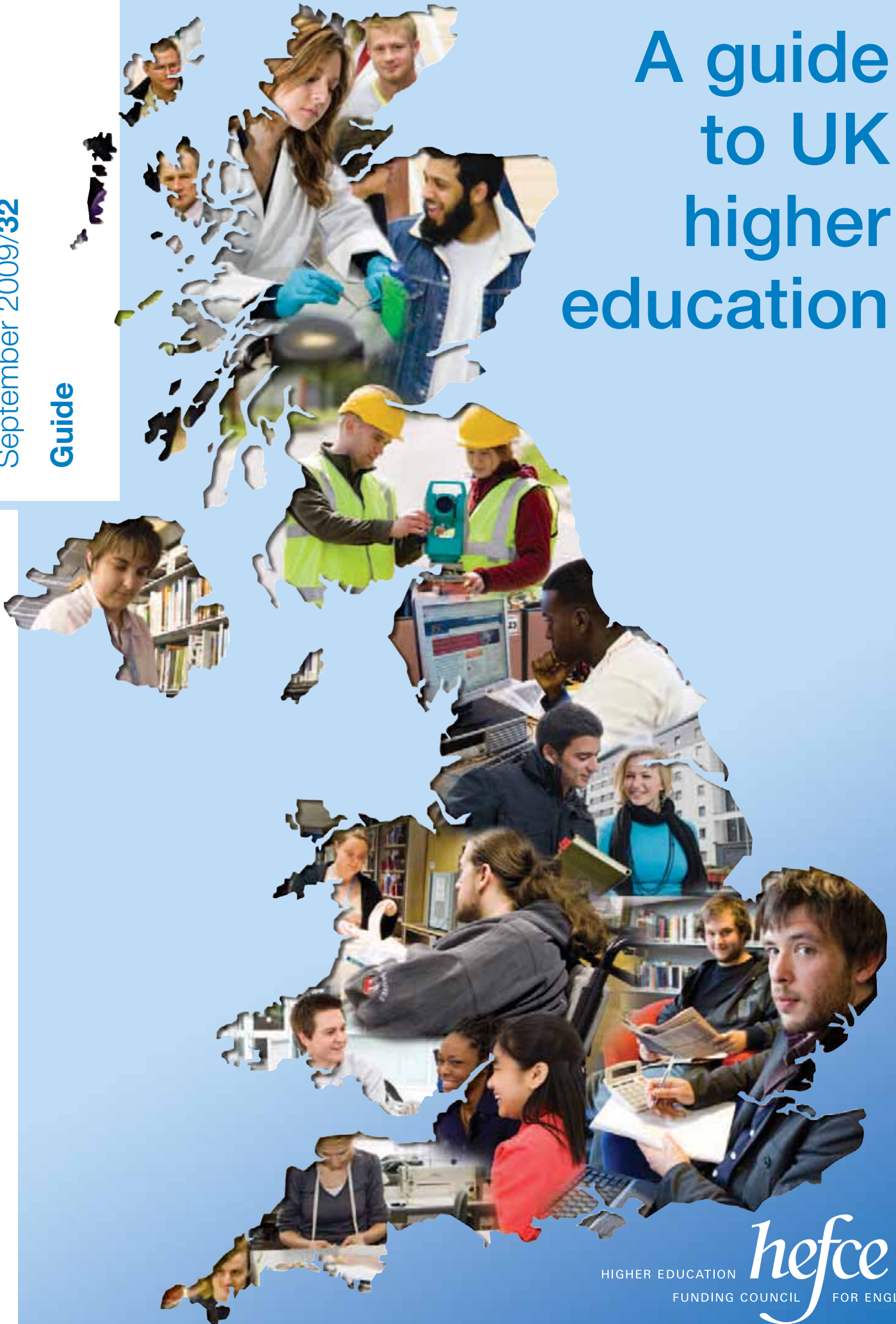


September 2009/32

Guide

A guide to UK higher education



HIGHER EDUCATION *hefce*
FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND

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What's in the guide and is it for me?

This guide provides an overview of the higher education sector in the United Kingdom. It is designed to introduce the reader to the sector, provide basic factual information and signpost the way for further investigation.

It would be useful if you are new to higher education, or if you are a specialist already working in the sector but seeking to widen your understanding. International readers may find it useful as an introduction to the UK higher education sector.

It covers a broad sweep of information, from the types of institutions that can provide higher education courses and how they are governed, through current tuition fee arrangements, to major policy areas such as widening participation.

It indicates current trends, such as the move towards modularised degrees and the changing nature of the student population. It also includes contact details for useful organisations, and a chronology of landmark events in the recent history of UK higher education.

The nature of higher education in the UK



Higher education in the UK is rich, diverse and provided by many different types of institutions. Alongside the traditional roles of teaching and research, the provision of higher education makes a valuable contribution to the UK's economic and social development. Knowledge is built upon and shared, skills are developed and social mobility, innovation and enterprise are enabled.



The main purposes of higher education are:

- to enable people to develop their capabilities and fulfil their potential, both personally and at work
- to advance knowledge and understanding through teaching and research
- to contribute to an economically successful and culturally diverse nation.

The nature of higher education in the UK has changed significantly over the past 40 years. The number of students studying at universities and colleges has increased dramatically, with approximately 2.5 million students at higher education institutions today¹.

The age of undergraduates has changed, too. Formerly they were mostly school leavers studying full-time, but the student population now includes large numbers of mature students (older than 21 on entry) and people studying part-time. Higher education is part of 'lifelong learning', which extends through an adult's working life and sometimes into retirement.

The higher education sector in the UK reaches way beyond national borders. Many staff and students are recruited from overseas and international collaboration in research is commonplace.

The structure of non-compulsory education

Further education is for people over the age of 16. Further education courses are generally up to the standard of General Certificate of Education (GCE) A-level or National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 and take place in a sixth-form college or a further education institution.

Higher education courses are generally above the standard of GCE A-Levels or NVQ Level 3. They include degree courses, postgraduate courses, Higher National Diplomas and other qualifications.



Higher education institutions and their staff

Higher education courses and qualifications are delivered through a variety of different institutions, including universities and colleges. Due to this diversity they are commonly referred to as 'higher education institutions' (HEIs). Higher education also provides a significant source of employment for the UK workforce.

Universities

Universities are diverse, ranging in size, mission, subject mix and history. In England, the older universities were established by Royal Charter, Statute or by an Act of Parliament. Institutions that have the necessary characteristics are now granted university status by an agency called the Privy Council. The Government is supporting the development of new universities in areas of the UK where local access to higher education is absent or limited.

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 granted university status to higher education institutions that had previously been known as 'polytechnics'. These are sometimes called 'new' universities, although many of them have their origins in vocational colleges with a long history. Conversely, universities that may be called 'old' are in fact of various history. They include some founded in the 1950s and 1960s, the 'civic' universities that were founded in major cities in the 19th and early 20th centuries and the first colleges of the University of Wales, which were established in the 19th and early and mid-20th centuries. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge date from the 12th and 13th centuries, and three Scottish

universities (St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen) have existed since the 15th century.

Universities have their own degree-awarding powers. They range in size from fewer than 4,500 students (University of Abertay Dundee) to around 40,000 students (Leeds Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester). The Open University, whose part-time students study by distance learning, is even larger with over 175,000 students.

