FUTURETRACK - THE DIVERSITY OF UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Evidence from UK HEI students who studied full-time from Autumn 2006 till 2009/10

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FUTURETRACK – like Paired Peers, a study of the relationship between what students bring to HE, and how this facilitates or limits HE experience and opportunities

• Longitudinal study – tracking respondents from HE application in 2005-6 until 2011-12;

• Large sample with comprehensive and representative coverage of full spectrum of undergraduate full-time student population, including EU and other overseas students;

• Includes applicants who did not proceed to HE;

• Independent, policy-relevant research
  
  *Interdisciplinary team*
  
  Mixed-methods research with potential for quantitative and qualitative extension.
The fieldwork schedule 2005 - 2012

Pilot study Wave 1: Sept/Oct 2005
Pilot study Wave 2: May/June 2006
Pilot study Wave 3: June 2008
Pilot study Wave 4: June 2010
Main study Wave 1: 2007
Main study Wave 2: 2008
Main study Wave 3: 2009
Main study Wave 4: 2012
The scope of the investigation

- Routes and obstacles to access to HE and career opportunities;
- Mapping the HE population:
  - Gender, skills and choices;
  - Ethnicity and HE choices;
  - Age and the implications of timing in HE access.
- Unpacking ‘higher education’ - subject of study, career pathways and rewards.
- Education-led mobility and the geographical dimensions of opportunity.
- Career decision-making: need for, and impact of, access to guidance and information.
- What actually happens to students after graduation...
The different HEI and course choices reflect different prior educational and social ‘careers’: 

- different degrees of access to opportunity;
- different structural contexts within which educational and employment choices were made and continue to be made;
- different trajectories accessed;
- different attributes, skills and achievements;
- different conceptual universes and perceptions of options available.

AND they provide different cultural capital and access to different graduate labour markets (or optional routes within the highly segregated graduate labour market).
STAGE 1: Information, guidance, choices.....
"I did not have enough information about the implications of post-16 subject choices", comparing selected school students’ response by gender.
“I did not have enough information about..[ items identified]”, comparing selected school students’ responses by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State School</td>
<td>Relation between courses an employment options 50</td>
<td>Relation between courses an employment options 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-sex school</td>
<td>Information about courses available 30</td>
<td>Information about courses available 35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee-paying school</td>
<td>Relation between courses an employment options 40</td>
<td>Relation between courses an employment options 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information about courses available 35</td>
<td>Information about courses available 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reasons, and main reason, for applying to do an undergraduate degree

- It is part of my longer-term career plans
- To enable me to get a good job
- I want to study the particular subject/course
- I want to realise my potential
- I wasn’t sure what to do next and it gave me more options
- It is the normal thing to do for somebody like me
- I want to be a student
- Other
- My parents encouraged me to apply
- I thought it would be better than being unemployed
- My teachers encouraged me to apply
- I was influenced by careers advice or information provided at my school/college
- I was encouraged to apply by my employer/colleagues
- Some/all of my friends are doing so
- It is the normal thing to do for somebody like me

Main reason All reasons
Importance of location in terms of opportunity to stay at home or to study away from home, by region of domicile prior to application

- Could continue to live at home
- Wanted to study away from home
‘Everybody in my school goes for higher education - there was no question or doubt in my mind as to whether or not I would apply’. [Male, 18 and under, Eastern, White, Independent school, Professional/Managerial background, Mathematical and Computing Sciences, Russell Group]

‘My husband left [me] and three children. I decided I wanted to do something I had always wanted to do as well be a good carer in order to provide for my children and give them and myself a decent future”. [Female, 31-40, West Midlands, White, Subjects allied to medicine, other HEI]

‘No one of my family members have gone to university so I want to achieve more than my parents and other relatives ever have’, (Female, 18 and under, Greater London FE college, Socil Sciences, New university)

‘I reached a point in my life, where I realised that walking into an office everyday and staring at a computer monitor, could, if I didn't make a change, be for the rest of my life. I want to do something fulfilling’. [Male, 26-30, North East, White, New university, Linguistics and Classics]

‘I was made redundant after working for one organisation for 21 years. Further education has given access to higher education and the opportunity to fulfil my dream of becoming a school teacher’. [Female 41-50, Scotland, White, Russell Group, Education]
## Key characteristics of 2006 students (selected subjects)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>% Female</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% 25+</th>
<th>% 'professional managerial background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALL 2006 accepted UK applicants</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-clinical Medicine</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>58.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pharmacy etc</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>34.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical Engineering</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>51.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>37.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Studies</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History by period</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>52.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design Studies</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>36.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STAGE 2: The experience of higher education....
Subject applied for, comparing male and female distributions

*accepted applicants
Being a student at the university or college where I studied was a positive experience overall

My course was good value for money

There were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus

I had sufficient access to web-based facilities

I was given good feedback on my progress

On the whole, the tuition and learning support I received on my course were excellent
‘There were excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities on or around the campus’ by type of HEI

- Highest tariff university
- High tariff university
- Medium tariff university
- Lower tariff university
- General HE college
- Specialist HE college

1 - Strongly agree  
2 3 4 5 6 7 - Strongly disagree
Work placement in the UK or abroad as part of course, comparing those on 3 and 4 year undergraduate courses

- None of these as part of course
- Will do course abroad this...
- Will do work placement this...
- Shorter full-time course(s) abroad
- Year abroad doing full-time...
- Shorter work placement(s) abroad
- Work placement year abroad
- Shorter UK work placement(s)
- UK work placement year

- 4 year courses
- 3 year courses
Final year students’ evaluations of aspects of courses

