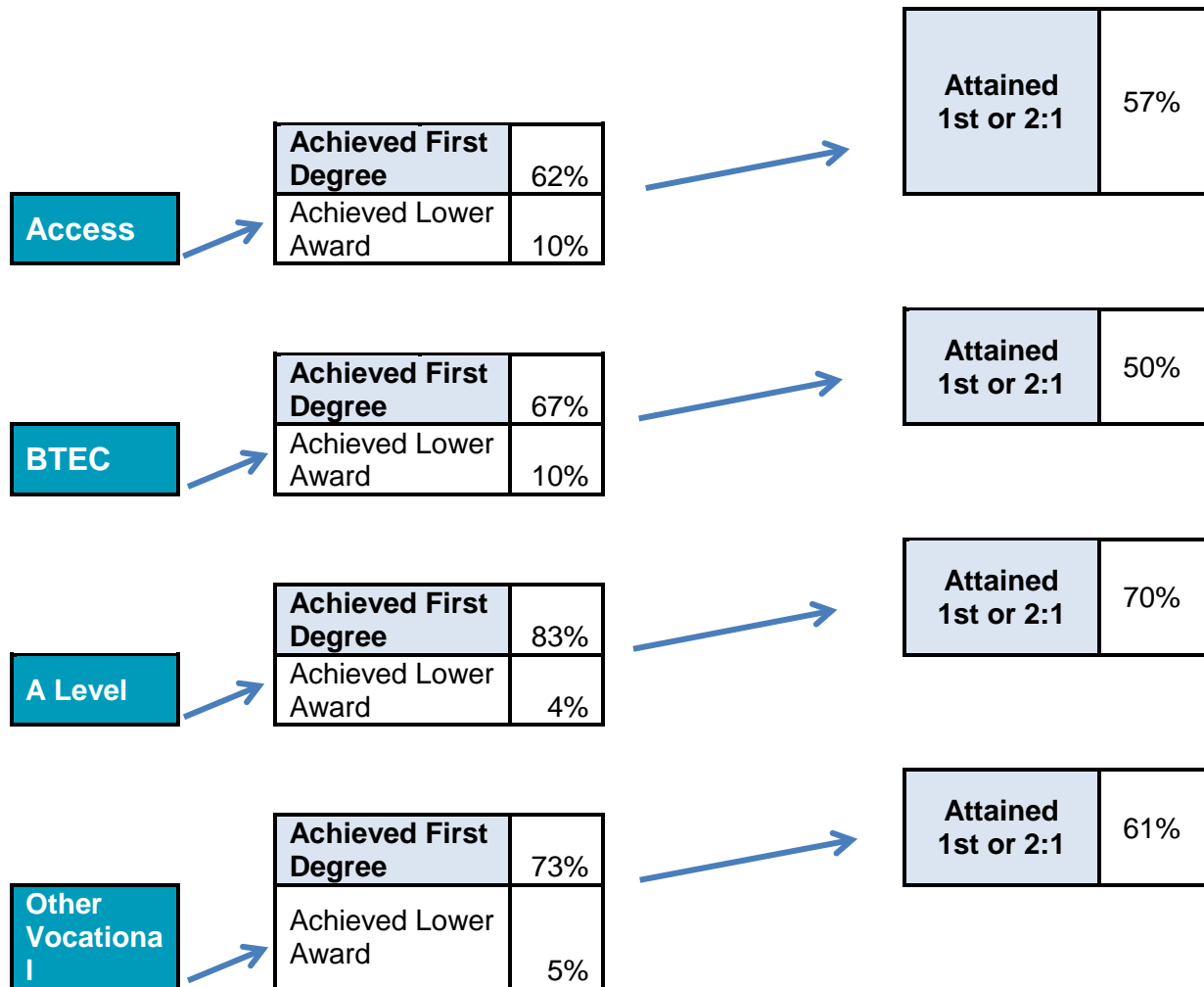
**Figure 13: 2008 and 2009 First Degree entrant progression flow by Level 3 qualification**



## 6.8 FE Level 3 student HE success summary by qualification type

A summary of HE success rates by Level 3 qualification type is provided in Figure 14 showing the relationship between Level 3 qualification, achievement and attainment of good degrees.

**Figure 14: Success rate mapped by Level 3 qualification (2008 and 2009 FT First degree entrants)**



## 7. College students and prior attainment at KS4 (Level 2) in school

### 7.1 Key stage 4 overview

Key stage 4 (KS4) is measured by pupils in schools gaining GCSE qualifications. GCSEs are at Level 2 and the main performance measure adopted by the DfE is determined by the achievement of 5 GCSEs graded between A\* to C including English and Maths (DfE, 2014 b). However the strict definition of a “full Level 2” is through the achievement of qualifications “equivalent to 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C (BIS, 2015). In this study we refer to both but differentiate according to the DfE definition which by including English and Maths, describes the group most likely to progress through Level 3 qualifications to higher education.

