UCAS Undergraduate data

Last updated: August 2019

Introduction

These notes have been created to help you use the UCAS Undergraduate data published on ucas.com. The notes include information on the coverage of the UCAS undergraduate data, with changes over the cycles and definitions.

Coverage of UCAS Undergraduate data

For people living in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, UCAS Undergraduate covers the overwhelming majority of full-time provision at higher education providers (HEPs). Statistics relating to these countries in the data resources can be taken as being close to all recruitment to full-time undergraduate higher education.

In Scotland there is a substantial section of provision that is not included in UCAS Undergraduate's figures. This is mostly full-time higher education provided in further education colleges, which represents around one third of young full-time undergraduate study in Scotland. This proportion varies by geography and background within Scotland. Accordingly, the statistics on UCAS acceptances in these data resources reflect only that majority full-time undergraduate study which uses UCAS.

Changes to the coverage of UCAS Undergraduate data

Adjustment
From the 2009 cycle, the Adjustment period was introduced, allowing applicants who had met and exceeded their conditional firm offer to find an alternative course. Each cycle the Adjustment period runs from A level results day until the end of August. Applicants have five full days from the start of A level results day, or from meeting and exceeding their offer conditions, in which to change to an alternative course.

Art and design Route B
In 2010, the sequential process of applying to art and design courses, known as Route B, ceased. Previously, applicants could make up to three applications to art and design courses in order of preference, with only one choice referred at a time. Data up to the 2010 cycle included all Route B applications, even if they hadn't been referred. From 2010, all applications to art and design courses have been made through the main scheme, and are referred to all providers at the same time.

Centralised Applications to Nursing and Midwifery Training Clearing House

For the 2010 cycle, the Centralised Applications to Nursing and Midwifery Training Clearing House (CATCH) was incorporated into the UCAS Undergraduate admissions scheme. Data from 2010 onwards includes nursing and midwifery diploma courses in Scotland.

Croatia classification

In 2014, the Croatia classification changed from Not EU to EU (excluding UK). In order to present an accurate time series, Croatia has been consistently classified as EU (excluding UK). This will result in differences with data published prior to 2019.

Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service

For the 2008 cycle, the Nursing and Midwifery Admissions Service (NMAS) ceased as a stand-alone service and was included in the UCAS Undergraduate admissions scheme. As a result, data for 2008 onwards includes applications and acceptances to Advanced Diploma of Nursing, Diploma of Nursing and Midwifery, Graduate Diploma of Nursing, and midwifery courses in England.

UCAS Teacher Training

From the 2015 cycle onwards, applications to postgraduate teacher training programmes in Scotland were included in the UCAS Undergraduate admissions scheme, previously these were recruited through UCAS Teacher Training.

Reduction to the number of main scheme applications

In 2008, the number of applications an applicant could make through the main scheme (the main UCAS Undergraduate application scheme through which providers/courses can be applied to) changed from six to five.

Reporting for Scotland in UCAS Undergraduate data

In addition to the approximate one third of young full-time undergraduate study in Scotland which is not included in UCAS Undergraduate's figures, a number of changes through time should be borne in mind when considering the data pertaining to Scotland, particularly when looking at more than one cycle.

As indicated above, from 2010 onwards, applications for nursing and midwifery diploma courses in Scotland were incorporated into UCAS Undergraduate data. From the 2015 cycle onwards, applications for postgraduate teacher training programmes in Scotland were also included in UCAS Undergraduate.

The number of Records of Prior Acceptance (RPAs) can vary from cycle to cycle. In 2014, there were fewer very late acceptances than in other cycles recorded in the UCAS Undergraduate data, for some Scottish providers.

Definitions

The following provides the definitions of terms used throughout the UCAS Undergraduate data outputs. It is important to check individual outputs for notes specifically for them.

