

How to read the analysis tables

The data tables report applicants placed through the UCAS Undergraduate scheme by intended academic year of entry between 2013-14 and 2016-17.

Reporting placed applicants by the academic year they are recruited to, rather than by the UCAS admissions cycle in which they were accepted, is a better guide to the change in the number of those starting higher education in a particular academic year.

These statistics reflect the position recorded exactly four weeks after GCE A level results day. Acceptances at this point are usually around 97 – 98 per cent of the eventual end of cycle totals over recent cycles. For entry into 2015-16, there was a net increase of 13,270 (+3 per cent) between this point and the end of the 2015 cycle.

The number of placed applicants by entry year at this point can differ from the final number of higher education enrolments recorded on statistical returns, due to a range of factors. These include not all acceptances going on to enrol and some enrolments not coming through UCAS. These factors, and their extent, can vary from year to year.

Notes about UCAS statistics for Scotland

In Scotland, there is a substantial section of provision that is not included in UCAS' 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 in Scotland. Accordingly, the statistics on UCAS acceptances in these data resources reflect only the majority of full-time undergraduate study, which uses UCAS.

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. In 2015, around 120 courses at providers in Scotland moved into the UCAS Undergraduate scheme, estimated to represent around 2,000 acceptances, mostly aged 21 or over. Comparisons between 2016-17 and 2014-15 (or earlier cycles) will be affected by this change.

Coverage and structure of analysis tables

The analysis tables in the release report the number of acceptances into entry year 2016-17, in the context of the totals for entry into 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 at equivalent points in the relevant UCAS cycle. To ensure a consistent comparison through time, the tables do not include a small number (several thousand) of acceptances to courses that start within a cycle.

The reference point for these statistics is four weeks after the release of GCE A level results (15 September 2016, and the equivalent point in previous cycles). Total acceptances at this point are around 97 – 98 per cent of the end of cycle totals over recent cycles. This can vary between providers in different countries, and for different years.

The table below shows the change in acceptances between the reporting point of four weeks after GCE A level results day and the end of the 2015 cycle.

Provider country	2015-16 entry year acceptances 28 days after GCE A level results day	2015-16 entry year acceptances at end of cycle	2015-16 entry year change from day 28 to end of cycle	2015-16 entry year percentage change from day 28 to end of cycle
England	435,270	445,960	10,690	2%
Northern Ireland	9,910	9,920	10	0%
Scotland	44,690	46,400	1,710	4%
Wales	24,640	25,510	870	4%
Total	514,510	527,780	13,270	3%

There are six sets of analysis tables. The first set (tables 1a, 1b, 1c, and 1d) report placed applicants by the country of the provider where they are placed, and their country of domicile on application.

The second set (tables 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d) provide a further analysis by categories that relate to attainment and entry qualifications, for UK applicants who applied before the June deadline. The qualification and attainment information for applicants who apply after the June deadline, directly through Clearing, is not as comprehensive, so these are reported separately. Applicants from the EU (excluding UK) and non-EU countries are also reported separately, because their qualification and attainment levels are not well represented by the same categories as UK applicants.

The attainment categories use information from the UCAS system to approximate the ABB+ categories that relate to level 3 qualifications, used by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in previous cycles for student number control arrangements. A common approximation is applied to all entry years

for the purpose of comparison. Some examples of the factors that contribute to these being approximations are:

- to enable point-in-time comparisons, these numbers do not include a small number of acceptances to courses that start within a cycle;
- a small number of qualification types (e.g. Access to HE) have not been assessed against the ABB+ categories for technical reasons;
- combinations of qualifications included in the ABB+ categories in 2014-15 have not been assessed.

Applicants who meet the ABB+ category solely because they have already attained a degree level qualification or have been accepted to study certain courses, such as medicine, are not reported as ABB+ in these tables.

The assessment of entry qualifications uses a number of data sources, including information provided by applicants themselves. Acceptances that meet the ABB+ categories use the qualification information provided by the awarding bodies for those awarded in the year of application, in combination with information provided by the applicants relating to qualifications awarded prior to the application. This means the ABB+ criteria can be met solely through the information supplied by the awarding organisations, in combination with applicant-supplied information, or through the applicant-supplied information alone.

It is rare for any applicant to be holding qualifications within the ABB+ set from more than one qualification type. Assignment to the different entry qualification categories for those who meet the ABB+ criteria is done on a hierarchical basis, so that accepted applicants are first considered against the ABB+ criteria using any A levels qualifications held. If the ABB+ criteria are not met through A levels, then BTEC qualifications are considered next, then SQA Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications. If the ABB+ criteria are not met through SQA qualifications, then the International Baccalaureate is considered and, after that, any other qualifications the accepted applicant holds.

Accepted applicants who do not meet the ABB+ criteria are assigned to the not ABB+ category. Assignment to the different qualification categories within the not ABB+ category is also determined according to the qualifications held. Those who hold at least three A levels (either alone or in combination with any other qualification), or who hold one or two A levels not in combination with other qualifications, are assigned to the A level category. Assignments to the BTEC, SQA, and International Baccalaureate categories are made if an accepted applicant holds only that qualification type and no other. Accepted applicants holding combinations of qualifications (other than three A levels in combination with other qualifications, who are assigned to the A level category) are assigned to the 'other' category. This category also includes all other placed applicants who do not fall into any of the other categories.

The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth set of tables also look at acceptances by categories that relate to attainment and entry qualifications, but do so for acceptances to providers in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, separately.

There are four parts to each set of tables. The first (a) gives the accepted applicant totals to each entry year. The second (b) reports these as the change between the 2016-17 entry year acceptances and acceptances into earlier entry years (reported so that where the 2016-17 entry year acceptances are lower than the comparison entry year acceptances, the statistic reported will be negative). This shows directly whether recruitment to 2016-17 is higher or lower than the reference year chosen. The third (c) reports this same statistic as a proportional change from the comparison entry year.

The fourth table (d) splits the acceptances for each entry year by the UCAS cycle that the acceptance was from. For example, the acceptances into the 2016-17 entry year are split into whether they were accepted from the 2016 cycle (immediate acceptances) or from the 2015 cycle (deferred acceptances). To give the best picture of acceptances across the 2013-14 to 2016-17 entry years, the deferred acceptances into those entry years are reported using the end of cycle position. This is not possible yet for the deferred acceptances from 2016 into 2017-18, who are reported instead at the reference point. This means that deferred acceptances into 2017-18 are likely to change by the end of the cycle, whereas the deferred acceptances into other entry years will not. Last year, deferred acceptances to 2016-17 increased by 3,530 between this point and the end of the cycle.

All tables show acceptances and differences rounded to the nearest 10. Proportional changes are not shown for rows where the base is fewer than 500.