Pupils without the 5 GCSEs A\*-C are considered to be “low attainers” at Key Stage 4. In this study we have used the term “**lower attainers**” to identify those who did not attain 5 GCSEs (A\*-C) **including English and Maths**. Many without 5 GCSEs progress from school to colleges and undertake further Level 2 vocational programmes. Others, often those who may have nearly achieved a full Level 2, are accepted on to vocational programmes at Level 3 including those who have not achieved A\*-C grades in English and Maths. The Government, following recommendations in the Wolf Report (Wolf, 2011), has now introduced “Study Programmes” (DfE, 2014 a) for all 16-19 students where English and Maths is compulsory for students yet to achieve an A\*-C grade.

### 7.2 The significance of Key Stage 4 for progression to college

It is generally accepted that prior attainment at KS4 is the most important predictor of successful progression to HE and underachievement in secondary school is acknowledged to be a key barrier to progression to higher education (Chowdry, 2010). In order to contextualise Level 3 FE College student progression, it is helpful to build a picture of prior (KS4) attainment of the Level 3 cohort before going on to analyse their progression and the extent to which colleges provide pathways to higher education for students who achieved and underachieved at school.

Progression through qualification levels is not vertical for many students for a number of reasons; assumptions are often made that students who have achieved a Level 3 qualification have achieved a minimum standard at GCSE or equivalent (Level 2) but this is not necessarily the case for many students who are studying vocational and Access to HE programmes in FE Colleges. Indeed, it is estimated that around 20% of adult students on a Level 3 programme in FE did not have full Level 2 qualifications 5 GCSEs (A\*-C). (IFF Research, 2014). It is recognised that many students who have not achieved this level at age 16 in secondary schools will continue to FE to study at Level 2. Similarly, some students who have already achieved at Level 2 will go on to an FE programme at this level because they are happier to do so and/or they wish to study a new subject. It is also the case that many adult students with few, if any qualifications use FE Colleges as a second chance, gaining vocational qualifications or enrolling on Access to HE courses and then progressing to higher education. In the previous section, the achievement rates of Access to HE students were shown, in this section their progression based on their prior GCSEs is detailed including to the type of university they progress to.

FE courses meet the needs of a range of individuals, some with lower prior attainment. Many programmes at Level 3 enable individuals to develop specific vocational skills and do not require the attainment of specific subjects at GCSE or other Level 2 qualifications. The value of the Level 3 programme studied in FE may be related to their job role or intended career path. Increasing our understanding of prior attainment at age 16 for the FE Level 3 cohort will show the important role that FE Colleges play in the progression of students with lower attainment on entry; illustrating the extent to which FE Colleges prepare students who underachieve in school to subsequently achieve their FE Level 3 qualification **and** then progress onto HE. Moreover, the analysis will be able to show the extent to which HE programmes delivered by FE Colleges provide for this group of students (as well the extent to which such students progress to universities).

### 7.3 Prior KS4 attainment of the FE Level 3 cohorts 2009-10 to 2011-12

Three of the most recent Level 3 cohorts were linked with Key Stage 4 data. While examining the prior attainment of the FE Level 3 cohort, it is worth remembering that the cohort comprises Level 3 students in FE Colleges who **achieved** their Level 3 qualification.

Table 43 shows that linking the FE Level 3 cohort to KS4 attainment data returned known data for 85% of the cohort. Interestingly, 30% of the cohort who had achieved at Level 3 were not recorded as attaining Level 2 at KS4, that is, 5 GCSEs or equivalent, grades A\*-C. 39% were not recorded as attaining Level 2 with English and Maths. The data was mined further to explore HE progression for both groups of students, Level 3 with Level 2 and English and Maths, and Level 3 without Level 2 and English and Maths.

