



FUTURETRACK: PART-TIME STUDENTS
**CAREER DECISION-MAKING AND CAREER
DEVELOPMENT OF PART-TIME HIGHER
EDUCATION STUDENTS**

**A Report to the
Higher Education Careers Services Unit
(HECSU)**

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All the views expressed in this report are solely those of the authors.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is based on the findings of a survey of 3,704 part-time undergraduate UK domiciled students conducted in 2007/08. This survey forms part of a larger longitudinal study that will track these students over time through a series of surveys. It is the first study of its kind involving a nationally representative sample of part-time undergraduates from across the UK. The initial survey reported here, aimed to explore students' career intentions and ambitions and to collect data on their career development and decision making – issues that have tended to be ignored in other research on part-time students. The study was conducted for HECSU and BIS and was undertaken by Prof Claire Callender of Birkbeck, University of London and David Wilkinson and Rebecca Hopkin of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

The students surveyed were drawn from 29 Higher Education Institutions from across the UK who were aiming for a First Degree, Foundation Degree, or Higher National. They were studying one of the following subjects: Engineering/technology; Social Sciences; Law; Business and Education. Two groups of students were surveyed – students in their first year of study – referred to as starters in this report, and students in their final year of study – referred to as completers. In this way, students' progress at different points of time in their study careers can be charted and followed over time.

KEY FINDINGS

Part-time students' reasons for studying

- The part-time student population is extremely heterogeneous and this is reflected in their wide range of reasons for studying. The initial factors triggering their decision to study, influencing their choice of course, and shaping their aspirations were primarily instrumental. They were employment and career driven. They were manifest in their desire for an higher education qualification to get ahead and to meet their career ambitions, and to develop new or existing skills and better opportunities in the future.
- However, the students also valued the intrinsic rewards of studying in terms of wanting to do something new and different, their interest in their subject of study, and for mothers especially, acting as a role model for their children.
- Students' reasons for studying part-time as against full-time were both financial and pragmatic. They could not afford to give up their job to study full-time (80%). In addition, part-time study offered them greater flexibility (83%) and they could fit their studies around their existing work (79%) and domestic commitments (54%).
- These findings confirm those of earlier studies and Kember et al's (2001) observation that students hold 'multiple orientations' towards study, which inevitably influence experiences upon entry to a course and beyond.

Part-time students' career plans and ambitions

- A unique feature of this research is its exploration of part-time students' career plans. Well over a half of students had clear career ambitions and well-reasoned long-term career plans – they knew what they wanted to do, especially students who already had some experience of, or exposure to, higher education. For the vast majority of students, both their decision to study (89%) and choice of subject (92%) were firmly linked to these career aims. For a sizable minority (27%), their ideas about their careers had crystallised as a direct result of taking their course, especially amongst

those nearing the end of their course and among those more vulnerable students who were not employed, entered higher education with low-level qualifications, and came from low-income households. However, for around a half of those students not taking vocational qualifications or studying education, their courses were not always directly related to their current employment or occupation. This suggests that they were using their studies as a springboard to realise their ambitions in a different job or area of work.

The careers information, advice, and guidance sought by part-time students and their use of university/college career services

- Only a third of new entrants had sought any careers information, advice, or guidance before starting their course. This was because most (71%) of them knew what they wanted to do and/or had experience to call upon to weigh up their career options. In addition, the vast majority did not think they needed more help and advice in choosing their course of study.
- It was primarily for these reasons that only a third of students had used their university/college career service once they got to university. This is an important finding given the absence of other research on part-time students' use of university career services. Those most likely to have had some contact with their university/college career service while at university were in their final year of study, were not employed, were without a higher education qualification at the start of their current course and came from minority ethnic groups.
- Of those part-time students who had not used their university/college careers service during the academic year, nearly three in ten (58%) knew what they wanted to do and/or had the knowledge and experience to make up their own minds about their career options. However, a further third of students who had not used their university/college's careers service were unaware of its existence, or thought the service did not cater for people already with jobs or for those studying part-time, especially female students and those under the age of 25. This suggests that university/college career services need to do much more both to market their facilities and to broaden their provision in order to increase student awareness of the service and to improve students' use of the service.
- When students did seek careers information, advice, and guidance either before starting their course or during their course, those who were employed mostly relied on their employer (32%) or someone at work (30%) for such advice, which they also rated the most helpful sources of careers information, advice, and guidance. By contrast, those who were not employed depended primarily on help from family and friends (27%) which they also rated as the most helpful source
- Consequently, most part-time students do not rely on professionals for their careers information, advice and guidance. Instead, they turn to those close at hand - their informal social networks at work and at home. This means that many students may not be receiving impartial or broadly informed career advice, when compared with the advice likely to be provided by a professional career advisor.
- Although most part-time students did not use their university/college's careers service while at university, the majority (57%) had sought some careers information, advice, and guidance from alternative sources. This demonstrates an appetite for such help and support, and potential missed opportunities for university/college career services. So, while there is a demand for careers information, advice, and guidance among part-time students, university/college career services are not fulfilling that demand. To meet that demand universities and colleges need to priorities the requirements of

part-time students and allocate more resources to them. Specifically, they need to re-orientate their services away from services preparing younger students to enter the labour market to those catering for older students already with experience of the labour market who want information, advice, and guidance on career progression and career change. A finding which confirms those of Little et al (2005), one of the very few studies that has looked generally at career development activities in HE for part-time students but within the context of effective learning for employability. Our study also found that university and college career services need to acknowledge part-time students' preferences for a more personalised approach and for face-to-face interaction with a careers advisors rather than delivering services for instance, via websites.