There is one privately funded university: the University of Buckingham, which provides courses mainly in business, information systems and law. It has approximately 900 students².

Higher education colleges

Higher education is also provided by colleges. Some award their own degrees and other qualifications; in other colleges, qualifications are validated by a university or national accrediting body.

Higher education colleges with at least 4,000 students and degree-awarding powers can apply to the Privy Council for the title of 'University'. Smaller colleges with degree-awarding powers can apply for the right to use the title of 'University College'.

Colleges range in size from small, specialist institutions with around 300 students (The Institute of Cancer Research, for example), to large, multi-discipline institutions of around 15,000 students, such as Canterbury Christ Church University College³.

Many higher education colleges cover a wide range of subjects, while some specialise in one or two areas, such as art and design, dance and drama, agriculture or nursing.

Several colleges provide teacher training as a major element of their higher education provision. In Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales these courses are funded by the higher education funding bodies. In England they are funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

Governance

Higher education institutions are legally independent entities. Their governing bodies or Councils are responsible for ensuring the effective management of the institution and for planning its future development. They are ultimately responsible for all the affairs of the university or college.

Higher education in further education colleges

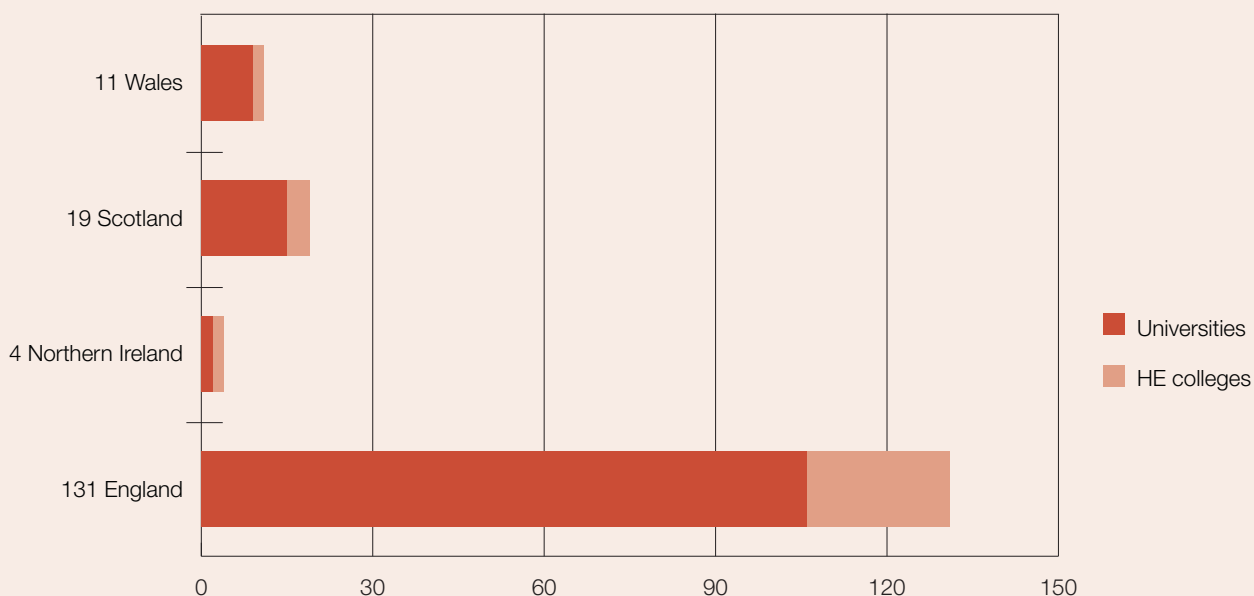
Many further education colleges also offer higher education courses, which are validated by a higher education institution or a national body such as Edexcel. The volume of higher education provision in further education colleges during the first decade of the 21st century is variously quoted as forming between 9 and 11 per cent of all higher education⁴.

Staff

Higher education institutions in the UK employ around 115,000 full-time academic staff and around 60,000 part-time. If all staff are included, (academic, administrative, and other support) the figure is estimated to be around 370,000⁵.

Academic staff in most universities, and in some colleges, carry out research as well as teaching. Most have doctorates and many have professional qualifications.

Location of higher education institutions in the UK



Staff pay

Pay scales are negotiated nationally for university and college staff under the auspices of the New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff; this has replaced the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff, which operated between 2001 and 2008.

Employers are represented by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and staff by various trade unions. Resulting national agreements take the form of recommendations to participating universities and higher education colleges⁶. Details of the current picture can be found at www.ucea.ac.uk.





Funding and resources

Universities and colleges receive about £23.4 billion in funding every year. More than a third of this comes from the UK Government⁷.

There are four UK higher education funding bodies:

- the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- the Scottish Funding Council (SFC)
- the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland) (DELNI), which acts as a higher education funding body for Northern Ireland.

The funding bodies allocate most of their funds for teaching and research using formulae. The distribution of funds for learning and teaching depends largely on the number of students at an institution and the subjects that it teaches. Nearly all funding for research is related to the quality and volume of research.

The four funding bodies are the largest individual sources of higher education funding, but universities and colleges also receive funds from a wide variety of private sources such as sponsorship, fee-paying students, conferences and donations. They can generate income by providing services to businesses and the community, such as consultancy, training and contracted research. In turn, the local economy and community benefit from engaging with the university's intellectual capital and connections.

