

Oxford Brookes' performance against widening participation milestones

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1.0 Introduction

Who are the Office of Fair Access (OFFA) and what is an Access Agreement?

The Office of Fair Access (OFFA) is an independent public body whose role is to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups.

All Universities in England charging a tuition fee above the basic level are required to submit an access agreement to OFFA. This agreement sets out how the institution will support recruitment and student success of under-represented groups and will include details of financial support packages, outreach activities and milestones for widening participation.

The access agreement is renewed every year and approved by OFFA. Part of the process involves monitoring progress in meeting access agreement commitments and targets.

What are the University's widening access milestones?

In Oxford Brookes' access agreement, the University has committed to examining the recruitment patterns and academic performance of 6 under-represented groups:

- Disabled Students
- Students from low social-economic groups (HESA SEC's 4,5,6 and 7)
- Students from black and minority ethnic groups (BME)
- Mature students without a first degree
- Students from low income households (\leq 27k).
- Students whose parent/guardian has no HE background

The milestones cover student performance across the full student lifecycle; described as 'getting in, getting through and moving on and involving the following stages:

- Applicants
- Entrants
- First year retention
- Completion: Completed course successfully and/or gained any other award
- Good Completion: Proportion achieving a first or upper-second class honours degree
- Employment (including Further Study)

How do we measure performance?

The performance of the above student groups is analysed for each stage of the student lifecycle outlined above and against the OFFA targets for 2014/15. These targets have been devised by the University. Performance relative to the University average¹ is also considered though the emphasis of this particular report is on the interpretation of performance statistics in the context of national statistical data and sector average benchmarks.

The data has been extracted from the Academic Performance Tracking Tool (APTT). The report takes a University level view with a Faculty perspective provided as part of the Strategic Planning process. A year on year view of performance is given in order to analyse trends over time.

¹ All Undergraduates and select PGT students (on courses charging maximum fee level) that are UK domiciled, paying the domestic fee, studying full-time or sandwich out at Oxford Brookes University or Franchise Colleges.

Data considerations/changes since last report

We keep our OFFA targets under constant review and any changes or developments are brought to the attention of and considered by the Widening Participation Advisory group (WPAG).

The Strategic and Business Planning Office (SBPO) have re-defined the good completion indicator in order to align it with how HESA present achievement data for the sector (namely using the student actual leaving year rather than expected leaving year). The related OFFA targets may need to be revised to reflect a new base line.

The completion indicator is based on a students expected cohort end year. Some students will complete on time whilst others will take longer especially those who have transferred to another course within Brookes. For these students the cohort end year on eCSIS will not be altered to reflect a later date. For this reason, the completion data (which currently excludes the still studying and internal transfers) needs to be treated with caution.

Guide to interpreting the tables

The following information needs to be used by the reader to interpret the tables in each section; it provides details of the 'current' year each measure is based on.

- Applicants – 2014/15 entry year
- Entrants – 2014/15 entry year (with the exception of low income students where the current year is 2013/14 entry due to data restrictions)
- Retention – 2013/14 entry year
- Completion – 2013/14 cohort end year
- Good Completion – 2013/14 leaving year
- Employment – 2012/13 leaving year

2.0 Performance against widening participation milestones

2.1 Disabled students

Lifecycle Stage	All Students	Disabled Students				
	University Average	Latest Year	Previous four years			
Applicants (Base Population)	-	11.1% (1988)	11.0% (1997)	10.3% (1913)	10.2% (2104)	10.5% (1840)
Entrants (Base Population)	-	14.5% (501)	16.5% (634)	15.3% (469)	16.8% (594)	16.9% (622)
Retention	93.0%	93.0%	92.5%	92.7%	92.1%	89.9%
Completion	78.6%	75.7%	80.3%	82.2%	83.9%	85.5%
<i>% Still studying or transferred</i>	<i>10.6%</i>	<i>13.9%</i>	<i>6.3%</i>	<i>3.6%</i>	<i>3.1%</i>	<i>2.9%</i>
Good Completion	76.0%	74.0%	69.5%	72.7%	73.7%	65.6%
Employment	90.0%	85.7%	84.5%	84.4%	83.7%	80.8%

Key findings

- The absolute number and proportion of disabled applicants to Brookes has remained fairly stable over the last two years. **Brookes' disabled applicants' proportional representation has been above sector benchmark in the five years studied above (in the current year it is +3.1% above sector average)¹.**
- 2014 has seen a 2 percentage point dip in the proportional of disabled entrants from last year; equating to 133 fewer students. It is also the lowest proportional representation in the last five years. However, it is worth noting that the number of 'unknown' records is higher in 2014 (at 6%) than previous years where it has been around 1-2% so the drop may be due to data coverage rather than actual recruitment patterns. **In spite of the decline in proportions, Brookes' participation has consistently been above par with the sector average of 10.8%.**
- **The most recent retention rate recorded for disabled entrants is at par with the University and almost at par with the sector average (93.8% in 2011/12 according to recent HEFCE research)².**
- **Although the good completion rate is below the University average by -2.1%, it is higher than the sector average of 71.6%.**
- **Current graduate destination rates are marginally below the sector average (85.7%).**