The costs of part-time study and employer support

- There were wide variations in part-time students' total costs of study including both tuition fees and other course costs such as books, computers, travel etc. The average costs amounted to £1,730. Of this, £1,166 was spent on tuition fees, which were paid up-front, and the remaining £564 on other course costs.
- The nature of the current government-funded financial support for part-time is based on the assumption that students can afford these costs because they are working or that their employers will pay for them. However, only a minority of students received any help with their fees from their employer – around 41%.
- Employer support is discretionary rather than an entitlement, unlike statutory provision. This study, like others before (Woodley 2004, Callender et al 2006, Johnson et al 2009), confirmed that employers were very selective in terms of who they were prepared to sponsor, favouring the most advantaged in their workforce. Employer support was very unequally distributed to the detriment of those students most in need of help to improve their labour market position and human capital. Those missing out included students from ethnic minorities, from working class households with low-incomes and poorly paid part-time jobs and low qualification levels on entry. Those most likely to benefit from employer support were students least in need of such help- white students in full-time jobs, from high-income households already with a university degree studying towards a vocational qualification especially in engineering and technology.
- On top of help with fees, nearly a half of students had been given paid time off work to study by their employer, and one in six had received financial help towards their course-related costs. However, just like employers' financial contributions towards employees' tuition fees, employers were very selective in terms of in which employees they were willing to invest and support both financially and in kind so that their employees could successfully complete their course of study. Those employees most likely to be given paid time off work and help with course-related costs were also the employees most likely to have had their fees paid in full by their employer. For instance, nearly three times as many students whose employer had paid their tuition fees in full as students receiving no tuition fee support at all from their employer, were also given paid time off work. Consequently, the employees most likely to receive this additional support were some of the most privileged in the labour market – individuals working full-time with high or medium household incomes studying towards vocational qualifications, especially in engineering. Conversely those missing out included some of the most vulnerable in the labour force, part-time employees or those working voluntarily from low-income households taking a First degree and studying education and the Law.

- However, such employer financial support is particularly vulnerable to cuts. Employer sponsored education and training is particularly at risk in times of fiscal constraint, especially where such spending is perceived to be discretionary and where training budgets are competing with other resources to meet more pressing targets. Consequently, it is not necessarily a reliable funding source.
- Just under a half (46%) of employed students thought their employer was very supportive in helping them do their course. Not surprisingly, the employees most appreciative of their employer, who rated them as very supportive in their studies, were those who had received financial and practical help in the form of: contributions towards their course-related expenses; paid time off work to study, and payment of their tuition fees paid in full.

Government-funded financial support for part-time students

- Part-time students are potentially eligible for two means-tested government-funded grants: a fee grant towards the costs of their tuition and a course grant for help with the costs of books, travel computing etc. However, eligibility to both grants is highly limited because of their restrictive qualifying criteria. Students have to be studying at least 50% of a full-time course, not already have a level 4 qualification or a first/bachelor's degree, and have very low household incomes. However, entitlement is not driven by financial need, but initially is dictated by the number of hours students study and by their qualifications on entry. As a result, the vast majority of part-time students do not receive this financial support, including some disadvantaged groups such as students from low-income families or with low levels of entry qualifications - a finding confirmed elsewhere in earlier studies (e.g. Callender et al, 2006; Johnson et al 2009).
- Only 14% of all the students surveyed received a fee grant while 19% were awarded a course grant. This compares with 10% of all part-time undergraduates nationally. The students surveyed most likely to receive this help were those who did not receive any financial support from their employer. Therefore, the state system does help to compensate for the absence of employer support and for market failure. However, government fee grants are frequently less generous than an employer's contribution to a student's fees because the grants do not always cover a student's tuition fees in full, unlike most employer support.
- Consequently, when students do qualify for these grants, the amount they receive is inadequate and does not meet their costs. Over two in five (43%) students surveyed in receipt of a government fee grant, had tuition fees higher than the fee grant they received while 68% awarded a course grant incurred course costs higher than their grant.
- Nor does the system of financial assistance for part-time students promote widening participation and fair access. This is in marked contrast to the much more generous and comprehensive financial support available to full-time undergraduates. These differences in financial support may help explain why part-time student enrolments, outside the Open University, have fallen over time while full-time enrolments have continued to grow.

The benefits of part-time study

- The few studies on the benefits of part-time study focus on the outcomes of study, and what happens to students after they graduate. This study examined changes that occurred while students were still studying. It found that students already were reaping the benefits of their course even before they had completed them. Nearly a

half of students in their final year of study had changed jobs and/or their employer since starting their course, especially younger students, from low-income households studying for a First degree, particularly in the Law or Business.

- However, some part-time students may have unrealistic expectations about the employment benefits of studying particularly in relation to getting a new job, being promoted, and getting a pay rise. While a minority of students in their final year of study had experienced these particular employment benefits as a result of their studies, much higher proportions of students in their first year of study expected these changes to occur as a consequence of their studies.
- Yet, the majority of students had seen some positive outcomes from their studies. Their productivity and job satisfaction improved, they utilised the skills learnt on their course in their jobs, and were given more responsibilities at work reflecting their improved knowledge. There were unanticipated benefits too, particularly improvements in relations with colleagues at work and more positive employer attitudes towards them.

Detailed findings

CHAPTER 2: REASONS FOR STUDYING

What triggered students' decision to study?

- The key triggers that made students first think about taking their course of study were:
 - Career and employment related:

Most students identified realising they needed a Higher Education qualification to get ahead (59%) and that their existing qualifications were inadequate to meet their career ambitions (56%), as the key triggers, especially employed students or those with taking more vocational qualifications (i.e. Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals).
 - Change related:

Just under a half (47%) of all students wanted to do something useful or different with their lives, especially students who were not employed (55%).
 - Family related:

Just under a half (46%) of female students with a child under the age of 11 first started to think about taking their courses because they wanted to be a role model for their children or to help with their children's education.
- A slightly higher proportion of completers - students in their final year of study - than starters – students in their first year of study – identified these first two sets of triggers.

Why choose to study part-time?

- Over a half of all students rated the following reasons as very important in their decision to study part-time as against full-time:

- They could not afford to give up their job (72%), especially students in full-time employment, or doing a Foundation Degree ;
- Offered greater flexibility and convenience (54%), especially students in part-time employment or taking a Foundation Degree; and
- Wanted to combine study and work (54%), especially students in part-time employment or taking a Foundation Degree;

A slightly higher proportion of starters than completers identified these three reasons.

Why chose their course of study

- The majority of students rated the following reasons as very important in their decision to study their particular course of study:
 - To develop new and existing skills (69%), especially students studying the Law and Business or taking a Foundation Degree;
 - Interest in the subject (66%), especially students studying the Law; and
 - To enter a particular profession/occupation (50%), especially students studying the Law.

There were no marked differences by whether students were starters or completers.

