



24 leading universities
working together with
schools and colleges

Advancing Access HE update

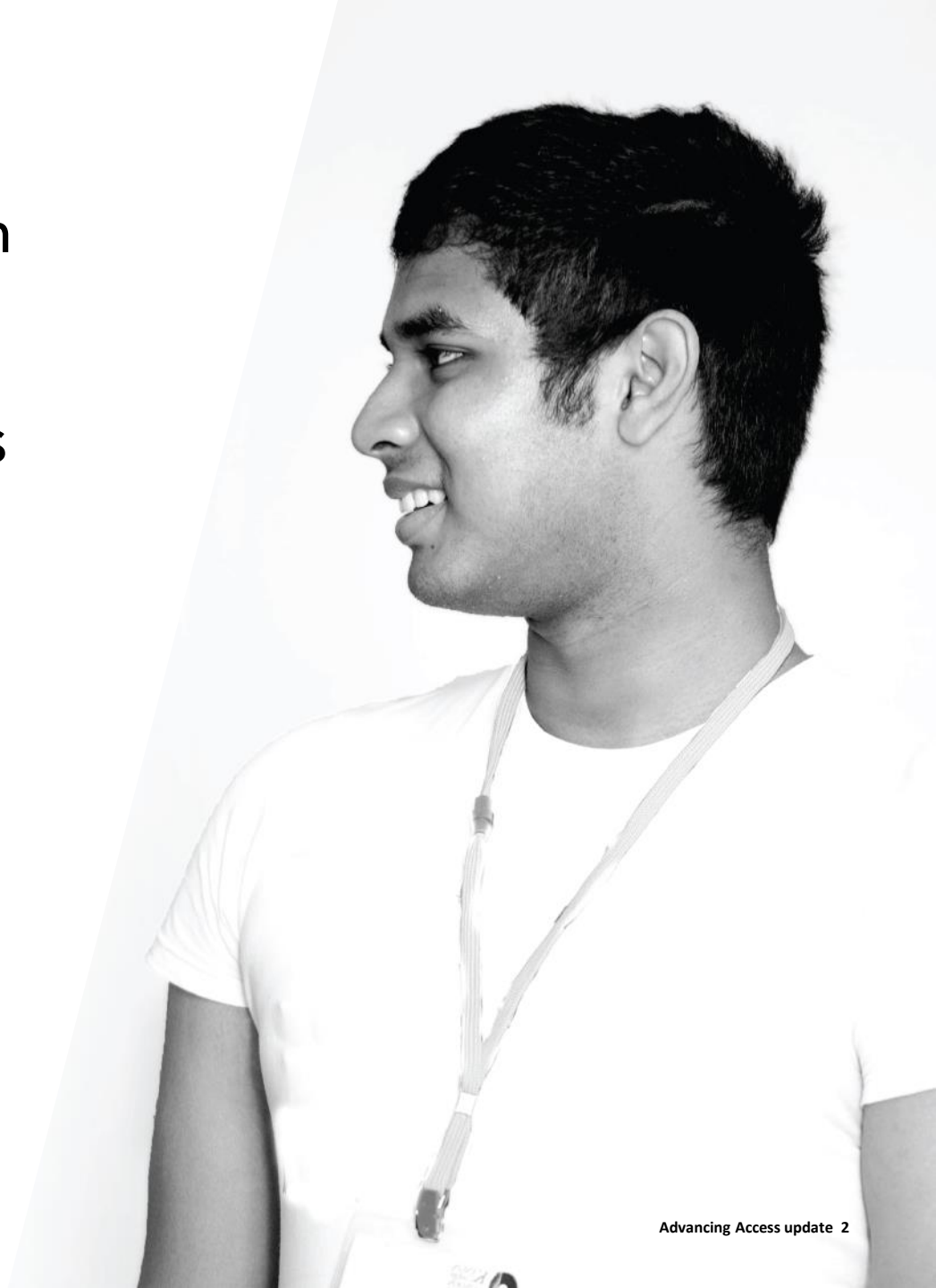
Paul Martin / Advancing Access

14 / February / 2019



Coming up...

- Widening Participation in Higher Education
- Contextual admissions
- Unconditional offers
- The Augar review





Widening Participation

What is Widening Participation?

- Advancing Access is funded as part of universities' spending on widening participation
- WP has been traditionally about supporting underrepresented groups to progress to university
- The new regulator with oversight of WP is the Office for Students – this has replaced the Office for Fair Access and the Higher Education Funding Council for England

Access and Participation

The Government now seem to prefer the term “access and participation”



**A new approach to
regulating access and
participation in English
higher education**

Consultation outcomes

The Government's broader vision

“We have stated an ambition that future generations should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education, and to achieve successful and rewarding careers.”