Acceptance route
Applicants accepted (placed) on a course will have been accepted through one of the following routes:

- firm choice: the applicant has been accepted to their first choice
- insurance choice: the applicant has been accepted to their second choice
- other main scheme choice: 'insurance choice' and 'firm choice' values are based on the applicant's response to an offer as at 30 June deadline. There are 10,000 - 20,000 acceptances to a main scheme choice each year where the applicant has not responded, or is awaiting an offer, by 30 June deadline. These acceptances are classified as 'other main scheme choice'
- Extra: applicants who held no offers after using all of their main scheme choices are placed through a choice made through the Extra scheme
- Adjustment: applicants who have met and exceeded the conditions of their firm choice choose to take up an alternative offer
- main Scheme Clearing: an applicant was unsuccessful in the main scheme and subsequently found a place through Clearing
- direct to Clearing: the applicant applied and was placed through Clearing without an initial application through the main scheme
- RPA: an application is submitted to UCAS by a provider when an offer has already been accepted by the applicant

Accepted applicant
An applicant who at the end of the cycle has been placed for entry into higher education.

Adjustment
From 2009 cycle, the Adjustment period was introduced allowing applicants who had met and exceeded their conditional firm offer to find an alternative course.

Age
All analytical data resources use country-specific age definitions that align with the cut-off points for school and college cohorts within the different administrations of the UK. For England and Wales, ages are defined on 31 August, for Northern Ireland on 1 July, and for Scotland on 28 February the following year. Defining ages in this way matches the assignment of children to school cohorts. For applicants outside of the UK, a cohort cut-off of 31 August is used.

Applicant
A person who has made an application in the UCAS system.

Base population estimates

Population estimates for 18 year olds are calculated using country-specific age definitions that align with the cut-off points for school/college cohorts in the different administrations of the UK. For example, for the 2019 cycle, England and Wales ages are defined on 31 August 2019, for Northern Ireland on 1 July 2019, and for Scotland on 28 February 2020. Defining ages in this way matches the assignment of children to school cohorts, and means the group of applicants treated as 18 year olds in each country will generally be applying to UCAS for the first time. The population estimates are based on the Office for National Statistics mid-year estimates controlled to UK countries. For 18 year olds, the estimates are obtained by ageing 15 year olds from the appropriate number of years earlier. This approach avoids the estimates being susceptible to changes in net migration (including overseas students) during these ages.

Clearing

An acceptance route available late in the application cycle. Applications received after 30 June deadline are entered directly into Clearing. Applicants may use Clearing if they were unsuccessful in the main scheme or had not made an initial application through the main scheme.

Deadlines

Providers must give equal consideration to applications received by the relevant deadline. Applications received after the relevant deadline can be considered at the provider's discretion. There are three on-time application deadlines for courses in the UCAS Undergraduate scheme:

- ## 15 October deadline
    Application deadline for most medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and veterinary science courses, and for all courses at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.
- ## 15 January deadline
    Application deadline for all courses, except those with a 15 October and 24 March deadline.
- ## 30 June deadline
    The main scheme closes on 30 June. A 30 June applicant applied by the 30 June deadline and was able to submit choices through the main scheme.

Decline

An offer made by a provider which has been declined by the applicant.

Defer (deferred)

Most acceptances are into the academic year that starts immediately at the end of the cycle, for example into 2015-16 from the 2015 application cycle. Acceptances can also be deferred for entry into the following academic year, for example into 2016-17 from the 2015 cycle. These are called deferred acceptances.

Domicile

Applicant's declared area of permanent residence. The domicile may be reported at different levels within the data resources. It should be noted that the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man have been assigned as 'Not EU'.

Entry rates

Number of acceptances from a UCAS application cycle divided by the estimated base population.

Ethnic group

Ethnic origin as declared by the applicant. Please note: ethnic origin is captured for UK-domiciled applicants only.

Extra

An acceptance route where the applicants who held no offers after using all five main scheme choices, make additional choices.

Firm

An offer made by a provider which has been confirmed by the applicant as their first choice.

Insurance

An offer made by a provider which has been confirmed by the applicant as their second choice, in case the conditions of the firm choice are not met.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation

The IMD2015, NIMDM2017, SIMD2012/2016 and WIMD2014 variables are calculated by linking the home postcode supplied to UCAS as part of an applicant's application with the associated lower super output area. The Office for National Statistics Postcode Directory (November 2017 version) is used for this linking process. These lower super output areas are then linked to the relevant IMD2015, NIMDM2017, SIMD2012/2016 and WIMD2014 quintiles.