Within the FE Level 3 cohort, there is a group of students who are identified as being eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and thus most disadvantaged. In 2010-11, 20% of FSM eligible students (at age 15) progressed to HE at age 19 and this is 18 percentage points lower than non FSM students. Prior attainment at 16 for students from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods will be examined and their progression compared to less disadvantaged peers

**Table 43: FE Level 3 younger cohort with KS4 attainment data**

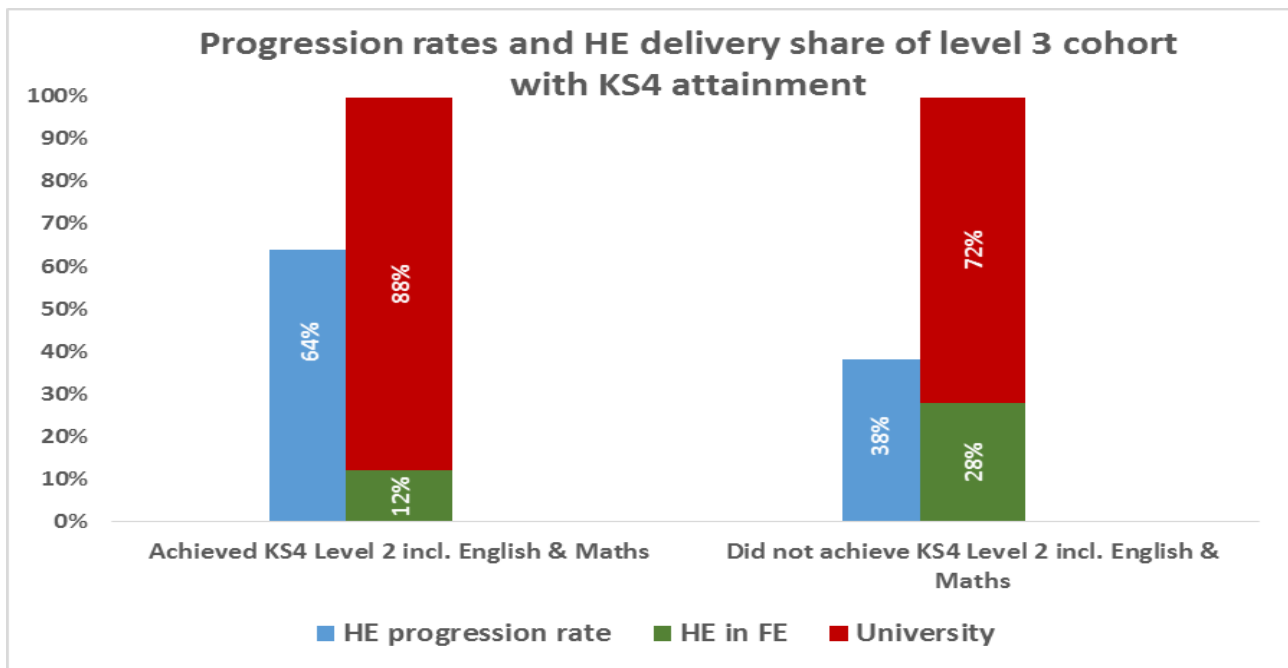
2009-2011 FE Level 3 cohort total	Number with linked KS4 data	Percentage of KS4 attainment captured	% of the cohort in receipt of free school meals	Number achieving Level 2 (5 A*-C)	% achieving full Level 2	Number achieving full Level 2 including English and Maths	% achieving Level 2 including English and Maths
688760	584960	85%	12%	406920	70%	357980	61%



## 7.4 Prior attainment at KS4 and progression to HE

Not surprisingly the progression rate<sup>12</sup> of Level 3 students who attained a full Level 2 at KS4 including English and Maths was considerably higher than the group who had not, 64% compared to 38%. Furthermore, as Figure 15 shows, students **without** full Level 2 including English and Maths were more likely to progress to HE in FE, than those with, 28% compared to 12%.

**Figure 15: HE progression rates of FE Level 3 cohort and KS4 attainment at Level 2 with English and Maths**



Attainment at Level 2 **notwithstanding** Level 3 qualifications is clearly important for progression to HE and students with English and Maths at KS4 are much more likely to go onto higher education. The data also shows, however, that there is still a group of students who have not attained a full Level 2 with English and Maths who do progress onto higher education after achieving their Level 3 qualification at college. This amounted to a total of 86,845 students from the FE and Sixth Form College Level 3 cohorts between 2009 and 2011 who successfully enrolled on higher education programmes.