The funding bodies and the Government

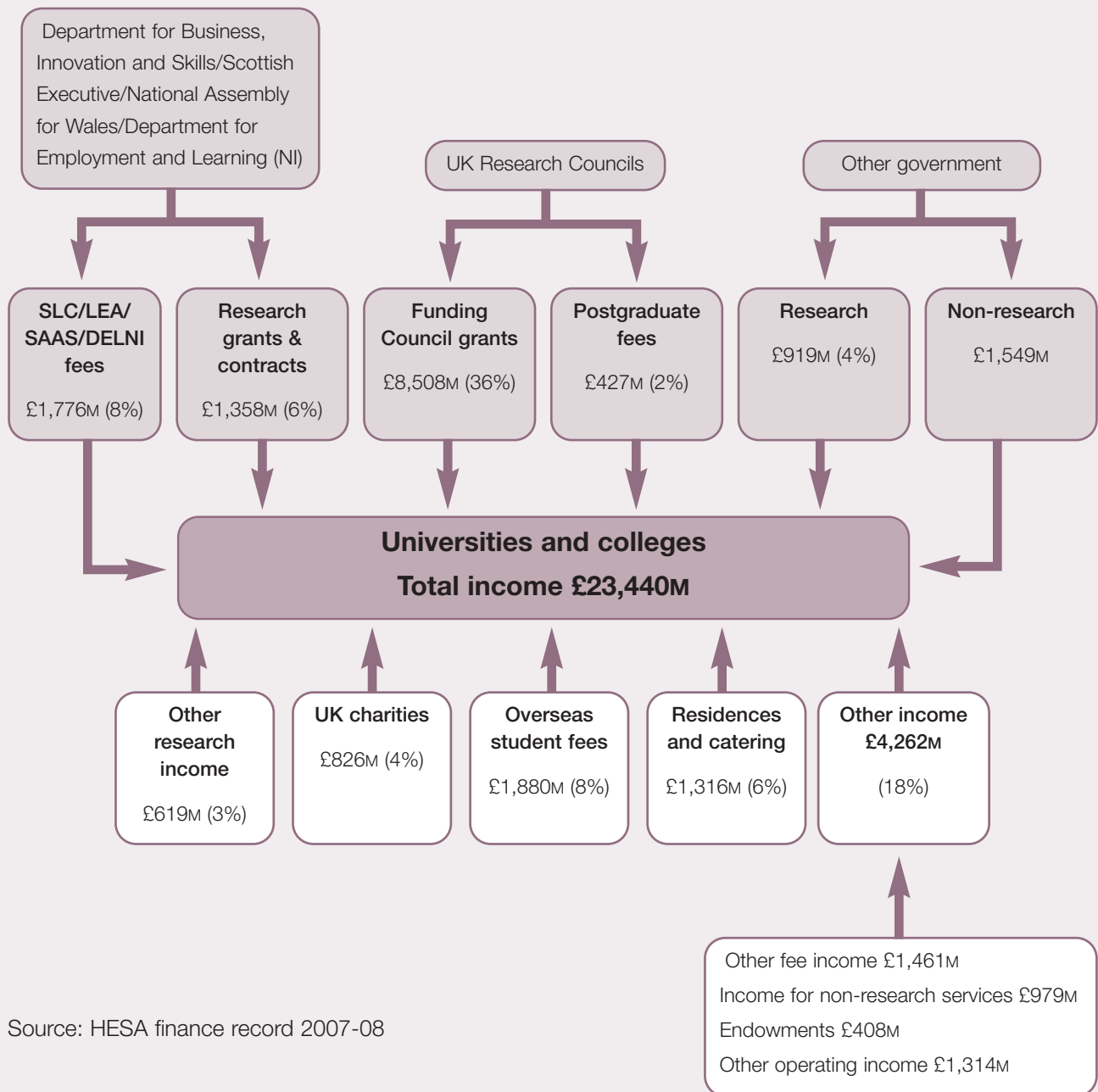
The four UK higher education funding bodies are funded by and responsible to Parliament. Their role includes:

- allocating funds for teaching and research
- promoting high-quality teaching and research
- widening access and increasing participation
- encouraging the development of interactions with business and the wider community
- advising Government on the needs of higher education
- informing students about the quality of higher education available
- ensuring the proper use of public funds.

The funding bodies work in partnership with other organisations such as the representative bodies (Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales, GuildHE), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

The total amount of money to be allocated is decided by central Government. Guidance and priorities are given by the Government but it is the sole responsibility of the funding bodies to allocate money to specific institutions. The funding bodies operate at arm's length from central Government.

Sources of finance for UK universities and colleges 2007-08



Source: HESA finance record 2007-08



Tuition fees and student support



In September 1998, UK students began to contribute towards the cost of a higher education through a yearly tuition fee⁸. Various financial support packages are available to students to help them pay the fee and meet the cost of living expenses while they study⁹. Student support and tuition fee arrangements differ across Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England.



Tuition fees

In 1998 students paid an annual contribution of around £1,000 to their chosen university or college. In 2006-07 English universities and colleges became able to charge variable fees subject to a maximum cap. Fees also increase with inflation each year. For academic year 2009-10 universities may charge no more than £3,225 per academic year for their undergraduate courses.

Universities and colleges that wish to charge variable tuition fees must have an access agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Access agreements set out how universities and colleges promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for lower income and other under-represented groups, mainly through the provision of non-repayable bursaries¹⁰.

Student loans

Student loans are part of the Government's financial support package for UK students, and are available to help students meet their living costs while studying. The rate of repayment depends on the level of the person's income after graduation.

Loans are provided by the Student Loans Company, or the Students Awards Agency for Scotland.

Student support funding

To help cover living costs and the payment of fees, students can apply to their local education authority and the Student Loans Company for additional financial support. In cases of financial hardship, students can also apply for funding, in the form of non-repayable bursaries, from the institution that they attend.

Part-time students may also be entitled to a fee waiver. In addition some students may be eligible for certain state benefits, including the Childcare Grants and other allowances.

Since 2006, students who meet certain criteria have been able to take advantage of a non-repayable maintenance grant to cover their living costs. The amount of grant received depends on the student's personal circumstances¹¹.

Arrangements in Scotland

Since 2000 students studying in Scotland have had tuition fees paid on their behalf by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.

Because the Scottish honours degree normally takes four years to complete, students from the rest of the UK were, as a concession, able to have their fourth-year tuition fee paid under the Quigley Agreement. Eligible students were those studying for a four- or five-year course at a Scottish institution where, at the time of commencing, there was an equivalent course over fewer years in their home country. This concessionary arrangement came to an end with the introduction of variable fees in the rest of the UK, which meant that non-Scottish students were no longer at a financial disadvantage from the cost of completing the extra year¹².

Arrangements in Wales

In 2006, under the 2004 Higher Education Act, the Secretary of State at the then Department for Education and skills (DfES) devolved certain functions to the National Assembly for Wales. The power to set its own student support and tuition fee regime now resides with Welsh ministers and applies only to students whose permanent home is in Wales (even if they live elsewhere while studying).

Student support is delivered by the Assembly Government's delivery partners; the Welsh local authorities assess student eligibility and the Student Loans Company pays and services grants and loans¹³.

Arrangements in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Assembly also has the devolved power to set its own student support and tuition fees regime. Current arrangements have been effective since 2006, following the 2005 Higher Education (NI) Order.

Student support is delivered by the Northern Ireland Assembly's delivery partners; the Education and Library Boards assess student eligibility and the Student Loans Company pays and services grants and loans¹⁴.



Who participates and how?

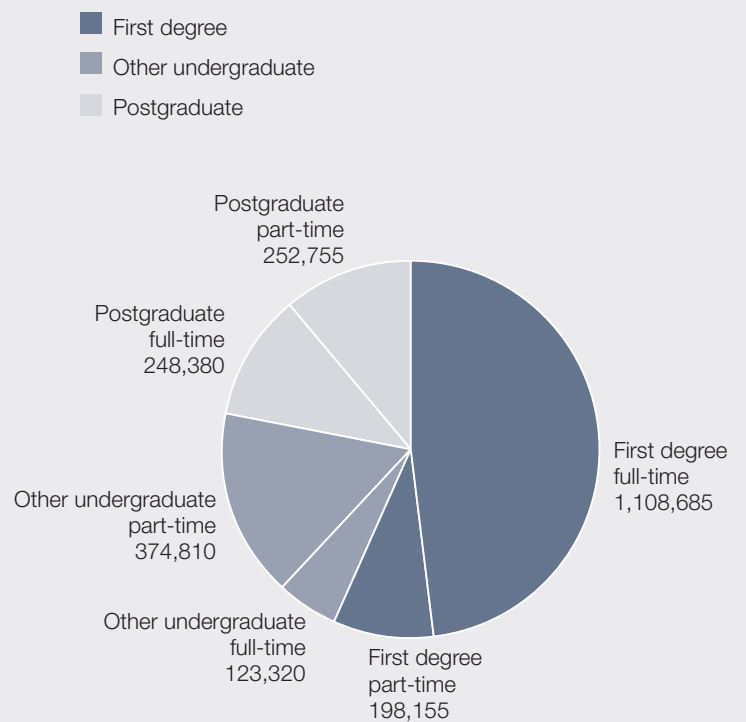


There are around 2.5 million higher education students in UK universities and colleges¹⁵. The make-up of the student population has changed significantly in the past 50 years.