IMD 2015

The Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2015 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of England, providing a relative measure of deprivation amongst small areas (lower layer super output area). When reporting by IMD 2015, the IMD 2015 is used to group areas in each year in the times series.

NIMDM 2017

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure for 2017 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Northern Ireland, providing a relative measure of deprivation amongst small areas (super output area). When

reporting by NIMDM 2017, the NIMDM 2017 is used to group areas in each year in the times series.

SIMD 2012

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2012 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland, providing a relative measure of deprivation among small areas (data zones). When reporting by SIMD 2012, the SIMD 2012 is used to group areas in each year in the times series.

SIMD 2016

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2016 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Scotland, providing a relative measure of deprivation among small areas (data zones). When reporting by SIMD 2016, the SIMD 2016 is used to group areas in each year in the times series.

SIMD 2012/2016

Combination of the SIMD measures created in 2012 and 2016. SIMD 2012 is applied to all years before 2017, and SIMD 2016 is applied to years 2017 and onwards.

WIMD 2014

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across all of Wales, providing a relative measure of deprivation among small areas (lower layer super output area). In this report, the WIMD 2014 has been used to group areas in each year in the times series.

Main scheme

The main UCAS application scheme through which up to five providers/courses can be applied to. Prior to the 2008 cycle, up to six providers/courses could be applied to. The main scheme opens in September, and closes to new applications on 30 June the following year. Within a set timeframe, dependent on when the application was referred to the provider, a decision is given as to whether an offer is made or the choice is unsuccessful.

Offer

Provider decision to offer a place to an applicant. These can be either conditional (dependent on achieving specified academic and/or other criteria), or unconditional (no further requirements to be met).

Offer rate

The proportion of applications that receive an offer.

POLAR4

Developed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), POLAR4 classifies small areas across the UK into five groups according to their level of young participation in higher education. Each of these groups represents around 20 per cent of young people and is ranked from quintile 1 (areas with the lowest young participation rates, considered as the most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 (highest young participation rates, considered most advantaged).

POLAR4 is based on the participation rates of young people between 2006 and 2011, who entered higher education between 2009-10 and 2014-15. It is, therefore, most suitable for applicants aged 19 and under. These groups are assigned using the postcode declared by the applicant at the time of their application.

Updates in geographical classifications may result in small changes to the POLAR4 quintile assignment of applicants between reporting cycles.

Record of Prior Acceptance

Data resources that report total acceptances (rather than acceptances from applicants who applied before 30 June), may include very late acceptances recorded though the 'Record of Prior Acceptance' (RPA) route. The provider informs UCAS of applicants accepted outside of the normal application process.

The number of RPAs can vary from cycle to cycle. In 2014, there were fewer very late acceptances than in other cycles recorded in the UCAS Undergraduate data, for some Scottish providers.

Reply

Applicant response to any offers received, this could be firm, insurance or decline.

Subject group (JACS)

The Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) has been utilised since 2002. Each course is assigned up to three valid JACS subject codes and a course balance indicator by UCAS, which are available for review by the provider. The course is assigned a subject based on these JACS subject codes and balance indicator.

Over time, UCAS has used several different subject classifications. Between 2007 and 2011 the subject codes assigned to each course were from the JACS2 classification. JACS3 versions of the subject categories have been approximated for 2007 to 2011 to allow consistent time series.

Subject group (HECoS)

The CAH classification used to categorise HECoS course subject codes into subject groups. A course may be associated with up to 5 individual subject codes and their respective percentage weight. For this analysis, application totals for subject groups

have been calculated by apportioning course applications as weighted by subject group.

Please note that there are some courses that do not currently have a HECoS code assigned. These courses are reported as 'Unassigned'. As such, any reporting by HECoS classifications should be considered preliminary.

Tariff
A numerical summary of qualification level.

Tariff group
Provider groups based on the average levels of attainment of their UK 18 year old accepted applicants (summarised through UCAS Tariff points) in recent cycles. Each group of providers (higher, medium, lower) account for around a third of all UK 18 year old acceptances.