Benefits hoped for

- At least a half of students identified the following generic personal or professional benefits that they hoped to achieve from their studies:
 - Better opportunities and prospects (55%); and
 - Improving their skills/qualification/experience (50%).

CHAPTER 3: CAREER RELATED STUDY AND CAREER AIMS

The relationship between students' study and their career aims and current employment

- Nearly all students' (89%) decision to study and their subject of study (92%) was related to their career aims, particularly younger students, those who were employed, who were taking a Foundation Degree, or were studying Engineering, Technology or Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- Overall 55% of students said their course was related a great deal to their current occupation or employment, especially, female students, those with children, white students, those employed full-time, taking a Foundation Degree or Higher National, and studying Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- Only 13% reported that their course was not at all related to their current occupation or employment, a figure broadly in line with the percentage reporting that their decision to study was not related to career aims (11%) and that their subject of study was not related to career aims (8%).

Career plans

- Students had pretty set ideas about their career plans .
- Almost one-third of students had a clearer idea about their career plans since starting their course. For a further 27% of students their original career plans had been reinforced since starting their course, while for another quarter their plans remained unchanged. Only 5% had changed their ideas completely, or had a less clear idea.
- The students most likely to have a clearer idea about their career plans were in their final year of study, were not employed, from low-income households, or had a Level 3 entry qualification (i.e. A Level or equivalent).
- Most students (59%), at the time of the survey, were clear about their long-term career plans and what they wanted to do. Students who already had a level 4/5 qualification, who had a family member with an HE qualification and students studying Law or Education were more likely to report that they were clear about what they want to do, once other characteristics were controlled for. There were no differences between starters and completers.

CHAPTER 4: USE OF CAREER SERVICE

Starters' careers seeking behaviour before they started their course

- Only a minority of students (33%) in their first year of study had sought some careers information, advice, or guidance before starting their course. Those students most likely to seek help were younger students, those with a partner, ethnic minority students, from low household incomes, and studying Engineering, Technology and Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- The main reasons first year students had not sought advice were because:
 - they knew what they wanted to do and did not need advice (64%), and
 - they have the experience and knowledge to decide about their career options (32%).

Sources of careers information, advice, and guidance used by starters before they started their course

- The most popular sources were:
 - their employer (32%);
 - the careers service at their university/college (30%);
 - family and friends (26%); and
 - someone at their workplace (26%).
- The most helpful sources were:
 - the careers service at their university/college (16%);
 - their employer (14%); and
 - someone at their workplace (14%).

- The vast majority (90%) of students in their first year of study thought there was more than enough or just enough career information, advice, and guidance.

Students' contact with their university's career service

- Only a minority of all students – a third - had had any contact with their university career service over the academic year of 2007/08. Those most likely to have had some contact included completers, male students, ethnic minority students, students who were not employed, with a Level 3 qualification on entry, and studying Social Sciences, Law and Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- The main reasons students had had no contact were:
 - they knew what they wanted to do and did not need advice (45%),
 - they have the experience and knowledge to decide about their career options (32%); and
 - they were unaware of the service (21%), especially female students and those aged under 25, once other characteristics were controlled for.

Career guidance opportunities

- Over a half of all students (57%) had accessed some careers information, advice, and guidance over the academic year from a wide variety of sources.
- Only a small minority of students had used any of the opportunities specifically offered by their university's career service. The most popular opportunities exploited were careers advice:
 - from their employer (27%);
 - someone at their workplace (26%); and
 - family and friends (14%);
- Students employed full-time relied much more heavily on their employer and someone at their workplace for careers guidance while students employed part-time, or not at all, depended on their friends and family and the opportunities offered by their university.
- The most helpful sources of careers information, advice and guidance for those using the source were:
 - one to one careers session offered by Careers Service staff at their university/college (54%);
 - careers advice from their employer (53%);
 - careers advice from someone at their workplace (45%);
 - careers advice from a public or private careers agency (44%); and
 - a module to develop employment related skills (41%).
- So there was a very marked difference between the most frequently used sources of careers information and those rated the most helpful.

Students' views about their university career service

- The university/college career services were working well for only a minority of students but there were widespread perceptions that the services are not for everybody.
- Accessing the service was not a problem with nearly half believing that it was easily accessible.

CHAPTER 5: THE COSTS OF STUDY

Information on financial support

- Nearly two-fifths of students sought information about the financial support available when studying part-time before starting their course.
- Students most frequently obtained information about student financial support from their university (63%) with only a quarter using the official government website - directgov.

Tuition fees

- The mean tuition fee was £1,166 and the median £900.
- The following students had above average fees:
 - First degree students (£1,209);
 - those studying the Law (£1,646) and Business (£1,249);
 - those not studying at the Open University (£1,233); and
 - those studying more than 60% of an full-time equivalent
- 41% of students received an employer contribution towards their fees while a similar proportion paid for some or all of their fees themselves, and a fifth gained some support from a financial assistance scheme.
- The students most likely to get help from their employers were female, white, full-time employees, from households with medium and high incomes, who already held a Level 4 or 5 qualification, were aiming for a Foundation Degree or Higher National, studying Engineering or technology, and were studying at least 50% of an FTE, after controlling for other characteristics. Thus, those students, most in need of financial help did not receive it from their employer.
- About a half of the employed students knew they would receive this help from their employer before starting their course while 30% knew they would get no help, and the remaining 22% did not know whether their employer would contribute to their tuition costs.
- The students most likely to pay for some of their tuition fees themselves were completers, male, aged 25 and over, childless, employed part-time, from households with medium and high incomes, taking a first degree, and studying the Law and at the Open University, after controlling for other characteristics.

Course costs and expenditure

- The mean amount students spent on things like books, travel to and from their place of study, computers etc was £564 and the median was £350.
- The following students had above average expenditure:
 - completers (£630);
 - part-time employees (£674);
 - non-working students (£825);
 - first degree students (£583); and
 - those studying the Law (£739)
- The most costly items of expenditure for those incurring the costs were:
 - childcare costs incurred while studying (£884); and
 - residential course costs (£723).
 - The vast majority of students paid for these costs themselves with only 15% getting help from their employer.

