

Session Title:	Keynote: Assessing the health of student demand
Speaker(s):	Laura Scanga
Chair:	Reena Littlehales
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Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	<p>Laura Scanga is Director of Business Development at dataHE. She joined in May 2023 with a background in marketing, media and education. She has worked in multiple sectors and countries and has an MBA. She has recent experience in senior management in the higher education sector; responsible for UG, PG and student success. Laura leads on helping universities use data for better decision making.</p>
Overview/Aim of session:	<p>An overview of recent and future demand for higher education in the UK.</p>
Workshop Content	<p>DataHE was started 5 years ago by 2 ex-UCAS directors who felt there was a need for universities to understand the market better with a more operational focus. They aim to help universities make better, strategic decisions. They work within the sector with a range of universities across Scotland, NI, England & Wales – objective but not attached.</p> <p>Negative press about university funding is not new but shows a building of pressure. Terminology around the value of degrees affects not just one university, but all of us. Language about ‘Mickey Mouse’ degrees doesn’t help anyone. International students now cannot bring family members into the UK. Universities are feeling the pain – each institution will be going through something.</p> <p>Is there a value to a degree? They are great for social mobility; there is a positive impact a degree brings & societal implications for women and their children who study in HE – linked to health, happiness and wellbeing.</p>

A study was published in 2023 by the Social Mobility Commission: Labour market value of higher and further education qualifications. This found on average anyone who studies in HE will earn more than those who don't. There is a labour market value too. After controlling for different personal characteristics (e.g. degree award) there is a benefit. Same conversations happen in America where also agree a degree is worth the investment over a lifetime (not just 15 months after graduating).

Who wants to go?

Mostly young and from the UK and demand is set to increase over time. 18 year olds in the UK are the biggest segment, which will increase over the coming years. By 2030, project 800,000 applications to university. When analysis was done in 2020, projections were looking at 40,000 more by 2030 – but this was revised down from 2022 to 2023 due to volatility in the market and demand is being slightly suppressed. Expecting 40,000 fewer applications coming from 18 year olds – they are the driver of increase or decrease in the market.

International could help with shortfall but is more risky, what you expect isn't always what you get.

Entry rates over time have gone upwards. Fee increase came in in 2012 and there has been an upwards trend since - was a drop but it didn't stick, there was more demand. Little different in Scotland due to cap.

Areas where A level grades have been improved, see increased demand. Location does matter; London is higher due to increased population but demand is also greater.

North East, has a smaller population of 18 year olds, but they are also less interested in university compared to the rest of country.

All strata of society are supportive of HE; parents of those in POLAR Q1 do want children to go to university but only 33% are getting into university.

Declines in entry rate across all POLAR quintile groups but is steepest in Q1. There is an ambition but it's not being met.

Who gets in?

After A level results in 2023, about 430,000 UK students were going to HE. Non-UK students are proportionally small.

	<p>Q1 & 2 are applying but entry rates don't match – ambition is there but access is constrained.</p> <p>There is a widening of discrepancy for sex and ethnicity. Men are not getting into higher tariff institutions and there are then less of them there when they do.</p> <p>Grades had been very stable up until the pandemic, but then there was a structural challenge when grades increased during pandemic. How does it make the students feel when they get good grades but can't get in? These structural shocks could have long lasting implications we aren't aware of yet. Rejection rates have increased too – back to 2015 levels – constraints aren't affecting everyone equally.</p> <p>Are expectations met?</p> <p>4930 North East students went to university in the North East. UK regions have more than 50% remaining in the area except for Yorkshire and The Humber, where students move more for university and might not necessarily go back.</p> <p>The majority of all entrants want to live away from home – will be even more students by 2030 that want to do this. Doesn't necessarily mean moving out of region. 18 and 19 year olds especially want to live away from home. Usual for international students to want to move away from home too, except in Italy students opt more to stay at home.</p> <p>By 2030, the UK will need another 200,000 beds for students based on demand.</p> <p>When at university, students give ratings through NSS. Support need was being met but a decline started in 2016 and during pandemic, this dropped much lower. London consistently underperforms on support. Same trend in all tariff institutions but harder for higher tariff institutions where expectations are not being met. There is an erosion of fees based on inflation, so services might be being cut.</p> <p>Application and entry rates dropped in 2022 – the only other time this happened was when higher fees were introduced which was the largest ever fall in demand.</p>
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Questions and Answers:</p>	<p><i>Do you have any personal thoughts around the gender split?</i></p> <p>Higher tariff institutions appear better for women but might be different by subject. There can be lots of speculation around topics like this, important we go and look at the data around the area.</p> <p><i>There was a spike in grades during the pandemic, any further data on how they impacted different POLAR quintiles? We have been seeing that those in lower quintiles were less likely to get higher grades. Universities were taking more students as they were legally bound to if they have the grades, then grades changed but still we were legally bound to take them.</i></p> <p>Hard to balance what happens as one year can impact the next. Ofqual have said grades would come down to pre-pandemic levels; institutions that were prepared for that shift may have been prepared that students wouldn't have the grades they had had before – would have been back to normal. May mean some institutions have missed on quality students. Shouldn't see any grade shocks like this again but the ripples of what happened may still play out more.</p> <p><i>What is your top tip to anyone to be more comfortable with data?</i></p> <p>Only get comfortable when you use it. Ask questions. Those who work with dataHE can get in touch and we will work with them whenever they have questions. Data becomes more accessible when you use it.</p>
<p>SummaryKey takeaways:</p>	<p>Universities are feeling the pain – each institution will be going through something.</p> <p>There is a value to having a degree.</p> <p>18 year olds in the UK are the biggest segment entering higher education, which will increase over the coming years.</p> <p>All strata of society are supportive of HE.</p> <p>Q1 & 2 are applying but entry rates don't match – ambition is there but access is constrained.</p>

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