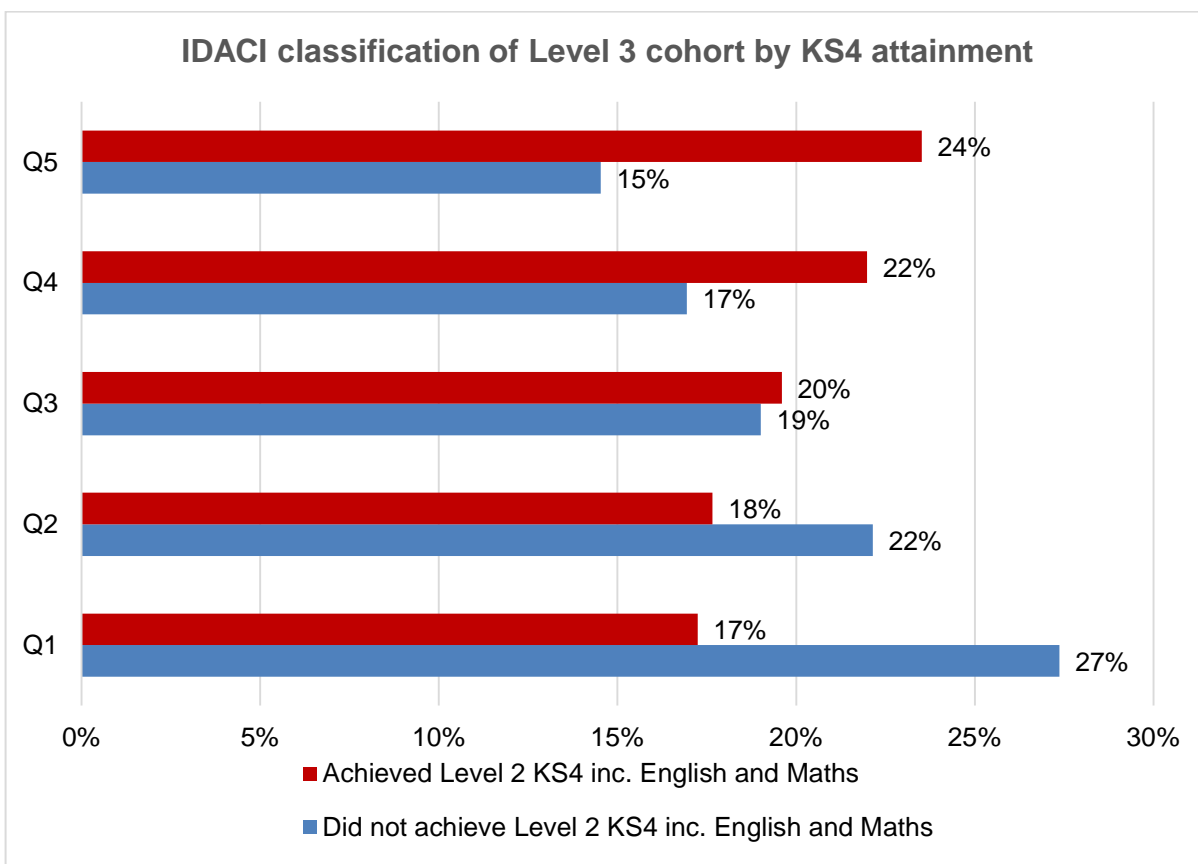
**NB** - However, it is acknowledged that some students, not picked up in this tracking, may have been studying additional qualifications alongside their Level 3 programme. From 2012 this will be the case for all FE students through their Study Programmes. Nonetheless, this group of students who left school with a lower attainment record, after achieving a Level 3 qualification at a FE College or Sixth Form College, then went onto study at HE level and a substantial proportion of this group studied HE delivered by FE Colleges.

<sup>12</sup> This rate is the overall HE rate (not just immediate) for the combined FE level 3 cohort whose KS4 attainment data was available. It excludes many older students in this study and FE students who may have not have been in the English secondary school system.

## 7.5 Characteristics of students who progressed to HE with lower KS4 attainment

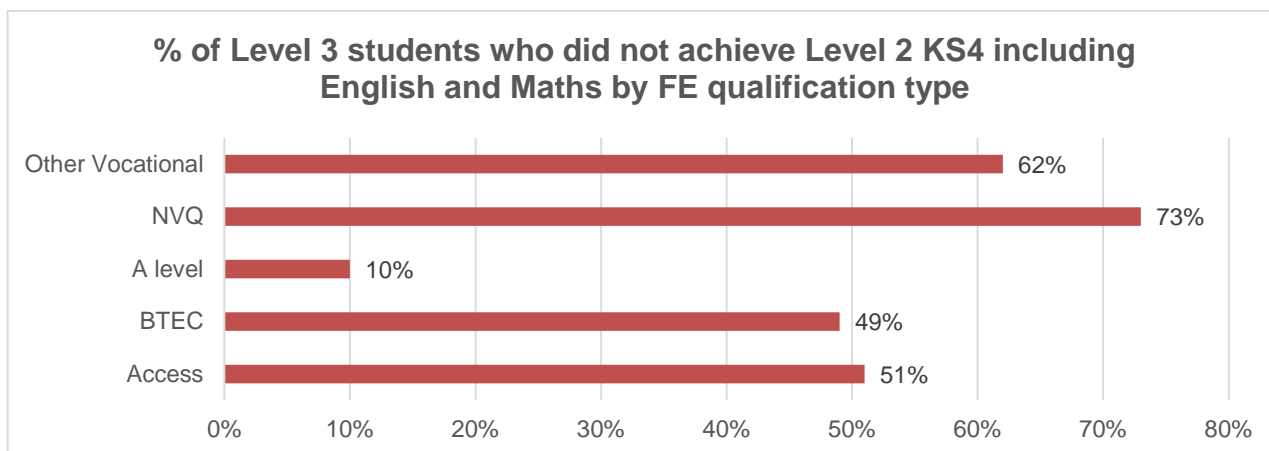
The characteristics of the group of lower prior attaining students (not achieving 5GCSEs (A\*-C) including English and Maths) are explored in more detail below. As expected, students with lower KS4 attainment are more likely to be classified as disadvantaged using the IDACI indicator (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) and this is illustrated in the chart in Figure 16, where 27% of lower attaining KS4 students are classified as IDACI Quintile 1, the most disadvantaged quintile, compared to 17% of students who attained Level 2 with English and Maths at KS4. This provides an example of how FE Colleges are providing Level 3 qualifications to lower attaining students who are also from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Figure 16: Disadvantage and KS4 attainment**