How many, and type of students received government student financial support

- The vast majority of part-time students receive no government student financial support.
- 14% of all students received a government fee grant towards the cost of their tuition.
- Those most likely to receive such a grant were starters, female, lone parents, employed part-time or not at all, from households with low-incomes, with a Level 3 qualification or lower on entry, taking a first degree, studying education and at the Open University or an FE college, after controlling for other characteristics.
- Students receiving government financial support largely reflect those students least likely to receive employer support –so government help, in part, compensated for the absence of employer financial support.
- 19% received a course grant toward their course expenditure.
- Those most likely to receive a course grant were similar to those most likely to get a fee grant – they were aged less than 25, lone parents, employed part-time or not at all, from households with low-incomes, with a Level 3 qualification or lower on entry, without a family member who had an HE qualification, taking a first degree, studying education and at the Open University, after controlling for other characteristics.

The adequacy of government student support

- For a sizable proportion of students, the support they received from the government did not meet their costs.
- The average value of the government fee grant was £793.
- 43% of students in receipt of a fee grant had tuition fees higher than the value of their grant. The average shortfall was £576.

- The average value of the government course grant was £242.
- 68% of students in receipt of a course grant had course expenses higher than the value of their grant. The average shortfall was £729.

CHAPTER 6: EMPLOYER SUPPORT

Employer awareness of whether their employees were studying

- The vast majority (95%) of students who were working either in paid employment or voluntarily had informed their employer that they were studying part-time.
- The main reasons students had not informed their employer were because
 - they believed that part-time study was a personal endeavour (26%); and
 - their course was not relevant to their current work (21%).

Whether study was a job requirement

- For a quarter of students, their current study was a job requirement.
- Those students most likely to say this were younger students, who were male, lone parents, from an ethnic minority, employed full-time, aiming for a vocational qualification – a Foundation Degree or Higher National and studying engineering or technology, social sciences and education not at the Open University, once other characteristics were controlled for.

Other forms of employer support

- Over and above financial help with tuition fees, some employers gave their employees other types of support. The most common form of support was paid time off to study, received by nearly a half of students (47%).
- Students whose employer paid for all their tuition fees also were most likely to be given other forms of employer support.
- The students most likely to get this additional support included full-time employees, from households with medium and high incomes, studying vocational qualification in Engineering or technology not at the Open University, after taking into account other student characteristics. These
- 41% of employees received no other forms of support.

Students' views on their employers support

- 46% of employees thought their employers were very supportive of their studies, and a further 32% thought they were quite supportive.
- Unsurprisingly, students whose employer paid for all their tuition fees were more than twice as likely as those receiving no such help to rate their employers as very supportive.

CHAPTER 7: CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT ARISING FROM STUDY

Employer and job changes

- Two-thirds of employed students had not changed jobs or employer since starting their current course.
- 20% of students had remained with their employer since starting their current course but had a different job. This figure rose to 24% for completers and fell to 16% for starters.
- 14 % of students had changed employer since starting their current course, and most of them also were doing a different sort of job. More than twice as many completers (21%) as starters (9%) had changed employers.
- The completers most likely to have changed employers since the start of their course were younger, those taking first degrees, studying the Law and Business and at the Open University.

Changes hours of work

- The vast majority of students (78%) had not changed their hours of work since starting their current course.

Changes at work arising as a direct result of their study

- This study confirms that there are many work-related benefits from participating in part-time study, apart from the more obvious change of job.
- Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of completers than starters experienced these particular benefits because they had been studying for a longer period of time.
- The majority of starters (68%) and completers (65%) felt that their ability to do their work had improved as a direct result of having undertaken their course while most completers (58%) and nearly a half of starters (47%) had derived more job satisfaction.
- Sizable minorities of completers had received a pay rise (41%) and promotion (39%) as a direct result of their studies – twice as many as starters.
- An unexpected consequence of studying for a sizable minority of both starters (29%) and completers (31%) was improved relationships with people at work.
- These changes at work were associated with other transformations at work associated with their studies. The majority of both starters and completers believed:
 - they had made, or expected to make, good use of the skills and knowledge they have learned on their course in their current job;
 - their employer's attitude towards them was more positive because of their part-time course; and
 - their course had helped them take on more responsibilities in their current job.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Part-time students and government policy

Part-time undergraduate students have tended to be on the periphery of higher education (HE), despite the fact that in 2007/08 they made up over a third of the UK HE undergraduate population (Mason, 2010). Concern has focused on full-time students, and especially those entering higher education straight from school. Arguably, one of the most obvious manifestations of this was the scant reference to part-time students and mature students in the government's 2003 White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) and the ensuing legislation - the 2004 Higher Education Act. The only passing references to part-time students in the White Paper were in relation to the need for more flexible provision to meet the skills gap. However, there was no discussion about what is needed to ensure greater flexibility of provision, nor any examination of the part-time student population. There was some discussion of student support for part-time students as a means of encouraging greater flexibility. This support was subsequently reformed following concerns about the impact on part-time provision of variable tuition fees for full-time students.

Nor were part-time students mentioned at all in the government's follow up to the White Paper on "*Widening Participation in Higher Education*" (DfES, 2003a). It seems ironic that key government documents on the future of higher education and widening participation ignore this important and growing sector of higher education, which is essential to an economy based on lifelong learning. This did not go unnoticed by the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee (2002-03 HC 425-1:p49) who observed:

‘The White Paper is principally concerned with young, full-time students. The needs of those who fall outside that category must be properly taken into account if the higher education sector is to provide truly improved access’.

Neither of these two documents discussed the provision of career advice for full or part-time students, unlike the Dearing Report. However, both documents highlighted the importance of providing information to inform students' initial choice of university and course – an area not usually covered by career services within universities.

More recently, the policy rhetoric surrounding part-time students and part-time provision has shifted. For instance, Universities UK, the main organisation representing the interests of university Vice-Chancellors, launched a programme of research on part-time students and part-time study. The research mapped the part-time student population and part-time provision (Ramsden and Brown 2006). It also explored part-time students' attitudes and experiences of part-time study and its costs (Callender et al 2006), highlighting the inequities in the funding of part- and full-time students.