Specific targets which have been set

1. To eliminate the gap in entry rates at higher-tariff providers between the most and least represented groups (POLAR quintiles 1 and 5) by 2038-39
2. To eliminate gaps in non-continuation between most and least represented groups by 2030-31
3. To eliminate the gap in degree outcomes (1st and 2:1s) between white students and black students by 2030-31
4. To eliminate the gap in degree outcomes between disabled students and non-disabled students by 2024-25

Different measures of disadvantage

Conversation between schools and universities about disadvantage can get complicated:

Schools – Pupil premium

- Free school meals (Ever 6)
- Adopted from care/care leavers
- Service child (Ever 6)

Universities – “POLAR”

- Geographical – looks at participation rate in the census ward in which the pupil lives
- These kind of geographical measures tend to correlate with socioeconomic background

Are we making progress on WP or not?

Poor pupils still denied chance to get a degree

Nicola Woolcock,
Education Correspondent

February 8 2019, 12:01am,
The Times

Schools

Education

Universities

Music



The proportion of poorer and state school pupils attending university has not changed much in the past four years

ALAMY

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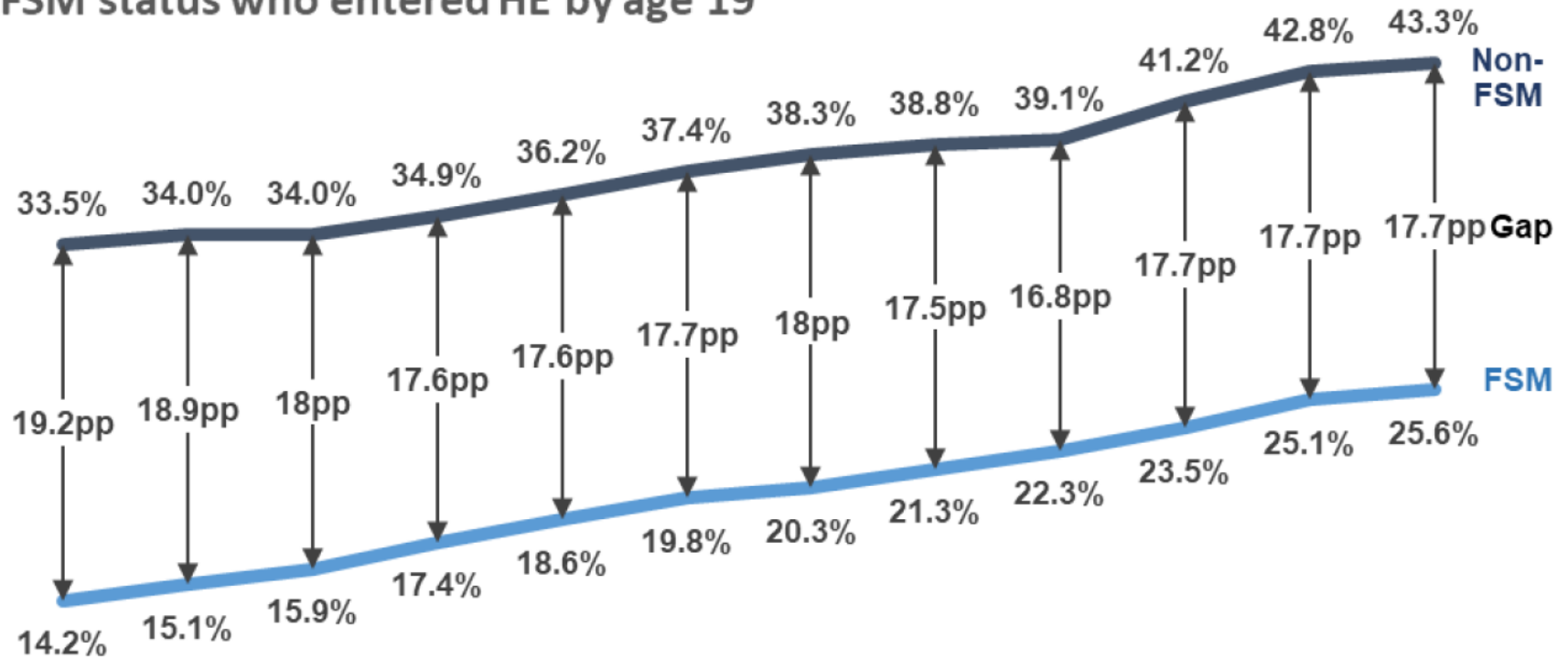


Save



Widening Participation in Higher Education

Estimated percentage of 15 year old state-funded pupils by FSM status who entered HE by age 19



2005/06 2006/07 2007/08 2008/09 2009/10 2010/11 2011/12 2012/13 2013/14 2014/15 2015/16 2016/17



Contextual admissions

What do you understand by the term “contextual admissions”, and what does it mean for the students you advise?