¹ UCAS annual datasets

² Non-continuation rates: Trends and profiles (HEFCE, July 2014)

2.2 Students from low socio-economic groups

Lifecycle Stage	All Students	Low SE Students				
	University Average	Latest Year	Previous four years			
Applicants (Base Population)	<i>No data available</i>					
Entrants (Base Population)	-	39.0% (1353)	40.9% (1572)	41.6% (1276)	39.8% (1413)	39.9% (1473)
Retention	93.0%	93.1%	92.2%	93.1%	91.7%	89.4%
Completion	78.6%	79.7%	81.9%	80.3%	82.9%	85.0%
<i>% Still studying or transferred</i>	<i>10.6%</i>	<i>10.4%</i>	<i>6.6%</i>	<i>5.1%</i>	<i>4.1%</i>	<i>2.5%</i>
Good Completion	76.0%	74.9%	73.0%	73.5%	72.2%	71.9%
Employment	90.0%	90.4%	86.2%	87.5%	88.0%	85.3%

Key findings

- Intake proportions from this under-represented group have moved within a maximum range of 2.6% (the difference between the highest and lowest intake proportions) in the five year period. The current year has seen a slight drop from last year equating to 219 fewer entrants.
- **Brookes' intake remains comfortably above the sector benchmark of 32.7%¹ and the University's location adjusted benchmark (31.8%).**
- The **latest retention rate recorded for this group is above the University benchmark.**
- Interestingly, in the current year, **this group of students has recorded higher performance ratings for almost all KPIs compared to the university benchmarks**; the only exception is good completion where it is marginally (-1.1%) under par.

¹ HESA Performance Indicators, Table T1b - Participation of under-represented groups in higher education: UK domiciled young full-time undergraduate entrants 2012/13

2.3 Students from ethnic minority groups

Lifecycle Stage	All Students	BMEG Students				
	University Average	Latest Year	Previous four years			
Applicants (Base Population)	<i>No data available</i>					
Entrants (Base Population)		17.1% (593)	16.4% (629)	16.7% (512)	13.3% (471)	12.4% (455)
Retention	93.0%	90.5%	88.8%	92.2%	91.4%	86.5%
Completion	78.6%	73.4%	79.1%	76.4%	76.7%	82.3%
% Still studying or transferred	10.6%	12.6%	5.1%	2.6%	3.7%	1.8%
Good Completion	76.0%	60.8%	60.9%	61.0%	57.6%	60.1%
Employment	90.0%	84.5%	75.8%	83.3%	80.7%	75.5%

Key findings

- A steady rise in the proportion of BMEG entrants is noticeable with the current academic year reporting the highest proportion of BMEG entrants at Brookes. It may also be interesting to note that in the fee year i.e. 2012, BMEG was the only under-represented group that showed an increase on the previous 2 years' recruitment figures. **The intake trajectory has therefore moved closer to the sector benchmark of 21.4% BMEG participation though the gap remains substantive.**
- However, when **compared to population statistics¹ for Oxfordshire and the South - East Region (around 8% BMEG), Oxford Brookes has an over-representation of BME participants (more than double the proportions).**
- The latest year has seen a +1.7% improvement in retention rates which have, however, **remained under par with the University average by -2.5% and indeed the sector average by a lesser 1.6%².**
- Good completion rates have remained fairly stable at around 60-61% and are in line with the sector average (60%). However, rates remain markedly **under par with the University average (by a substantive 15 percentage points).**

Rates have not shown the same pace of improvement as that observed for the non-BMEG (White) group (up by 4 percentage points over the five year period considered compared to 0.7% for BMEG students). Hence, the gap in good achievement between the two groups has widened considerably in recent years with BMEG reporting comparatively lower rates (a gap of 17 percentage points). This is largely a reflection of findings from a recent ECU report suggesting a 16.8% attainment gap³.

- A graduate destination rate of 84.5% in the most recent year is the highest in five years and on par with the sector average. However, **BMEG are still less likely to go into work and further study than their non-BMEG (White) counterparts whose rates tend to be around 90% in most years.**

¹ Office of National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011, All usual residents aged 18 years or above by ethnicity.