The chart in Figure 17 shows that only one in ten students who achieved their A level in an FE College or Sixth Form College were identified as lower attaining compared to two thirds of Other Vocational students and just under a half of BTEC students. These figures demonstrate the role of FE Colleges, and the vocational and Access pathways they offer, in increasing the qualifications of young people who leave school without the full Level 2 including English and Maths.

**Figure 17: Proportion of lower KS4 attaining young students by FE Level 3 programme type**



## 7.6 KS4 attainment, programmes of FE study and progression to HE in FE and university

Figure 15 showed that students who don't achieve their full Level 2 with English and Maths are more likely to study HE in an FE College than those who do, but this differs according to which Level 3 qualification they achieved. Table 44 shows HE progression rates by FE qualification type and place of HE study.

Access to HE students progress to university at similar rates regardless of prior attainment (77% for those with lower KS4 attainment and 81% for those with high KS4 attainment) and the majority in both attainment groups go to university.

Meanwhile for the other Level 3 qualifications, high attainment at KS4 leads to higher progression rates and lower attaining KS4 students are more likely to study HE in FE. This is particularly true for NVQ and Other Vocational Level 3 students.

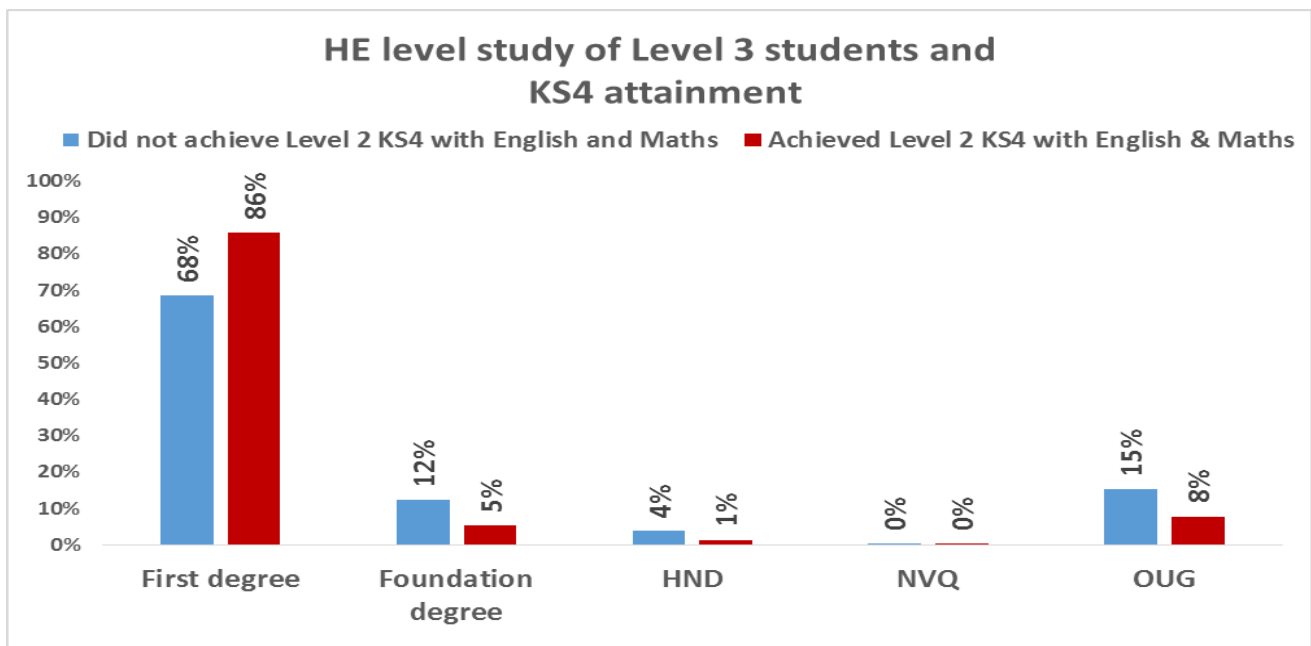
**Table 44: Share of HE delivery for Level 3 entrants not achieving full Level 2 with English and Maths and those who did achieve**