In addition, several official documents and research reports have suggested that the demand for part-time study is likely to grow in the near future, especially at the undergraduate level. For example, meeting Leitch's (2006) 2020 target of 40 per cent or more 19-65 year olds achieving a Level 4 qualification, is predicated on part-time provision. In particular, the report argues for more flexible and responsive provision and greater employer investment in HE, especially workforce development. The report also recommends a new universal careers service for young people and adults.

Two University UK reports (Ramsden and Brown 2008a, b) on ‘*The future size and shape of the HE sector in the UK*’ predict that by 2027 part-time undergraduate enrolments will increase at a much faster rate than full-timers, and the mix between full and part-time students could shift substantially towards part-time primarily because of the demographic downturn in 18 year old school leavers. Similarly, a National Audit Office (2008) report called for more part-time undergraduate courses to facilitate the widening participation agenda, while another government-funded study (Pollard et al 2008) of working adults highlighted their desire for part-time study in evenings and week-ends at a university close to home.

More significantly, with the onset of the economic downturn and severe constraints on higher education expenditure, part-time provision became more prominent in the Labour government’s discourse on higher education and its even greater emphasis on the role of higher education in meeting the high levels skill needed for a competitive economy and economic recovery. Part-time study, therefore, was seen as part of the Labour government’s wider skills strategy for re-skilling and up-skill the workforce, and as a vehicle for encouraging greater employer involvement in the funding of higher education. The perceived value of part-time provision lay in its delivery of vocational courses and qualifications at the expense of liberal arts and continuing education provision. This was well illustrated by a series of policy changes marking this shift in policy priorities. Most recently, it is evident in the Labour government’s withdrawal of funds from universities for those students whose higher education qualification aim was equivalent or lower than their entry qualification (ELQ). The Labour government promoted the withdrawal of ELQ funding as part of their widening participation agenda. However, the main plank of its policy was to look to employers to co-fund courses and programmes of study as a means to enable, and ensure that universities prioritised the recruitment of students within the workforce without a Level 4 qualification or Bachelor’s degree. As a House of Commons Select Committee commented, the ‘ELQ debate can be seen as a surrogate debate about the involvement of employers funding higher education’ (House of Commons 2008). The ELQ ruling, which came into force in 2008/9, has had a disproportionate impact on part-time provision.

Arguable, therefore, the Labour government was not particularly committed to part-time study and lifelong learning. Rather part-time study was perceived as just one instrument in the government’s toolbox for: creating a more flexible and diverse higher education sector with less ‘conventional’ undergraduate provision [three-year full-time degree courses]; promoting student choice; and broadening or widening higher education participation. Part-time study was also a means of reducing the higher education budget because it was considered a cheaper alternative to full-time provision.

These issues were captured in *Higher Ambitions: The future of universities in a knowledge economy* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2009), which was the last major document on higher education the Labour government produced prior to the May 2010 election. The document, therefore, neatly encapsulates Labour’s thinking on higher education at a time of fiscal constraint, and its rhetoric is worthy of exposition because, unlike previous government documents it engages with part-time study although in a very instrumental manner. Moreover, *Higher Ambitions* forms the policy backdrop for the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, launched at the end of 2009, to reform student financial support and an issue discussed in the current study.

The executive summary of *Higher Ambitions* (BIS 2009 p 8-11) pronounced that:

‘In order to attract a greater diversity of students, more part-time study, more vocationally-based foundation degrees, more work-based study and more study whilst living at home must be made available. This is a core aim of these proposals, and our wider skills strategy (p 8).....The next phase of expansion in higher education will hinge on providing opportunities for different types of people to study in a wider range of ways than in the past. The focus will therefore be on a greater diversity of

models of learning: part-time, work-based, foundation degrees, and studying whilst at home. (p9)..... We will give priority to growing a diverse range of models of higher education. These include options such as part-time and workplace-based courses aimed particularly at mature students or those from non-conventional backgrounds’ (p11).

The document, when discussing the need for more flexible routes into higher education, expanded on these points suggesting that:

‘Full-time honours degrees will continue to be a popular mode of study over the next 15 years. But we can expect part-time study to increase, and it is important that part-time provision is not seen by universities as something to be bolted on to a core model of full-time teaching. Part-time study can be organised around work, reducing student support costs, building practical employability skills, and fostering links between students and their employers. It is vital, therefore, that we have appropriate provision for flexible study’ (BIS 2009 para 34 p. 37).

It continued:

‘We will give priority to growing a diverse range of models of higher education most attractive to non-traditional students. These include options such as part-time and workplace-based courses aimed particularly at mature students or those from non-conventional backgrounds. Adults in the labour market who do not have higher education qualifications deserve a second chance to improve their own and their family’s economic position’ (BIS 2009 para 36 p. 37).

Wider and fairer access to higher education in *Higher Ambitions* was couched in terms of both social justice and economic success, but with a stronger emphasis on the latter. Thus, higher skills were deemed important because they influenced life chances and earnings potential, and consequently, ‘.....wider and fairer access to higher education is a question of basic social justice’ (BIS 2009 para 1, p 24). However, Labour’s wider access agenda had another, and more prominent, rationale: ‘The need to raise skills levels in the UK economy....[and] develop the potential of all our people’ (BIS 2009 para 4, p 25). In turn, this created challenges to develop ‘new pathways into higher education throughout professional lives and in a way that reflects the challenge of studying alongside full or part-time work’ (BIS 2009 para 4, p 25).

Specifically, *Higher Ambitions* advocated that:

‘We ...aim to widen participation through the expansion of the number of adults at university and by promoting a broader range of course models alongside the three year degree.....In order to attract a greater diversity of students, more part-time study, more vocationally-based foundation degrees, more work-based study, more fast-track degrees, and more study at home must be available. This improved flexibility of study will help those who have previously found it difficult to access higher education, such as parents with young children, to improve their skills’ (BIS 2009 para 8 p 26).

Increasing and widening participation in higher education were not positioned at the very heart of *Higher Ambitions*, unlike earlier Labour government higher education policy documents and initiatives (Naidoo and Callender, 2000). Neither were the economic arguments for widening access integrated with liberal ideas of the functions of higher education and lifelong learning. Nor was wider access billed as playing a significant role in overcoming social exclusion. For part-time students in particular, Labour’s approach to widening participation and fair access in *Higher Ambitions*, therefore, was not driven primarily by an ideological commitment to either social justice or lifelong learning. Instead,

the drivers for change in relation to part-time students, along with the Labour government's rhetoric about part-time study, were dictated nearly exclusively by the needs of the economy, and reducing the higher education budget. At the time of writing, it is not known whether the coalition government will adopt a different approach to part-time students and part-time higher education.