What does a 'traditional' admissions process look like?

In a more traditional admissions process, only the following factors are typically used to make admissions judgments:

- Predicted or actual performance in examinations
- The quality of the candidate's personal statement, including work experience completed etc.
- The teacher's reference
- Performance in an interview or in an additional admissions test



Contextual admissions

- “Contextual admissions” practices involve using the same factors in the traditional process but with some extra factors included to build up a more holistic picture of a candidate
- Contextual admissions are not new, they have been used to a varying extent for at least 15 years but the use of them is becoming increasingly common
- Each university has the freedom to make its own judgment about their own contextual admissions policy, and research and debate around these policies is ongoing



The history of contextualised admissions

Determinants of degree performance in UK universities: a statistical analysis of the 1993 student cohort

JEREMY SMITH and ROBIN NAYLOR[†]

University of Warwick

I. Introduction

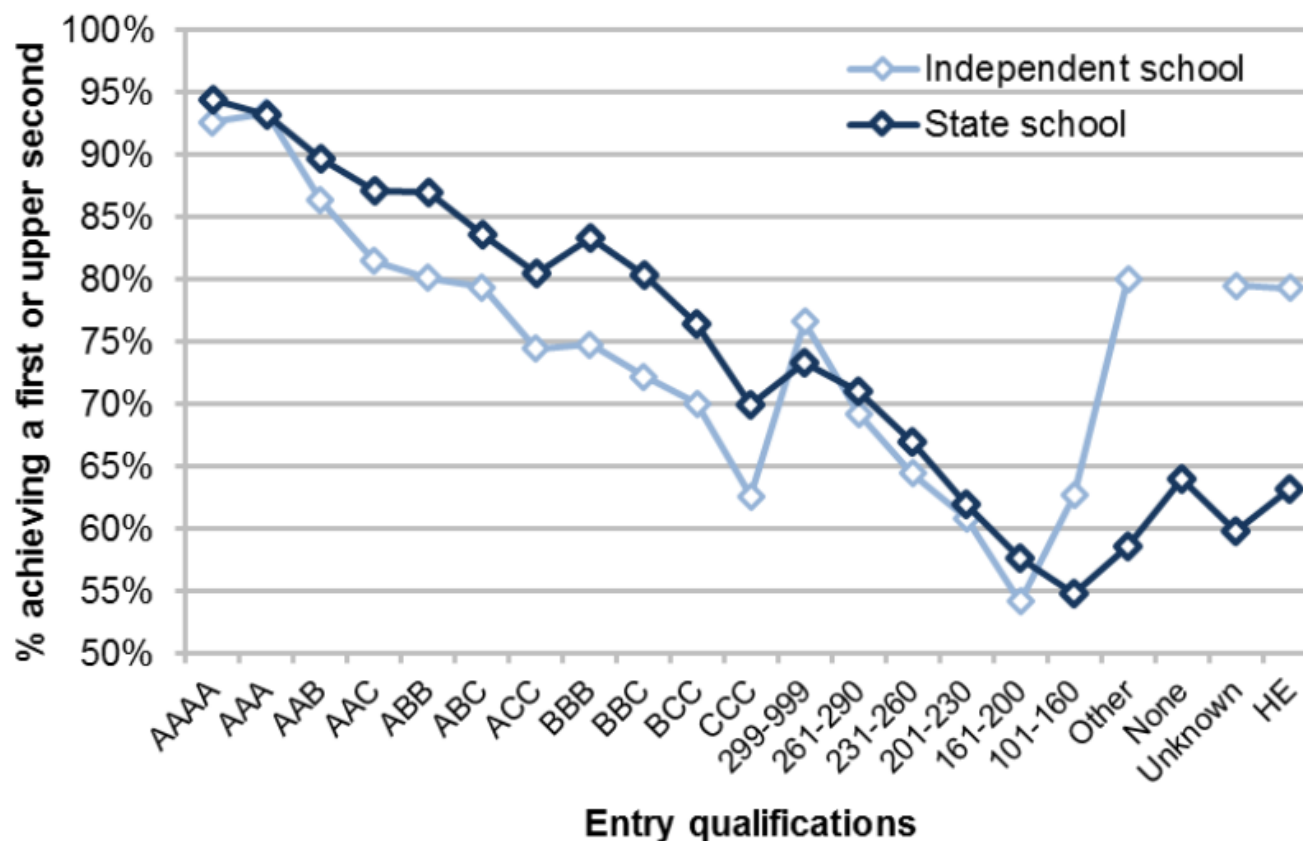
This paper presents the results of an analysis of the academic performance of undergraduate students in the 1993. The analysis is based on a unique data-set which contains representative records of the full cohort of students at 'Oxford' prior to university entrance. The data also includes information on the characteristics of the last school prior to university entrance. The data also includes information on their prior qualifications and on their social class background.