FE Level 3 qualification	Not achieving full Level 2 including English and Maths			Achieving full Level 2 including English and Maths		
	% HE rate	HE Delivery Breakdown		% HE rate	HE Delivery Breakdown	
		HE in FE	University		HE in FE	University
<b>Access</b>	77%	7%	93%	81%	7%	93%
<b>BTEC</b>	43%	29%	71%	53%	23%	77%
<b>A level</b>	69%	10%	90%	78%	6%	94%
<b>NVQ</b>	11%	76%	24%	21%	65%	35%
<b>Other Vocational</b>	18%	63%	42%	30%	32%	68%

### 7.7 KS4 attainment and the type of HE qualification studied

Examination of HE entrants by KS4 attainment shows that students with lower prior attainment by the time they leave secondary school are less likely to progress onto a First degree but more likely to study at Other Undergraduate level. Figure 18 illustrates the breakdown at HE qualification level. For example, 86% of Level 3 achievers with Level 2 KS4 qualifications including English and Maths progress onto a First degree programme compared with 68% of lower attainers at KS4; this group are more likely to study at Other Undergraduate level.

**Figure 18: KS4 attainment and the level of HE qualification studied**



### 7.8 KS4 attainment and regional variation

London had the highest proportion of their Level 3 cohort with lower prior attainment at KS4, 47% of London domiciles had not attained at this level. Even so, London still had the highest progression rate of all regions and even with lower prior attainment, London students were much more likely to enter a university than study HE in FE.

**Table 45: Low attaining KS4 students and progression by region**

FE Level 3 cohort who did not attain Level 2 with English and Maths					
Region	% of cohort with lower prior attainment	HE Progression	HE in FE share	University share	Cohort
East Midlands	42%	35%	29%	71%	17615
East of England	39%	30%	25%	75%	23005
London	47%	50%	14%	86%	33465
North East	40%	38%	53%	47%	11680

FE Level 3 cohort who did not attain Level 2 with English and Maths					
Region	% of cohort with lower prior attainment	HE Progression	HE in FE share	University share	Cohort
North West	35%	41%	28%	72%	36250
South East	34%	33%	31%	69%	33595
South West	39%	32%	45%	55%	21510
West Midlands	39%	41%	30%	70%	26865
Yorkshire and the Humber	39%	37%	29%	71%	22400

### 7.9 KS4 attainment of Level 3 cohort and HE progression summary

Figures 19 and 20 provide a summary of the progression of the 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 cohorts of Level 3 achievers linked to the DfE Key Stage 4 dataset. Figure 19 links Key Stage 4 achievement with progression, level of HE qualification and type of university. Figure 20 links Key Stage 4 achievement with students' achievement of First degrees and class of degree.