Students are split by mode (full-time or part-time) and level of study (undergraduate or postgraduate) as follows¹⁶:

Students by mode and level of study



Students in the UK

The UK is moving away from the idea of a ‘typical’ student; the young, male, middle-class stereotype is becoming a thing of the past. For example, women now make up around 57 per cent of the student population¹⁷ and 23 per cent of full-time first degree students are aged 21 or over when they start their course¹⁸.

Students also have the opportunity to access higher education through a variety of different entities. For example, there are many thousands of students on higher education courses at UK further education colleges and around 175,000 students studying via distance learning with the Open University¹⁹.

Almost 80 per cent of full-time UK students successfully complete their academic programmes of study. This compares favourably to the OECD average of around 70 per cent²⁰.

Widening participation and access

Higher education should be accessible to all those who are able to benefit from it. Through programmes such as Aimhigher, the Government and funding bodies are working with higher education institutions and other organisations to widen participation in higher education, particularly among people from communities that are under-represented. Overwhelmingly, these are people from lower socio-economic groups and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds²¹.

Universities and colleges in England which plan to charge more than the standard fee for a course have to enter into an agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) setting out their proposals for improving access²².

International students

There are more than 350,000 international students studying in the UK. They come from over 200 countries and represent about 15 per cent of the student population. Around one-third of these students are from European Union countries²³.

A number of organisations provide support and advice to international students. The British Council, which has offices in over 100 countries, promotes UK education, encourages student mobility and offers a wide range of services to potential students in their own countries and while they are in the UK²⁴.

Student mobility is encouraged and promoted by the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC), which provides information

and advice on the comparability of qualifications from different countries.

The Erasmus scheme is an EU-funded programme that promotes student mobility within the whole of Europe. It is administered in the UK by the British Council. About 160,000 students a year throughout Europe take part, of which around 10,000 are from the UK²⁵.

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) provides advice and information to international students and to the advisers and professionals who assist them. Universities and colleges also provide support services for international students on academic and other matters, and to help them adjust to life in Britain.

Applying to university or college

Most applications for full-time undergraduate higher education courses are made through the admissions service, UCAS. Applications are usually made in the autumn, a year before the start of the course. Almost all UCAS applications are now submitted and handled online (www.ucas.ac.uk).

UCAS handles some postgraduate applications, such as for social work courses. However, applications for most postgraduate courses, access courses, foundation degrees and part-time study are still made directly to the university or college. In 2007, in response to requests from the higher education sector, UCAS set up an online postgraduate application service called UKPASS. The majority of postgraduate applications should eventually be made online using the UKPASS web-site: www.ukpass.ac.uk²⁶.

Potential students have a wide choice of higher education institutions. Students therefore need accurate information to help them decide where and to study. Sources of information include careers officers in schools and colleges, the UCAS Handbook and web-site, prospectuses, databases, videos and libraries. There is a wide range of resources available via the internet, including the Unistats web-site where the results of the National Student Survey (an annual survey of student satisfaction with their courses) can be found: www.unistats.com

Prospective students can use university league tables to help them select an institution. League tables are produced annually by national newspapers such as the Guardian and the Times, and are available in print and online. International league tables are also produced, notably by the Shanghai Jiaotong University. In 2008 HEFCE published some research to help stimulate informed debate about the league tables across the UK higher education sector²⁷.



Courses and qualifications



UK institutions can offer their students a vast range of higher-level courses and qualifications. The increasing use of modular course structures means that qualifications are now more flexible than ever and can be tailored to meet the needs of the individual and their employer (if appropriate), or transferred between institutions.



The normal minimum age for an undergraduate to start a course is 18, or 17 in Scotland. First degree courses are commonly known as bachelors degrees, for example Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc), and generally take three years in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are normally awarded ‘with honours’, which is indicated as, for example, ‘BA (Hons)’.

Sandwich courses, which include periods of practical work in organisations outside the university or college, usually last four years, as do certain specialist courses. Some vocational degrees are longer, for example in medicine, dentistry and architecture.

In Scotland, undergraduate programmes are offered both on a three-year basis, leading to a general degree, and on a four-year basis, leading to an honours degree.

Levels of attainment in the UK honours degree are expressed in the form of First, Upper Second (or 2:1), Lower Second (or 2:2), Third, Pass or Fail.

Other undergraduate qualifications include: Higher National Diploma (HND), Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Diploma in Higher Education (DipHE) which usually take one or two years to complete. Foundation degrees were launched in 2001; they take two years to complete and are mainly vocational. After successful completion of a foundation degree it is possible to progress to a full honours degree.

Postgraduate courses

Postgraduate courses are very varied. They can be taught, conducted through research programmes, or a combination of both, and may be part-time or full-time. Qualifications include diplomas and

certificates, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE); masters degrees, for example Master of Science (MSc); and doctorates, for example, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD).

Postgraduate taught programmes usually last one year full-time or two years part-time. Research programmes normally last three years for full-time students and more than four years for part-time students. These normally require the student to complete a written thesis to present their research and findings.

Modularisation and credits

Some higher education courses are offered on a modular basis. Modular programmes allow students to build up their degree or other qualification by selecting self-contained blocks of study called modules. On completing a module the student is awarded a credit or credits. Students are awarded a degree after accumulating the appropriate number of credits in appropriate combinations. A year's full-time study is equivalent to around 120 credits, a third of what is required for a three-year BA honours degree at an institution in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Qualifications and Credit Framework

The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), implemented in November 2008, is a framework for creating and accrediting qualifications. It is at the heart of a major reform recognising a wider range of qualifications, making them more relevant to the needs of employers and more flexible and accessible for learners.

By 2010 all key vocational and professional qualifications will be readily available to learners in small, credit-based units of learning. The new system will also be compatible with qualifications frameworks across Europe, ensuring people who work elsewhere in the EU will be able to build a portfolio of qualifications²⁸.

For more information about the implementation of the QCF and what it means, see www.qca.org.uk/qcf

The Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)

In 2007, a steering group made up of higher education practitioners and experts published its final report, 'Beyond the honours degree classification'. The group, known as the Burgess Group after its chair Professor Robert Burgess, recommended the development and implementation of a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). The HEAR would be given to students upon graduation and should more accurately and thoroughly reflect the achievements of students than the existing degree classification system of First, Upper Second, Lower Second, Third, Pass or Fail.

The Burgess Group, which also oversees the development of the HEAR, recommended that UK institutions should initially issue the HEAR alongside the existing degree classification system, but that eventually the HEAR, or a similar system, should be the main vehicle for recording achievement.

You can read the full report on the Universities UK web-site under 'publications': www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/publications

The Bologna Process

The Bologna Process is a pan-European process that aims to create a European Higher Education Area in which degree qualifications are easily recognised, qualitatively comparable and consistent across European national borders. Alongside other signatories, the UK has put in place a series of reforms to achieve this. These reforms will help higher education in Europe and the UK to compete internationally with other higher education systems, notably the USA and Asia.