Issues concerning information, advice and guidance were also covered in *Higher Ambitions*. However, the discussion focused exclusively on the needs of young people in terms of encouraging progression into higher education and raising young people's aspirations. Thus despite the importance of adult learners and part-time study within *Higher Ambitions*, their need for careers information, advice, and guidance was left untouched.

Career services in Higher Education

Career guidance services in HE are well developed and established compared with other OECD countries (Watts and Van Esbroeck, 1998). Unlike other career guidance provision within the education sector, there is no statutory obligation for universities to provide such services. However, the vast majority have well established services some of which are provided through dedicated Careers Services, some via academic departments, and some through integrated student services. The nature of the services provided, vary considerably. They include information provision; personal advice and guidance; access to self help techniques; career fairs; employers interviews; job placement; interview skills coaching and broader career management skills; employability skills; and curriculum-based careers education.

The most detailed review of HE's career service was conducted by Sir Martin Harris. The report *Developing Modern Higher Education Career Services* (DfEE, 2001) made 41 recommendations, directed to the HE sector as a whole, institutions, career services, and other bodies. The report set out the need to deliver efficient, effective, and economical careers education, information and advice within HE. In addition, it recognised the implications for the career service of the increasing proportion of students from 'non-traditional backgrounds'. The report highlighted the need for institutions to identify such students who were likely to require specific help and guidance.

‘Such diversity calls for imaginative responses from career education, information, and guidance services. Mature students, part-time students and students studying at a distance, as well as those with particular domestic or personal circumstances, may need different forms of help from ‘traditional students’. (DfEE, 2001:14)

Similarly, the Quality Assurance Agency recognised the expansion and diversification of higher education, and called for career education, information, and guidance that meet “the needs of students from diverse backgrounds and students engaged in different modes of study, including part-time and distance learning.” (QAA, 2001:5)

Subsequent policy and reports, however, have not been particularly concerned with part-time students and distance learners. On the whole, they have tended to focus on a narrower definition of ‘non-traditional’ students, especially on young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds as part of a social inclusion and widening participation agenda (Rolfe and Nadeem, 2007). For example, a recent study (Morey et al, 2003), commissioned by HECSU on how careers services might enhance the employability of students from non-traditional backgrounds pays scant attention to issues specifically facing part-time and distance learning students, and demonstrates a limited understanding of the part-time student population. In the report, part-time students are conflated with mature students. Some of the concerns of these two student groups may overlap, and many of the recommendations proposed would benefit part-time students. However, part-time students may have divergent

and particular career service needs, especially those already working full-time, and in relation to access to student financial support.

The Harris Review has led to a range of changes and some progress has been made on implementing the recommendations as part of a modernising agenda (UUK, 2002). More recently, the emphasis in post-Harris provision has been on prioritising quality assurance and standards (Maguire, 2005). However, despite this recognition of a more diverse student population with differing career service needs, the model underpinning most career service provision within HE remains one informed by the ‘typical graduate’ - young and single who entered university straight after leaving school.

Existing research on part-time students’ career decision-making and career development

Part of the HECSU study included a literature view on part-time students and career making and has been published separately (Callender and Feldman, 2009). This explored existing studies on part-time students. It concluded, just as part-time students tend to be overlooked in government higher education policy, and often in CEIG services within HE – so they have been overlooked by researchers exploring the myriad of complex issues impacting on career making. Compared to full-time students, part-time students are under-researched.

The review brought together two main bodies of literature, with many works not fitting easily into either. On the one hand there is the social and education policy and sociological literature which looks at government and institutional policies towards part-time students, and the aspirations, experiences of such students and the benefits or otherwise to them of having studied. A second body of literature was reviewed relating to careers guidance.

Within the first body of literature the review has identified an important conceptual and practical difficulty in the literature on part-time students in HE. A general neglect of the importance and diversity of part-time students, linked to a preoccupation with widening participation, has resulted in much discussion of part-time students being subsumed under other headings. Thus “part-time” is often added to descriptions of students as diverse as, non-traditional, working-class, mature, or having low entry qualifications.

This has the effect of seeing part-time students as just another disadvantaged group within the literature on widening participation. “Part-time” ceases to be seen as a mode of study, but becomes an attribute of students. However, even where part-time students are included among these groups, the *specific* barriers they face, and, even more, the *different* needs they may have, are often not specified.

In recent years, much of the careers guidance literature reflects a preoccupation with adapting careers services to new circumstances, including especially, non-traditional HE students and new labour market conditions, as well as new systems of student funding which means that many full-time as well as part-time students work during their courses. Careers Service departments have also traditionally been marginal to the main emphasis of universities, and, in response to a much stronger emphasis on employment in HE policy, part of their discussion of adaptation also involves their own repositioning within the institutions.

The literature reflects the profession’s concern to address student diversity, and many reports recognise that part-time and mature students are often not catered for. However, like the more sociological and social policy literature, with some exceptions, they also tend to subsume part-time students under other characteristics, particularly mature or disadvantaged, without addressing in detail their different needs from those of full-time students. These relate, above all, to the fact that part-time students are predominantly already in full-time employment, and therefore may have needs for advice with career advancement or career change, rather than first introductions to the labour market.

There clearly are an increasing number of studies concerned with different aspects of part-time students in HE. The complexity and variability of the students, their courses, their situations, and background can make comparison between them as difficult as between them and full-time students. The review attempted to disentangle some of the many issues that the studies in the review dealt with, drawing attention not just to the findings but to the gaps that still exist in our knowledge. In particular more needs to be known about part-time students' experience of study in different situations, the impact that part-time study has had on their lives, and of how career decisions are made and assisted in the course of their studies. Further studies are an important means of encouraging a more nuanced approach to part-time students in HE. We need to differentiate more clearly the varying needs and trajectories of different groups among them and use this knowledge to challenge the undifferentiated assumptions embedded in the concept of the non-traditional student, to which part-time students are too often confined.