² Non-continuation rates: Trends and profiles, HEFCE, July 2014

³ Equality in higher education: statistical report 2014 (Part 2)

2.4 Mature students without a first degree

Lifecycle Stage	All Students	Mature Students without a first degree				
	University Average	Latest Year	Previous four years			
Applicants (Base Population)		22.1% (3941)	19.5% (3547)	21.3% (3950)	22.2% (4593)	22.7% (3986)
Entrants (Base Population)		29.7% (1032)	26.7% (1025)	28.4% (874)	30.7% (1088)	29.7% (1096)
Retention	93.0%	88.2%	88.8%	89.8%	89.5%	86.9%
Completion	78.6%	76.2%	78.3%	78.5%	78.3%	79.2%
<i>% Still studying or transferred</i>	<i>10.6%</i>	<i>11.1%</i>	<i>7.9%</i>	<i>5.1%</i>	<i>5.8%</i>	<i>3.2%</i>
Good Completion	76.0%	70.8%	70.9%	66.3%	65.5%	74.0%
Employment	90.0%	92.2%	88.4%	90.2%	91.7%	88.9%

Key findings

- **2014 has registered an upsurge in mature applicants and entrants without a first degree, in terms of proportional representation and absolute numbers.**
- Mature applicant numbers declined by -13.9% in 2012 (when the fees were raised) compared to the previous year. This decline continued in the following year albeit by a slightly lessened margin (-10.2%). **2014, however, has seen recovery by +11% on 2013 applicant numbers.**
- **Sector benchmark for all mature applicants stands at 26.4%; Brookes' proportion (albeit for mature applicants without a prior degree) stands -4.3% lower at 22.1%.**
- Absolute numbers for mature entrants have been on an upward trajectory post the rise in fees in 2012 and **participation rates have consistently been above the sector average of 19%.**

Growth is reported in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, particularly in the Department of Clinical Health Care and to a slightly lesser extent in the Department of Biological & Medical Sciences.

- The most recent **retention rate has been the lowest in the five years considered**; -4.8% below University average. **On a more positive note, however, retention rates in the period considered have remained at or above par with the sector benchmark of 87.1%.**
- **Mature students at Brookes have the highest employability rate in the most current year applicable.** It is also +2.1 percentage points above the University average. A probable cause for this is that mature students are more likely to be in jobs already when they enrol.

2.5 Students from low income families

Lifecycle Stage	All Students	Students from low income families				
	University Average	Latest Year	Previous four years			
Applicants (Base Population)	<i>No data available</i>					
Entrants (Base Population)		33.2%* (1274)	35.3% (1082)	33.4% (1182)	32.4% (1195)	29.5% (999)
Retention	93.0%	91.9%	90.7%	95.5%	92.5%	91.8%
Completion	78.6%	77.6%	84.4%	83.2%	85.9%	91.1%
% Still studying or transferred	10.6%	12.3%	4.3%	2.4%	1.9%	1.0%
Good Completion	76.0%	73.2%	71.2%	72.8%	69.8%	73.5%
Employment	90.0%	88.5%	86.7%	85.8%	84.1%	80.5%

* Latest year for 'entrants' from low income households is for 2013 since current entrants may still be in the process of declaring household income while applying for Grants and Bursaries etc.

- 2013 intake is higher than the last academic year by 192 students; **proportional representation however, has dropped by -2.1%**.

It is important to note that the proportion of unknown information relative to total entrants has increased year on year by more than 10 percentage points (33.4% in 2009 vs 43.7% in 2013) in the last five years considered. Hence it is advisable to treat data on students from low household income families with caution.

- **Improvements in performance rates are noticeable across the three main indicators – retention, good completion and employment though in all three cases, this group does not meet the University average.**
- **When compared to performance indicators for students from higher income families, the biggest gap was noticeable in the latest completion rate (82.5% vs 77.6% - a difference of almost +5%) and to a lesser extent in graduate destination rate (91% vs 88.5%) and a marginal gap in good completion rate (74.4% vs 73.2%).**

2.6 Students whose parents/guardians have no HE backgrounds

Lifecycle Stage	All Students	Students whose parents/guardians have no HE background				
	University Average	Latest Year	Previous four years			
Applicants (Base Population)	<i>No data available</i>					
Entrants (Base Population)		34.8% (1207)	38.7% (1487)	35.8% (1099)	33.6% (1192)	33.3% (1226)
Retention	93.0%	92.5%	93.0%	93.3%	92.9%	90.8%
Completion	78.6%	79.1%	81.4%	82.4%	83.9%	81.8%
% Still studying or transferred	10.6%	10.8%	6.0%	4.3%	5.0%	2.8%
Good Completion	76.0%	74.8%	71.1%	73.5%	73.3%	73.8%
Employment	90.0%	90.6%	88.1%	88.1%	89.1%	87.9%

- This OFFA group has consistently recorded highest proportional intake in the last five years. Proportional representation has **dipped in 2014/15 by around 4 percentage points reversing the upward trend since 2010/11.**
- Retention and employment rates are in line with the University average whereas good completion is marginally below.
- In order to identify gaps in performance, attainment rates for students from families with higher education backgrounds were looked at. **It was found that their retention, completion and good completion rates were not just above par compared to students from families with no higher education background (most notable gap in good completion i.e. 78% vs 74.8%), they were also higher than the University average for the indicators mentioned (most notable being an almost +2% improvement on University retention benchmark).**