**Figure 19: KS4 attainment of FE Level 3 and HE progression flow**

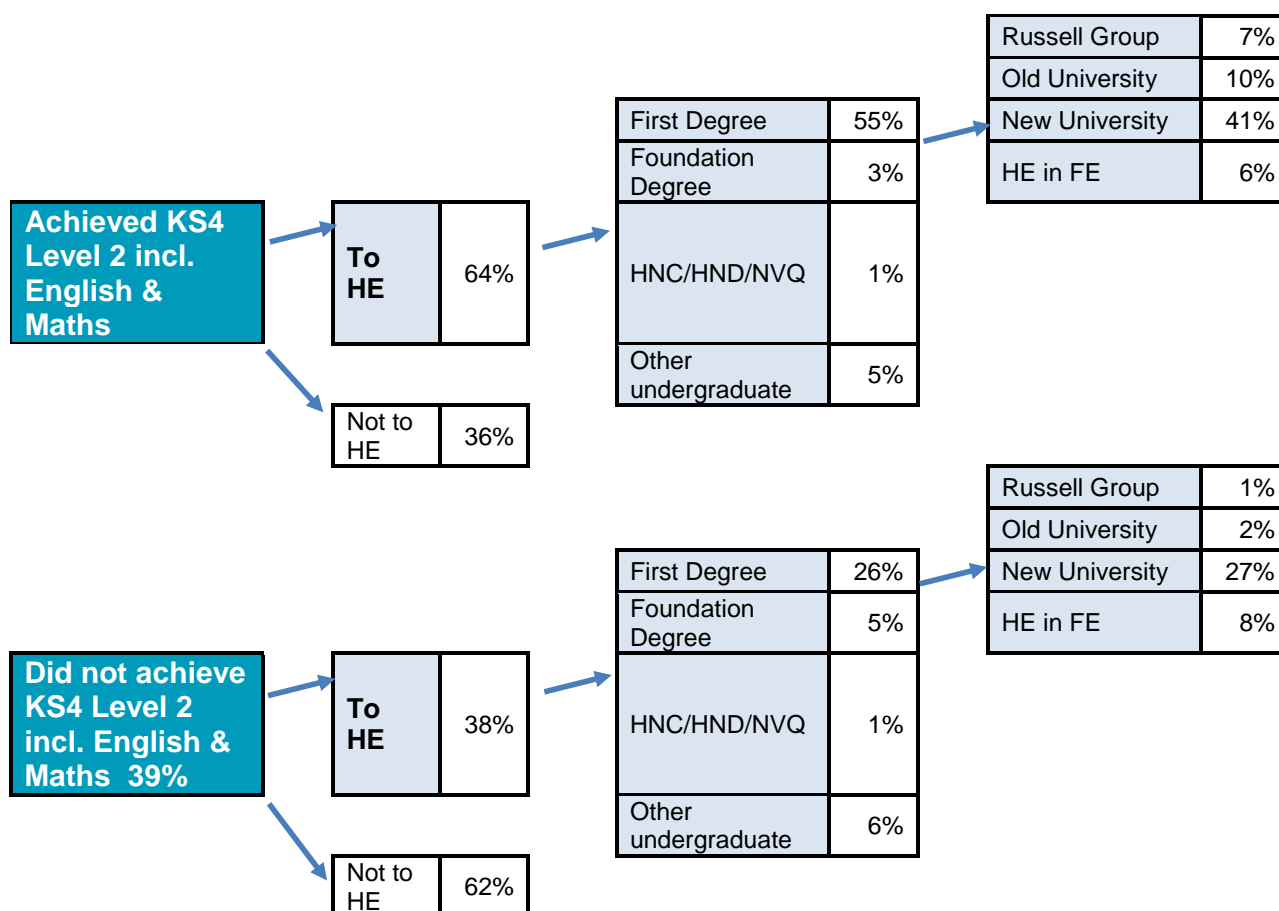
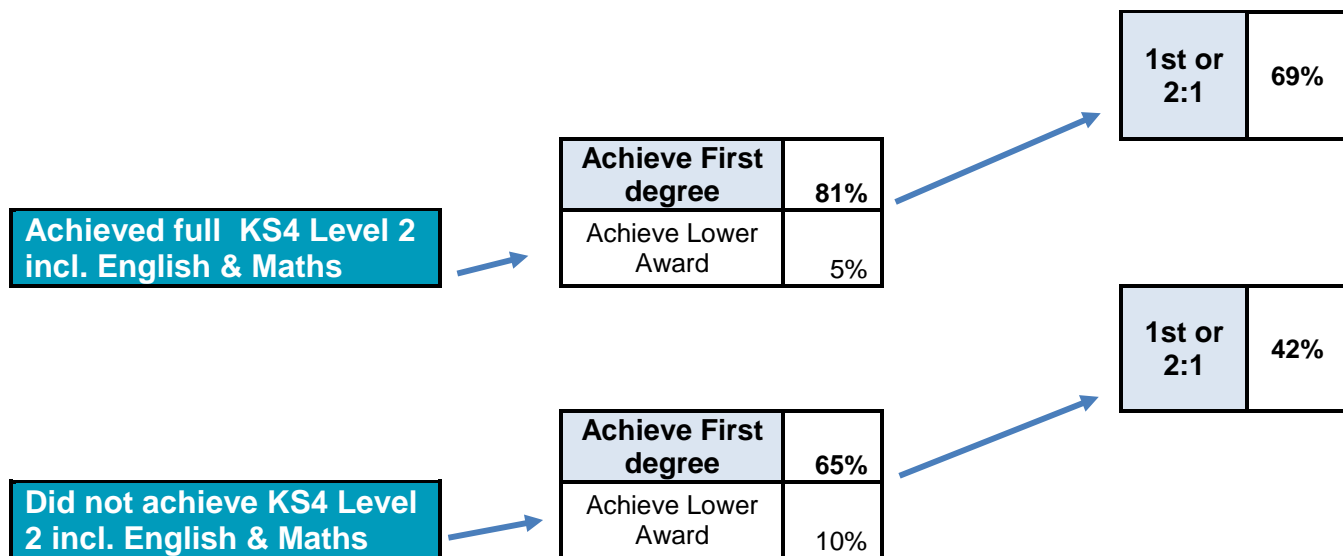