While all the studies highlighted in the literature review, form a useful backdrop to this study, none of them systematically explore in detail the career decision-making and career development of part-time students, nor the role of employers. It is against this background that this programme of longitudinal research aims to improve our understanding of the career learning and decision making of part-time students and graduates and the career guidance interventions required to support these.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the research

The overall aims of the research are:

- to collect data on career intentions and ambitions for part-time students;
- to investigate employment and training outcomes for part-time students;
- to assess the impact of the mode of study on employment and training outcomes;
- to collect data on students' career development/learning and decision-making; and
- to investigate the views of employers of part-time students.

At this stage of the research we have only conducted the first wave of survey data collection, hence this report focuses on career intentions and ambitions and career development/learning and decision-making.

Employers' views on part-time students are reported separately (Mason and Hopkin Forthcoming).

1.3 Methodology

The research reported is based on analysis of data collected from online and telephone surveys of part-time learners in either their first or final year of a course of HE study, across a total of 29 Universities, conducted in 2008. For further details see the Technical Appendix.

A second phase of the research will follow both cohorts of students in 2011, three years after the initial survey. The inclusion of first year and final year students means that the three-year project will yield information about student views over the duration of their course and information about how student experiences shape their career choices and progression in the three years after completion. As first degree courses, for instance, take on average five years for students to complete on a part-time basis, a model in which only first year students were

followed up would need to be undertaken over a period of up to eight years for progress over a three year post-course period to be evaluated, and therefore the two cohort approach was preferred.

The population of students that the survey was designed to represent covered those studying part-time, including those studying on block release or studying during the evenings only. Those studying full-time for less than 24 weeks in the academic year were also eligible for inclusion. It covered home students, domiciled in England, Wales, Scotland, or Northern Ireland and focused on those studying towards one of the following types of qualification:

- First undergraduate degree
- Foundation degree
- HNC
- HND

They also had to be studying towards a qualification in one of the following subject areas (JACS Subject Code in brackets):

- Engineering (H)
- Technologies (J)
- Social Studies(L)
- Law (M)
- Business and Administrative Studies (N)
- Education (X)

The survey data was weighted to correct for differential response rates by qualification aim, subject of study and age of the student. Our analysis is largely descriptive, but for some key questions we undertook some multivariate analyses to determine the key factors associated with survey responses, the results of the multivariate analysis are reported in the appendix tables.

1.4 Outline of the report

The rest of this chapter looks at the characteristics of the students surveyed and the courses they are studying. Given the split cohort design of the survey this compares our starter sample (students in their first year of study) with our completer sample (students in their final year of study). Chapter 2 focuses on the reasons students decided to study, why they decided to study part-time, why they chose their particular course and the benefits they hoped to gain from their period of study. Chapter 3 puts study in a career context highlighting the extent to which study was career related and how strongly students viewed their career planning and whether that had changed through the course of study. Chapter 4 turns to the use of career services both in terms of gathering information before studying in order to make an informed decision about whether to study, what to study and where to study, as well as use of career services whilst studying. Chapter 5 considers the cost of study looking at whether students looked at information on financial support before studying, how much tuition or course fees were payable and who paid these fees. It also considers other course-related expenditure and the extent to which students received government financial support. Chapter 6 is focussed on employer support, whether students knew they would get help with tuition or course fees before starting to study, whether they received other forms of support in terms of paid or unpaid time off work to study and whether they received money to cover other course-related

expenses. Finally Chapter 7 considers employment changes arising from part-time study looking at expected changes reported by starters and realised changes reported by completers.

1.5 The characteristics of the students surveyed

Tables 1.1 to 1.4 provide some basic information about the students included in the survey. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 examine student, course, and institutional characteristics by whether the student was in the starter or completer cohort and Tables 1.3 and 1.4 look briefly at how some of the key characteristics of students relate to each other.

Table 1.1 shows that most students surveyed were:

- aged 25 years or over at the start of the 2007/08 academic year;
- female;
- White;
- in paid full-time employment;
- working in managerial and professional occupations; and
- from a family where a partner, child or parent held an Higher Education (HE) qualification.

In addition, roughly one-third of students had dependent children and more than a half were either married, living with a partner or civil partner. The majority of students had household income below £50,000 per annum with more than one-third with household income below £25,000 per annum. More than 40 per cent of students surveyed already held a level 4 or 5 qualification

Comparing the percentages in the starter and completer cohorts we find only small differences in the characteristics of the students reported in Table 1.1. A higher percentage of the completer cohort (74%) was aged 25 or over than the starter cohort (69%); this may simply reflect the ageing process, such that some students in the completer cohort were aged below 25 when they started their course.

There were also a slightly lower percentage of students from low-income households in the completer cohort (33%) than the starter cohort (36%) and correspondingly a higher percentage of students from high-income households in the completer cohort (20%) than the starter cohort (16%) which may reflect higher course drop out rates for students from low-income households. Similarly there were also a slightly lower percentage of lone parent students in the completer cohort (8%) than the starter cohort (11%) which may be related to course drop out.

Some 42% of students already held at least a First/Bachelor's degree, and so essentially were re-skilling. The remainder did not have a higher education qualification and were studying to raise their existing qualification level. Around four in ten had A Levels or equivalent on entry to their current course while one in ten had a GCSE qualification or below, or had no qualifications at all.

Table 1.1 Student characteristics by whether a starter or completer

Characteristic	Starter (N=1876)	Completer (N=1828)	All	
	%	%	%	N
Age at 31st August 2007¹				
Under 25 years	29	24	27	992
25 years or over	69	74	72	2653
Missing	1	2	2	59
Gender				
Female	61	59	60	2230
Male	39	41	40	1470
Missing	0	+	+	5
Family type				
Single with no children	33	34	33	1240
Lone parent	11	8	9	334
Couple with no children	22	23	23	837
Couple with children	34	34	34	1268
Missing	+	1	1	25
Ethnicity				
White	88	86	87	3227
Other	11	12	11	417
Missing	1	2	2	60
Current economic status²				
Full-time paid employment	74	73	73	2710
Part-time paid employment	17	17	17	626
Not in paid employment	9	11	10	368
Gross annual income³				
< £25,000	36	33	35	1279
≥£25,000 & <£50,000	33	34	33	1233
≥£50,000	16	20	18	668
Missing/refused	15	13	14	523
Social class of highest earner				
Managerial and professional	56	55	56	2038
Intermediate	22	23	23	831
Routine, manual and unemployed	9	9	9	314
Missing	13	13	13	479
Highest existing qualification⁴				
Level 4/5	41	43	42	1554
Level 3	38	39	38	1416
Level 1/2/entry or none	20	18	19	704
Missing	1	1	1	30

Partner/children/parent HE qual.				
No HE qualifications	44	44	44	1613
Hold HE qualifications	54	54	54	2005
Missing/don't know	3	2	2	86
All	100	100	100	3704

Base: All students

Notes: + indicates a percentage that is greater than zero, but less than 0.5

1 Age calculated using full date of birth. In 73 cases (68 weighted) where day of birth was missing it was set to 15. In 85 cases (73 weighted) where month of birth was missing it was set to 6 (or 7 where day of birth was 31). Where year of birth was missing age is missing.