For more information see www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process.





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Opportunities

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used to describe the way that
licensed content is shared with
others.

Events

Open content
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Providing support to the sector

Various organisations exist to help support and promote the needs and aims of the UK higher education sector. Increasingly, computer networks are used to support campus-wide, national and international activities.

The Higher Education Academy

The Higher Education Academy was created in 2003 to support quality enhancement and the student experience in higher education and to improve the professional development and standing of staff in the higher education sector.

Professional and regulatory bodies

In most academic areas, there are subject bodies that represent the academic and professional interests of their members. These organisations may be royal societies (for example, The Royal Society of Chemistry), chartered institutes (such as The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers), or associations (such as the British Medical Association). In many cases – such as architecture, dentistry, medicine and law – people may only practise professionally if they meet the regulatory bodies' requirements. Degree courses in these subjects may count towards professional qualifications.

JISC

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) is a support organisation funded by the UK higher education and further education funding bodies. It helps to ensure that the UK further and higher education sectors remain internationally competitive by championing and facilitating the innovative use of information and communications technology (ICT).

JISC is also committed to helping institutions work in partnership with business and community

organisations to support the UK's economic growth. The JISC Collections service negotiates on behalf of the sector with owners of online information to provide a range of resources to support education and research. Meanwhile, JISC Advisory Services offers the sector world-class advice and guidance to on legal issues, procurement, accessibility and strategic management²⁹.

For more information visit www.jisc.ac.uk and www.jisc-collections.ac.uk

JANET and JANET (UK)

The Joint Academic Network (JANET) is a computer network dedicated to the needs of education and research in the UK. It connects UK higher education institutions, further education colleges, research councils, specialist colleges and adult and community learning providers, enabling secure access to online resources. It is one of the fastest, most secure networks in the world and currently serves over 18 million end users. It is internationally respected and links to similar academic networks across Europe and the world.

JANET(UK) manages the operation and development of JANET on behalf of JISC. JANET(UK) also funds a programme of collaborative ventures with other research and education networking organisations within the international community³⁰.

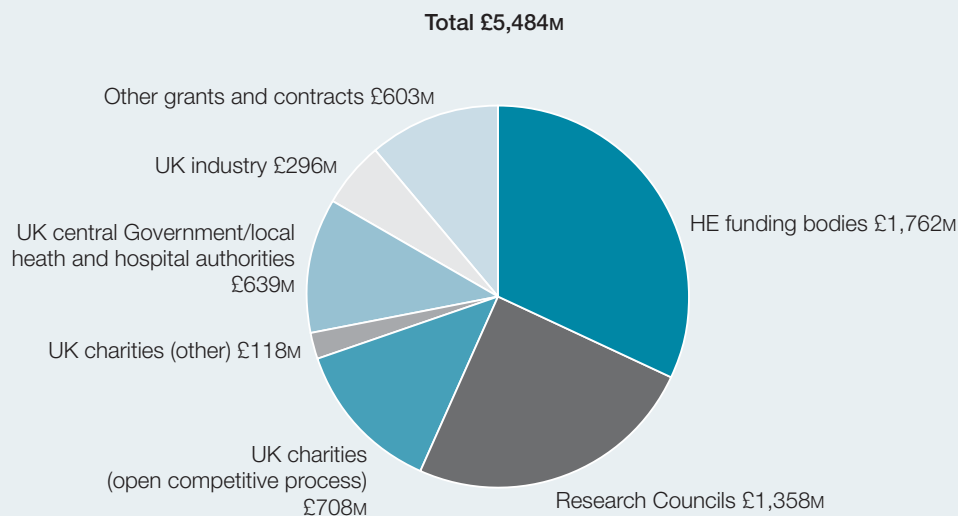
For more information see www.ja.net



Research

Research is fundamental to the development of knowledge and understanding, which contributes to the success of an economy. In the UK there is a strong tradition of research in all subjects.

Sources of research income



Source: 2007-08 HESA student record. Full-time includes sandwich students

UK researchers are among the most productive in the world, and the number of times the work of UK academics is read and cited by other academics, per million pounds spent, is the highest worldwide.

UK researchers regularly win international prizes for their work. Most of the UK's long-term, curiosity-driven and strategic research is carried out in universities. Many international research staff and students contribute to research in the UK.

Research funding

Each year UK higher education institutions receive billions of pounds to fund research. The public

funding of research in universities and colleges is provided under the 'dual support system'. Under this system, the Research Councils provide grants for specific projects and programmes, while the UK's funding councils provide block grant funding to support the research infrastructure – for example, library and IT costs and salaries. This type of funding enables institutions to undertake ground-breaking research of their choosing. Other projects are supported by charities (foundations), industry, the European Union and UK government departments.

Over 90 per cent of research funding allocated by the funding councils is distributed selectively,

according to the quality of research measured. Research quality has been assessed every few years through the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) since 1986. Six RAEs have been conducted so far: the most recent was completed in 2008³¹.

The Research Councils

Research Councils are non-departmental public bodies established by Royal Charter. They invest public money into research in the UK in order to advance knowledge, which can be used to benefit the economy and society.

Each Research Council funds research and training activities in a different area, ranging across the arts and humanities, social sciences, engineering and physical sciences, and the medical and life sciences.

There are seven Research Councils:

- Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Medical Research Council (MRC)
- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC).

All are independent legal bodies accountable to Parliament but separate from much of Government³².

For more information visit www.rcuk.ac.uk

Science parks

In recent decades, the establishment of science parks across the UK has launched hundreds of technology and knowledge-based companies, strengthening the links between research and enterprise.

At its heart, a science park provides businesses with organised links to higher education institutions, providing companies with the constant access to the expertise, knowledge and technology they need to grow.

Innovation centres are specifically geared towards the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), providing a controlled environment for the incubation of new firms. Many science parks also house divisions of larger or international firms, who benefit from the close links with a higher education institution.

The ownership of science parks varies, from universities or local authorities to private management companies. As a significant source of local employment and with clear benefits to the local economy, many science parks receive financial support from the UK Government, the EU or local regional development agencies³³.

The United Kingdom Science Park Association (UKSPA) provides advice and information on science parks and innovation centres across the UK. More information can be found on its web-site, www.ukspa.org.uk



Quality and standards



The arrangements for assessing academic quality and standards in UK higher education are sophisticated and rigorous.



A variety of organisations undertake quality assurance, as shown in the following table:

| Process | Undertaken by |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Internal quality assurance processes | The university or college, including external examiners, and internal validation and review of programmes |
| Institutional-level quality review | The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education |
| Professional accreditation | Professional and statutory bodies |
| Research assessment | Funding bodies using mechanisms to be developed in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) |

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997 to provide independent assessment of how higher education institutions in the UK maintain their academic standards and quality.

Although the primary responsibility for academic standards and quality rests with individual institutions, the QAA reviews and reports on how well they meet those recommendations. It does this by:

- conducting external audits of universities and colleges
- publishing reports on the confidence that can be placed in an institution's ability to maintain standards and quality

- offering expert guidance on maintaining and improving the quality of higher education
- providing common reference points for the higher education sector, which help to define clear and explicit standards
- advising the Government on applications for degree-awarding powers and university title³⁴.