Figure 20: KS4 attainment of FE Level 3 and HE progression flow



## 8. Conclusions

This study examines the HE progression of over 1.8 million Level 3 students who have achieved a qualification in either an English FE college or Sixth Form college. FE Level 3 students are distinctive from their peers in secondary schools because they include both young and mature students studying a wider mix of Level 3 qualification types, including a myriad of vocational programmes. For this reason, it is important to mine the data and provide a descriptive, contextual picture of progression that increases our understanding of the complexity of FE progression. The data follows five cohorts longitudinally with the last cohort tracked for one year entering in 2012, the year in which tuition fees were increase to a maximum of £9,000 per year. The study allows us to explore the impact that HE fees may have had in progression and further tracking of FE students in 2013 and onwards will allow us to examine any recovery in line with national trends and the extent to which FE Level 3 patterns of progression differ from general patterns of progression or from school Key Stage 5 students.

As expected, mirroring national trends, FE Level 3 HE progression rates peaked in 2011 (37%) then fell back in 2012 (for the 2011 cohort who entered HE in 2012). The rate returned to 33% a similar rate to the first cohort in 2007, 32%. However, the mean rate for the whole cohort masks a different picture when you examine progression looking at underlying demographic characteristics. Progression rates for the young Level 3 group who entered higher education in 2012 were 37% and this is considerably lower than the rate for the first tracked cohort who entered HE in 2008, 49%. This drop in rates for young FE students was countered by an increase in progression rates for the mature groups, where trends show their rates increased (despite the fee increase). Progression rate trends are sustained or increase if the entry rate is stable against a back drop of significant population increases.

There are important results highlighted in this report that appear to impact progression rates in addition to macro HE factors: the fact that the composition of the FE Level 3 cohort has changed significantly across the five years, the 16-19 cohort has grown considerably (+46%) and the population of the mature cohort aged 20-24 years (-10%) and 25 + has fallen (-36%). There has been a significant increase in the number of BTEC students which doubled between 2007 and 2011 compared to A level students, whose numbers have remained steady across the tracked cohorts. Although BTEC Level 3 entrant numbers have increased, the rate of progression for this group took a significant dip in 2012 and it will be interesting to see the extent to which this rate recovers, especially as BTEC Level 3 students in FE now far exceed the numbers studying any other qualification type.

Other Undergraduate provision in university has dropped considerably although HE provision in FE has balanced this drop and the findings show the increasingly important role that HE in FE plays in FE learner Level 3 progression to higher study.

By tracking the FE Level 3 population longitudinally you can see that some students do not enter HE immediately on achievement of their Level 3 qualification but enter 2-5 years later. Longitudinal tracking also allows us to examine not only access to HE but success in HE and success rates are investigated in detail to show the differentials in success by FE qualification type. Achievement rates of FE and Sixth Form College students who progress to First degrees at university hold up well when compared to all England figures for both school and college entrants (75% compared to 79% for all England). The proportion of FE and Sixth Form College

students achieving a good degree (First or 2:1) was 62% compared to all UK qualifiers where the rate is 64%. When put into the context of the relatively high proportion of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, these figures illustrate the important role the FE sector has in offering alternative pathways to success and ultimately increased opportunities for social mobility.

Prior attainment at KS4 also reinforces the role and value of the FE sector in increasing the educational capital of students who leave school with lower Key Stage 4 attainment (those who don't attain 5 GCSEs A\*-C including English & Maths). 39% of the Level 3 cohort (where KS4 attainment data is available) did not attain 5 GCSEs A\*-C including English & Maths, yet went through the FE system and achieved a Level 3 qualification. Overall, 38% of this FE cohort went into higher education despite leaving school with lower attainment, further evidence of the contribution that the FE sector makes to mobility.

The report examines the intricacies of progression by demographic characteristics such as learner domicile, ethnicity and subject area, illustrating varying patterns of progression by learner background. It is hoped that this information encourages planners in both the FE and HE sector to think about the "fit" between demand and supply and to tailor provision to target groups. Further, the data can provide both a national and regional benchmark going forward allowing providers to monitor trends in patterns of progression, locally and with context.



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