The screenshot shows a BBC News article from Tuesday, 4 March 2003. The main headline is "Private schools 'boycott' Bristol". The sub-headline reads: "Head teachers at independent schools are to discourage sixth-formers from applying to Bristol because of claims the university discriminates against private school pupils." The article text states: "A group which represents the heads of public schools says it is advising its members not to encourage children to apply for Bristol. The Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC) and the Girls' Schools Association (GSA) are stopping short of a boycott, because they say their members cannot stop children from applying where they want to. But their advice signals an attempt to increase pressure on..."

Navigation and sidebar elements include: BBC NEWS, BBC NEWS CHANNEL, News services, Last Updated: Tuesday, 4 March, 2003, 16:50 GMT, Email this to a friend, Printable version, a navigation menu with "Education" highlighted, a "WATCH AND LISTEN" section with "The BBC's Mike Baker" and a quote: "Independent schools think Bristol is discriminating against those from good schools", and a "SEE ALSO:" section with links to related articles.

More recent data...

Figure 14: 2013-14 graduates by previous school, entry qualification and degree classification



Contextual admissions stories appear regularly in the news

Family & Education | School Report | Global Education

Cambridge plans to recruit poorer students

2 October 2018

f m t e Share



Cambridge University is to open its doors to students from disadvantaged backgrounds who show great potential but have not met the entry grades.

Vice-chancellor Prof Toope said it was time to dispel the stereotype of the highly selective university as a "bastion of privilege".

Under the plan, some students who have faced "educational challenge" will be asked to join a transition programme.

Presently, entry to Cambridge requires at least three As or A*s at A-level.

Source: BBC

Which factors are 'contextual'?

1. Individual level:

Receipt of free school meals, first generation at university, in care or carer, household income, disability, refugee, asylum seeker, traveler

2. Area level:

Postcode used to either estimate socioeconomic status (Acorn, Experian etc.) or determine rate of HE participation in the area (e.g. POLAR4)

3. School level:

Attainment at KS4 and/or KS5, school type, progression rate to HE, average economic circumstances of pupils

4. Participation in outreach

Summer Schools, Widening Participation programmes linked to universities (not always transferrable)

Source: The Sutton Trust



Contextual factors might play a role in determining...

Whether an applicant receives an offer

The grades asked for in a conditional offer

Whether to invite a candidate for an interview

Entitlement for scholarships and bursaries

Entitlement to apply to certain courses (e.g. foundation years)

Whether to provide further consideration at clearing / prioritisation for near misses

What can you do to support your students?

- Encourage students to start thinking about taking part in outreach activity at an early stage (end of Year 11 onwards)
- Make sure students factor in potential grade reductions when making their five UCAS choices
- Students can mention contextual information in their personal statement
- Teachers can corroborate this in the reference, and provide contextual information about the school too



Where is the best place to get further information?

- There is no substitute for going straight to the horse's mouth by looking at websites and sending emails if you're unsure
- There is a summary of contextual admissions at Russell Group universities on the Advancing Access website
- The Sutton Trust has produced a detailed report called "Admissions in Context"
- Keep your eye on the news!





More HE news -
Unconditional
offers and the
Augar review

How do you advise your students to best deal with unconditional offers?

Unconditional offers – advice strategies

- Ask students to consider whether graduate employers will be making “unconditional” employment offers in the competitive graduate jobs market!
- It’s not uncommon for students to withdraw from a university and move to another
- Successful students work hard in their first year of university even if it “doesn’t count”

Unconditional offers – in the news!

- Unconditional offers have increased considerably in recent years – 3,000 in 2013 to 117,000 in 2018 (Source: UCAS)
- Future trend not easy to predict. Some universities are stopping the practice, and the Office for Students has expressed some concerns
- Students should be thinking carefully about accepting a “conditional unconditional” offer

The Augar review

- Major review of Post-18 education launched by the Prime Minister last year, the report is due imminently
- Politics is harder than ever to predict and students shouldn't be making big life decisions on the basis of rumours
- Lower tuition fees would not necessarily result in a reduction in the amount students pay back each month

Questions?



enquiries@advancingaccess.ac.uk

University of Birmingham / University of Bristol / University of Cambridge / Cardiff University
Durham University / University of Edinburgh / University of Exeter / University of Glasgow / Imperial College London
King's College London / University of Leeds / University of Liverpool
London School of Economics and Political Science / University of Manchester / Newcastle University
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