The QAA also conducts overseas audits of collaborative arrangements between UK higher education institutions and foreign organisations that lead to the award of degrees from UK institutions.

Research assessment

Until 2008, the quality of research in the UK was assessed by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Its primary purpose was to produce quality profiles for each submission of research activity made by higher education institutions. For the 2008 RAE, each academic discipline was assigned to one of 67 units of assessment (UOAs). Institutions submitted work for assessment by 67 sub-panels of experts, one for each UOA, who were experts drawn from HEIs and the wider research community from across the world. They worked under the guidance of 15 main panels.

The RAE was conducted jointly by the four UK higher education funding bodies. The results are used to allocate their grant for research infrastructure at the higher education institutions they fund. As such, any higher education institution in the UK that is eligible to receive research funding from one of these bodies could participate³⁵.

The Research Excellence Framework

The 2008 RAE was the last of such exercises. It will be superseded by the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF will consist of a single unified framework for the funding and assessment of research across all subjects. It will make greater use of quantitative indicators in the assessment of research quality than the present system, while taking account of key differences between the different disciplines. Assessment will combine quantitative indicators, including bibliometric indicators wherever these are appropriate, and light-touch expert review. Which of these elements are employed, and the balance between them, will vary as appropriate to each subject³⁶.





Economic impact and internationalisation

Higher education institutions are powerful drivers of the UK economy with a total economic 'footprint' of around £45 billion³⁷. The sector makes this substantial contribution to the economy in a range of ways.

These include:

- the effect of the overall scale of an institution's turnover
- the provision of graduates and postgraduates to the workforce
- the delivery of expertise and continuing training opportunities for businesses.

Higher education also reaches out to business and the community via a spectrum of enterprising 'knowledge transfer' activities. This includes consultancy, collaborative research, technology transfer (for example licensing inventions to large or smaller companies), and founding start-up companies.

This is known as the 'third stream' of activity, alongside the traditional roles of teaching and research. England uses the Higher Education Innovation Fund, distributed by HEFCE, to support third-stream activity. In Wales, third-stream activities are supported by HEFCW's Third Mission Fund in partnership with the Welsh Assembly. Scotland's SFC primarily uses the Knowledge Transfer Grant and Northern Ireland is developing its third-stream programme through the Northern Ireland Higher Education Innovation Fund.

The money is provided to increase the capability of institutions to support and develop a range of knowledge transfer activities which result in

economic and social benefit to the UK. These activities, and direct working with local and regional communities, all help to lever investment and improve the quality of life generally³⁸.

Employment

Higher education qualifications equip individuals with valuable skills and knowledge for the workplace. Over the long term, graduates are less likely to be unemployed than non-graduates.

The Higher Education Careers Services Unit and careers offices in higher education institutions provide students and graduates with a range of careers guidance services.

Workforce development

HEFCE is developing a closer relationship between higher education and employers through its workforce development programme.

The programme has two related goals: the design and delivery of higher education courses in partnership with employers; and to increase the number of learners in the workplace supported by their employers. The programme will run from 2008 to 2011³⁹.

Internationalisation

Increasingly universities and colleges are becoming internationalised. This means not only welcoming a

large number and wide range of international students but also seeking opportunities to work collaboratively with international partners in areas of common interest.

The UK university campus of the 21st century is a truly cosmopolitan place. Dealing with the many needs of international stakeholders has meant that universities have become very diverse institutions, encompassing a wide range of skills and expertise.

To help institutions to engage further with this international agenda, in 2007 the funding councils established the UK Higher Education International Unit, based at Universities UK (UUK).

Also based at UUK is the Higher Education Europe Unit. Launched in January 2004, it is a sector-wide body that aims to raise awareness of European issues affecting the UK higher education sector. It also co-ordinates the UK's involvement in European initiatives and seeks to strengthen the position of the UK higher education sector in debates on the Bologna Process and other EU policy. It does this by lobbying on behalf of the UK higher education sector in important European fora.



A chronology of change in UK higher education

Landmark developments in UK higher education:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>1963 The Robbins Report</p> | <p>The Committee on Higher Education, chaired by Lord Robbins, recommended substantial expansion in higher education. The principles and recommendations of the Robbins Report formed the basis for the development of the university sector for subsequent years. The report anticipated that by 1980 most higher education would be provided by universities or teacher training institutions.</p> |
| <p>1986 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)</p> | <p>The first RAE was carried out in 1986 to provide ratings of the quality of research conducted in universities and higher education colleges in the UK. The ratings are used to inform the allocation of funds by the higher education funding bodies. Further RAEs were carried out in 1989, 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008.</p> |
| <p>1988 Education Reform Act</p> | <p>The Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) and the Universities Funding Council (UFC) were created. The PCFC funded over 50 polytechnics and colleges previously funded by local education authorities. The UFC funded all 52 universities in the UK.</p> |
| <p>1989 Creation of dedicated funding bodies</p> | <p>The UFC and PCFC assumed formal funding responsibilities for universities, and polytechnics and higher education colleges in England respectively. Both Councils were non-departmental public bodies with a high degree of autonomy and an 'arms-length' relationship with the then Department of Education and Science.</p> |
| <p>1992 Further and Higher Education Act and Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act</p> | <p>Created new funding councils for the UK: the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC); and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). Since 1 April 1993, these bodies have funded all higher education institutions in the UK. The Act also abolished the division between universities and polytechnics, ending the 'binary divide' in higher education.</p> |
| <p>1997 National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Report)</p> | <p>The first fundamental review of higher education since the Robbins Report of 1963. Carried out by Lord Dearing, the key recommendations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in institutional and student funding • further expansion • a framework for qualifications • support for an interdisciplinary arts and humanities research council. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>1997 Establishment of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)</p> | <p>The QAA was established to provide an integrated quality assurance service for UK higher education. It is an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies.</p> |
| <p>1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act</p> | <p>Introduced measures to change financial support for students, including tuition fees to be paid by all except the poorest students from academic year 1998-89, the replacement of the maintenance grant for living expenses with loans from academic year 1999-2000, the availability of a supplementary hardship loan of £250 a year, and bursaries for students entering teacher training or health and social care courses.</p> |
| <p>2002-03 Roberts Review of research assessment</p> | <p>In June 2002, the four UK higher education funding bodies commissioned Sir Gareth Roberts to report on the future of research assessment in the UK. The report included recommendations to revise the current RAE with a new method for assessing the quality of research. The new RAE process was announced in February 2004.</p> |
| <p>2004 The Higher Education Act</p> | <p>The Act aimed to widen access to higher education institutions and help them remain competitive in the world economy. It took forward the proposals set out in the White Paper 'The future of higher education'. The new legislation covered higher education in England and Wales, although some provisions did affect higher education in other parts of the UK. Measures in the Act and associated secondary legislation include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of variable tuition fees • creation of an Office for Fair Access (OFFA), to promote and safeguard fair access to higher education for under-represented groups • institutions to provide bursaries for students from under-represented groups • re-introduction of maintenance grants • creation of a UK-wide Arts and Humanities Research Council • designation of an independent body to review student complaints not related to matters of academic judgement. |
| <p>2005 National Student Survey begins</p> | <p>The annual National Student Survey was commissioned by HEFCE and first took place in 2005. The online survey asks undergraduate students in the final year of their course to provide feedback on the quality of teaching on their course. The results are made available online (at www.unistats.com) to prospective students and their advisors, to help them make informed choices of what and where to study. Universities, colleges and student unions use the results to facilitate good practice and to enhance the student learning experience. The survey is fully supported by the National Union of Students (NUS).</p> |
| <p>2007 Burgess Group recommends the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)</p> | <p>In 2007 The Burgess Group recommended the creation and implementation of a detailed report, which they called the HEAR, to record an individual's achievement in higher education. The group suggests that eventually the HEAR, or a similar system, should be seen as the main vehicle for recording and recognising achievement, replacing existing degree classifications.</p> |