The amount of work I had to complete on my course was excessive
- Strongly agree: 6.8%
- Agree: 14.0%
- Neutral: 20.5%
- Disagree: 27.1%
- Strongly disagree: 35.7%

I was given good feedback on my progress
- Strongly agree: 9.7%
- Agree: 27.1%
- Neutral: 27.6%
- Disagree: 35.7%
- Strongly disagree: 8.3%

On the whole, the tuition and learning support I received on my course were excellent
- Strongly agree: 19.4%
- Agree: 35.7%
- Neutral: 23.4%
- Disagree: 27.6%
- Strongly disagree: 10.9%

My course is helping me to develop the skills I believe I will need to get a job
- Strongly agree: 20.0%
- Agree: 29.1%
- Neutral: 22.9%
- Disagree: 27.6%
- Strongly disagree: 10.9%
Agreement with the statement ‘Being a student has enhanced my social and intellectual capabilities more broadly’ by broad socio-economic group

- Routine and manual occupations
- Intermediate occupations
- Managerial and professional occupations

Agreement: purple, neither: blue, disagree: green
Self assessed self confidence, by HEI type

- **Highest tariff university**
  - As accepted applicants
  - Third year finalists

- **High tariff university**
  - As accepted applicants
  - Third year finalists

- **Medium tariff university**
  - As accepted applicants
  - Third year finalists

- **Lower tariff university**
  - As accepted applicants
  - Third year finalists

Colors represent different levels of self-assessed confidence:
- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Adequate
- Not very good
STAGE 3: ...what were they planning to do next?
‘The university I attended is an advantage in looking for employment’ by type of HEI

- Highest tariff
- High tariff
- Medium tariff
- Lower tariff
- General HE
- Specialist HE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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What do you hope to do in the year after graduation?' comparing 3 and 4 year course final year students

- Obtain employment related to longer-term career plans
- Become self-employed
- Temporary employment while considering longer-term plans
- Temporary employment while paying off debt
- Full-time postgraduate course
- Undertake vocational training
- Travel or take time out
- Don't know
- Other

4 year courses

3 year courses
% searching for employment in final term, by parental experience of higher education and socio-economic background, 2009

- Neither/not declared
- One parent has experience of HE
- Both parents have experience of HE
- Managerial and Professional Occupations
- Intermediate Occupations
- Routine and manual Occupations

40%
45%
50%
55%
60%
Whether students hoped to obtain a job related to their course subject by HEI type

- Obtain a job related to course subject
- Obtain a job not related to course subject
- No preference
Whether students hoped to obtain a job related to the subject of their course by broad subject group

Subjects allied to Medicine
Education
Architecture, Build & Plan
Creative Arts & Design
Engineering, Technologies
Law
Mass communication and...
Biology, Vet Sci, Agr & related
Mathematical & Comp Sci
Business & Admin studies
Interdisciplinary subjects
Social Studies
Physical Sciences
Linguistics and Classics
Hist & Philosophical studies

- Obtain a job related to course subject
- Obtain a job not related to course subject
- No preference

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Sources students used to look for future employment, and how useful they found them

- Prospective employers' websites
- Graduate vacancy publications/websites
- Friends or family
- University/College-based Careers Service or...
- Specialist trade or professional publications
- National press
- Independent employment agencies and their...
- Local press
- Other internet vacancy sites
- Speculative approach to companies
- Job Centre

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

- Very useful
- Quite useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all
- Have not used
Job-market aspired to in the medium to long term, by HEI classification

- Highest tariff university
- High tariff university
- Medium tariff university
- Lower tariff university
- General HE college
- Specialist HE college

Legend:
- Local (no plan to move for career)
- Regional (might move within the region started in)
- National (do not expect to change UK country)
- UK-based (do not expect to move from UK)
- International (work in or travel to other countries as well as UK)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Not very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to work in a team</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer literacy</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken communication</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy skills</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final year students’ self-rating of their skills**

[Graph showing self-ratings for each skill]
## Self-rating of core skills by selected broad subject groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad subject of study</th>
<th>Percentage rating themselves as excellent or very good</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering &amp; Technologies</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics &amp; Computing</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>70.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Administration</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical &amp; Philosophical Studies</td>
<td>83.5</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts &amp; Design</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Futuretrack 2006 combined dataset: UK based final year students, selected subjects (weighted)
Expected labour market expected in the medium to long term by selected indicators of previous mobility

- Study outside region of domicile (a)
- Study in region of domicile (a)
- Lived at home with family or partner in first year (b)
- Lived at home alone in first year (b)
- Lived in a student hall of residence in first year (b)
- Lived at home with family or partner final year (c)
- Lived at home alone in final year (c)
- Lived in a student hall of residence in final year (c)
- Lived in other rented self-catering accommodation in final year (c)

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

- Local (no plan to move for career)
- Regional (might move within the region started in)
- National (do not expect to change UK country)
- UK-based (do not expect to move from UK)
- International (work in or travel to other countries as well as UK)
‘I have clear idea about the occupation I eventually want to enter’ by Futuretrack stages

- **1 - Clear idea**
- **2 - During the application process**
- **3 - After the first year in HE**
- **4 - During the final year in HE**
- **5 - 6 - 7 - No idea**
Future options and accumulated debt

- Accumulated debt less than £15,000
- Accumulated debt £15,000 or more

- My options will not be limited by debts
- Would like to do a postgraduate course, but don't want to add to debts
- Will need to take a job that would not be my first choice so can pay off debts
- Locations where can seek employment will be limited
STAGE 4: ...and now we are beginning to analyse responses 18 – 32 months on...

*(Report to be published in November 2012)*

For further information and links relating to the Futuretrack project and related research see:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/glmf

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