List of UK higher education institutions

Higher education institutions in England

The following is a list of higher education providers directly funded by HEFCE as at April 2009. For an up-to-date directory of HEFCE-funded institutions, with full contact details, see the HEFCE web-site, www.hefce.ac.uk, under Universities & colleges or refer to the booklet 'Contacts in higher education' (to order a copy of the latest edition, e-mail publications@hefce.ac.uk).

Anglia Ruskin University
Aston University
University of Bath
Bath Spa University
University of Bedfordshire
Birkbeck College
University of Birmingham
University College Birmingham
Birmingham City University
Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln
University of Bolton
Arts Institute at Bournemouth
Bournemouth University
University of Bradford
University of Brighton
University of Bristol
Brunel University
Buckinghamshire New University
University of Cambridge
Institute of Cancer Research
Canterbury Christ Church University
University of Central Lancashire
Central School of Speech and Drama
University of Chester
University of Chichester
City University, London
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
Coventry University
Cranfield University
University for the Creative Arts
University of Cumbria
De Montfort University
University of Derby
Durham University
University of East Anglia
University of East London
Edge Hill University
Institute of Education
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University College Falmouth
University of Gloucestershire
Goldsmiths College, University of London
University of Greenwich
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Harper Adams University College
University of Hertfordshire
Heythrop College
University of Huddersfield
University of Hull
Imperial College London
Keele University
University of Kent
King's College London
Kingston University
Lancaster University
University of Leeds
Leeds College of Music
Leeds Metropolitan University
Leeds Trinity & All Saints

University of Leicester
 University of Lincoln
 University of Liverpool
 Liverpool Hope University
 Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts
 Liverpool John Moores University
 University of London (a federal university containing more than 40 institutions)
 University College London
 University of the Arts, London
 London Business School
 London School of Economics and Political Science
 London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
 London Metropolitan University
 London South Bank University
 Loughborough University
 University of Manchester
 Manchester Metropolitan University
 Marjon (University College Plymouth St Mark & St John)
 Middlesex University
 Newcastle University
 Newman University College
 University of Northampton
 Northumbria University
 Norwich University College of the Arts
 University of Nottingham
 Nottingham Trent University
 The Open University (also operates in Scotland and Wales)
 School of Oriental and African Studies
 University of Oxford
 Oxford Brookes University
 School of Pharmacy
 University of Plymouth
 University of Portsmouth
 Queen Mary, University of London
 Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication
 University of Reading
 Roehampton University
 Rose Bruford College
 Royal Academy of Music
 Royal Agricultural College
 Royal College of Art
 Royal College of Music
 Royal Holloway, University of London

Royal Northern College of Music
 Royal Veterinary College
 St George's Hospital Medical School
 St Mary's University College
 University of Salford
 University of Sheffield
 Sheffield Hallam University
 University of Southampton
 Southampton Solent University
 Staffordshire University
 University Campus Suffolk (a connected institution of the Universities of East Anglia and Essex)
 University of Sunderland
 University of Surrey
 University of Sussex
 Teesside University
 Thames Valley University
 Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
 University of Warwick
 University of the West of England, Bristol
 University of Westminster
 University of Winchester
 University of Wolverhampton
 University of Worcester
 Writtle College
 University of York
 York St John University

Higher education institutions in Scotland

There is a directory of Scottish higher education institutions on the Scottish Funding Council website, www.sfc.ac.uk, under Links/Funded institutions.

University of Aberdeen
 University of Abertay Dundee
 University of Dundee
 University of Edinburgh
 Edinburgh College of Art
 University of Glasgow
 Glasgow Caledonian University
 Glasgow School of Art
 Heriot-Watt University

Napier University
The Open University in Scotland
Queen Margaret University
The Robert Gordon University
Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama
Scottish Agricultural College
University of St Andrews
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
UHI Millennium Institute
University of the West of Scotland

Higher education institutions in Wales

There is a directory of Welsh higher education institutions on the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales web-site, www.hefcw.ac.uk, under About us/Working with Partners.

Aberystwyth University
Bangor University
Cardiff University
University of Glamorgan
Glyndŵr University
University of Wales, Lampeter
The Open University in Wales
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
Swansea Metropolitan University
Swansea University
Trinity College Carmarthen
University of Wales
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
University of Wales, Newport

Higher education institutions in Northern Ireland

Contact details for institutions in Northern Ireland can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk under Universities & colleges.

Queen's University Belfast (St Mary's University College and Stanmillis University College are both colleges of Queen's University Belfast)
University of Ulster

Useful addresses

Funding bodies

Higher Education Funding Council for England

Funds higher education at universities and colleges in England.

Northavon House, Coldharbour Lane, BRISTOL BS16 1QD

tel 0117 931 7317, www.hefce.ac.uk

Scottish Funding Council

Funds higher education institutions in Scotland.

Donaldson House, 97 Haymarket Terrace, EDINBURGH EH12 5HD

tel 0131 313 6500, www.sfc.ac.uk

Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

Funds higher education in universities and colleges in Wales including teacher training.

Linden Court, The Orchards, Ilex Close, Llanishen, CARDIFF CF14 5DZ

tel 029 2076 1861, www.hefcw.ac.uk

Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland.

Acts as a funding body for Northern Ireland.

Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, BELFAST BT2 8FD

tel 028 9025 7722, www.delni.gov.uk

Education bodies

Training and Development Agency for Schools

The national agency and recognised sector body responsible for the training and development of the school workforce.

151 Buckingham Palace Road, LONDON SW1W 9SZ

tel 020 7023 8000, www.tda.gov.uk

Learning and Skills Council

Responsible for post-16 education and training provision in England.

Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, COVENTRY CV1 2WT

tel 0845 019 4170, www.lsc.gov.uk

Government departments

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

The UK government department responsible for higher education.

Ministerial correspondence unit, 1 Victoria Street, LONDON SW1H 0ET

tel 020 7215 5555, www.bis.gov.uk

Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department

Responsible for economic and industrial development, transport, tourism, further and higher education, skills and lifelong learning.

Meridian Court, Cadogan Street, GLASGOW G2 6AT

tel 0141 248 4774, www.scotland.gov.uk

Representative bodies

Universities UK

Represents and promotes universities in the UK.

Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9HQ

tel 020 7419 4111, www.universitiesuk.ac.uk

GuildHE

Represents higher education colleges in England and Northern Ireland.

Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9HB
tel 020 7387 7711, www.guildhe.ac.uk

Universities Scotland

Represents higher education institutions in Scotland.

53 Hanover Street, EDINBURGH EH2 2PJ
tel 0131 226 1111, www.universities-scotland.ac.uk

Higher Education Wales

Represents higher education institutions in Wales.

2 Caspian Point, Caspian Way, CARDIFF BAY, CF10 4DQ
tel 029 2044 8020, www.hew.ac.uk

Other organisations

Action on Access

The national co-ordination team for widening participation in higher education, funded by HEFCE and DELNI.

St Helen's Road, ORMSKIRK, Lancashire L39 4QP
tel 01695 650 850, www.actiononaccess.org

British Council

Promotes educational, cultural and technical co-operation between Britain and other countries.

10 Spring Gardens, LONDON SW1A 2BN
tel 020 7930 8466, www.britishcouncil.org.uk,
www.educationuk.org

UKCISA: The Council for International Education

Provides advice and information to international students and to advisers and professionals in the HEIs who assist them.

9-17 St Albans Place, LONDON N1 0NX
tel 020 7285 4330, www.ukcisa.org.uk

Higher Education Statistics Agency

Collects, analyses and reports on statistics for higher education in the UK.

95 Promenade, CHELTENHAM GL50 1HZ
tel 01242 255577, www.hesa.ac.uk

Higher Education Academy

A professional body for staff who teach and support learning in higher education in the UK.

Genesis, 3 Innovation Way, York Science Park, Heslington, YORK YO10 5DQ
tel 01904 434222, www.heacademy.ac.uk

Joint Information Systems Committee

Provides leadership, funding and support to the UK further and higher education and research communities in the innovative use of information and communications technology.

Northavon House, Coldharbour Lane, BRISTOL BS16 1QD
tel 0117 931 7403, www.jisc.ac.uk

Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

Offers development in leadership, governance and management to current and future leaders within higher education institutions.

88 Kingsway, LONDON WC2B 6AA
tel 020 7841 2800, www.lfhe.ac.uk

Northern Ireland Higher Education Council

Advises DELNI on the planning and funding of higher education in Northern Ireland.

Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, BELFAST BT2 8FD
tel 028 9025 7722

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Promotes improvement in the quality and standards of higher education provision and provides public information.

Southgate House, Southgate Street, GLOUCESTER GL1 1UB
tel 01452 557000, www.qaa.ac.uk

Student Loans Company

Administers government loans to eligible EU students studying in higher education institutions in the UK.

100 Bothwell Street, GLASGOW G2 7JD
tel 0141 306 2000, www.slc.co.uk

UCAS

The UK central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to full-time undergraduate courses, Higher National Diplomas and university diplomas.

PO Box 28, CHELTENHAM GL52 3LZ

tel 01242 222444, www.ucas.ac.uk

UK Higher Education Europe Unit

Established to raise awareness of European issues affecting UK higher education and to co-ordinate the UK's involvement in European initiatives and debates.

Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9HQ

tel 0207 419 5421, www.europeunit.ac.uk

UK Higher Education International Unit

Established to co-ordinate, promote and undertake activities designed to support UK higher education in a globally competitive world.

Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9HQ

tel 0207 419 5609, www.international.ac.uk

Equality Challenge Unit

Promotes equality and diversity in the higher education sector for the benefit of individuals, institutions and society.

7th floor, Queens House, 55/56 Lincoln's Inn Fields,
LONDON WC2A 3LJ

tel 020 7438 1010, www.ecu.ac.uk

List of abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| BA | Bachelor of Arts |
| DELNI | Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland) |
| BIS | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills |
| ESRC | Economic & Social Research Council |
| EU | European Union |
| GCE | General Certificate of Education |
| HEAR | Higher Education Achievement Report |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEFCW | Higher Education Funding Council for Wales |
| HEI | Higher education institution |
| HESA | Higher Education Statistics Agency |
| HEA | Higher Education Academy |
| JANET | Joint Academic Network |
| JISC | Joint Information Systems Committee |
| New JNCHES | New Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff |
| LEA | Local Education Authority |
| LSC | Learning and Skills Council |
| MRC | Medical Research Council |
| UK NARIC | National Academic Recognition Centre |
| NERC | Natural Environment Research Council |
| NVQ | National Vocational Qualification |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development |
| OFFA | Office for Fair Access |
| ORSAS | Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme |
| QCF | Qualifications and Credit Framework |
| RAE | Research Assessment Exercise |
| REF | Research Excellence Framework |
| SAAS | Student Awards Agency Scotland |
| SLC | Student Loans Company |
| SFC | Scottish Funding Council |
| TDA | Training and Development Agency for Schools |
| UCEA | Universities and Colleges Employers Association |
| UKCISA | UK Council for International Student Affairs |
| UOA | Unit of assessment |

Sources of information

¹ ‘Students in Higher Education Institutions 2006/07’, Table A – All students by level and mode of study, Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

² ‘Students in Higher Education Institutions 2006/07’, Table 0 – All students by institution, mode of study, level of study and domicile 2006/07, HESA

³ See note 2.

⁴ ‘Supporting higher education in further education colleges – policy, practice and prospects’ (HEFCE 2009/05), p.8

⁵ HESA Education Statistics Return 2007-08, UK HEIs

⁶ Information from the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA)

⁷ HESA Education Statistics Return 2007-08, UK HEIs

⁸ The full text of the Teaching and Higher Education Bill 1998 can be found on Parliament’s web-site, www.parliament.uk, under Parliamentary Business/Publications & Records/Commons Publications.

⁹ Unless otherwise specified, explanations refer to student support and fee arrangements in England

¹⁰ Information from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA)

¹¹ See note 9

¹² Information from the Scottish Government

¹³ Information from the Welsh Assembly

¹⁴ Information from the Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)

¹⁵ See note 1

¹⁶ HESA Education Statistics Return 2007-08, UK HEIs

¹⁷ ‘Students in Higher Education Institutions 2006/07’, Table B – All students by gender, mode and domicile 2006/07, HESA

¹⁸ ‘Students in Higher Education Institutions 2006/07’, Table 3a – First year full-time first degree students by subject of study, age group and expected length of programme 2006/07, HESA

¹⁹ See note 2

²⁰ OECD ‘Education at a Glance’ 2008 edition

²¹ Information from the Widening Participation Policy Team at the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

²² See note 11

²³ ‘Students in Higher Education Institutions 2006/07’, Table B – All students by gender, mode and domicile 2006/07, HESA

²⁴ Information from the British Council

²⁵ Information from Erasmus

²⁶ Information from UCAS

²⁷ ‘Counting what is measured or measuring what counts? League tables and their impact on higher education institutions in England’ (HEFCE 2008/14)

²⁸ Information from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

²⁹ Information from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

³⁰ See note 30 and www.ja.net/development/international-collaboration.html

³¹ Information obtained from contacts working on the RAE

³² See www.rcuk.ac.uk under About the Research Councils

³³ See www.ukspa.org.uk

³⁴ See www.qaa.ac.uk under About us

³⁵ See note 32

³⁶ See www.hefce.ac.uk under Research/Research Excellence Framework

³⁷ Estimate given in Universities UK 2006 publication 'The economic impact of UK Higher education Institutions'

³⁸ Information obtained from the Business and Community Policy Team at HEFCE

³⁹ Information obtained from the Employer Engagement and Skills Policy Team at HEFCE

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