2 Students were able to select multiple economic groups. This derived mutually grouping prioritizes economic status in the following order: full-time paid employment, part-time paid employment, not in paid employment – including voluntary work.

3 Individual income if single / widowed / divorced / missing marital status. Household income if married / cohabiting / civil partnership.

4 Level 4 = 1st Degree/Bachelor's Degree or above; Level 3 = A Levels or equivalent; Level 2= GCSE or equivalent or below

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

1.6 About the course

The majority of surveyed students were:

- studying for a first degree qualification;
- not studying at the Open University; and
- attending a Higher Education Institution (HEI).

Table 1.2 also shows the range of subjects covered in our sample with 27% of students studying Business and 10% studying Law. Also shown are figures for the intensity of study based on the reporting of credit points. More than two-fifths of students were not able to report the number of credit points they were taking in the academic year and a further 15% reported points in line with study more than 100 per cent of a full-time equivalent. For those able to report credit points in line with part-time study roughly 10% reported they were studying at less than half of a full-time equivalent and 23% reported study of between 50 and 59% of a full-time equivalent.

By way of comparison, Mason (2009) analysis of HESA data for UK domiciled students in 2007/08, found that 48% of part-time First degree students were studying at less than half of a full-time equivalent with corresponding figures for Foundation degree students and Higher National students of 24%. Figures from our survey were First degree 11%, Foundation degree 6%, and Higher National 15%, with 36%, 48%, and 64% of students respectively unable to report the number of credit points they were taking. Clearly our measure of intensity of study is far from perfect reflecting a lack of understanding among students about the number of credits they are taking.

Again there are some differences between the percentages in the starter and completer cohorts for the characteristics considered in Table 1.2. Most notable is a much higher percentage of First degree completers (79%) than First degree starters (64%) and correspondingly lower percentage of Foundation degree completers (14%) than Foundation degree starters (26%).

This may in part be due to an expansion in the number of students undertaking Foundation degrees over the period since which many of our completer sample started their qualification.

There are also some differences by other course and institutional characteristics that may in part be related to the qualification studied and are difficult to interpret, but could also be related to differential course drop out rates.

Table 1.2 Course and institution characteristics by starter or completer

Characteristic	Starter (N=1876)	Completer (N=1828)	All	
	%	%	%	N
Qualification aim¹				
First degree	64	79	71	2646
Foundation degree	26	14	20	748
Higher National (HNC/HND)	9	7	8	310
Subject				
Engineering/technology	18	21	19	711
Social science	24	30	27	1001
Law	10	9	10	360
Business	27	22	24	905
Education	22	17	20	726
Studying at the Open University?				
OU student	19	20	20	725
Not OU student	81	80	80	2979
Intensity of study				
Less than 50 per cent FTE	8	12	10	369
50-59 per cent	23	24	23	857
60-74 per cent	6	5	5	201
75-99 per cent	5	6	5	197
100 per cent or more	13	18	15	554
Unknown	45	36	41	1502
Type of institution				
HEI	80	90	85	3149
FE college linked to HEI	18	8	13	483
FE college not linked to HEI	2	1	1	43
FE college unknown HEI link	+	+	+	15
Unknown	+	+	+	14
All	100	100	100	3704

Base: All students

Notes: + indicates a percentage that is greater than zero, but less than 0.5

¹ Qualification currently studying for (N=3579) or very/quite likely to study for (N=125)

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

It is also useful to highlight some of the key relationships between some of the student and course characteristics. Table 1.3 shows differences in gender in terms of current economic status and subject of study. This clearly highlights the predominance of female part-time employment such that 23% of female students were in part-time employment compared with just 8% of male students.

There are also different gender patterns by subject of study most clearly demonstrated by the fact that only 5% of female students surveyed were studying engineering/technology compared with 41% of male students. The balance is more in favour of women for Social sciences (32% of women compared with 20% of men) and Education (28% of women compared with 7% of men)

Table 1.3 Current economic status and subject of study by gender

Characteristic	Female (N=2230)	Male (N=1470)	All ¹	
	%	%	%	N
Current economic status				
Full-time paid employment	64	80	71	2614
Part-time paid employment	23	8	17	626
Not in paid employment	13	11	12	459
Subject				
Engineering/technology	5	41	19	711
Social science	32	20	27	998
Law	10	10	10	360
Business	26	22	24	904
Education	28	7	20	726
All	100	100	100	3699

Base: All students

Notes: + indicates a percentage that is greater than zero, but less than 0.5

1 Excludes the five students who did not report their gender

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Table 1.4 shows how household income relates to qualification aim and family type. Here 11% of students from low-income households were studying for a Higher National qualification compared with just 5% of students from high-income households.

More obviously single students were more likely to be from low-income households than students in couples. Here 64% of students from low-income households were single with no children compared with 3% of students from high-income households and 18% of students from low-income households were lone parents compared with 1% of students from high-income households.

Table 1.4 Qualification aim and family type by household income

Characteristic	Less than £25,000 (N=1279)	£25,000 - £50,000 (N=1233)	£50,000 or more (N=668)	All ¹	
	%		%	%	N
Qualification aim					
First degree	68	73	76	72	2289
Foundation degree	20	19	19	20	622
Higher National	11	8	5	9	272
Family type					
Single with no children	64	21	3	34	1096
Lone parent	18	5	1	9	298
Couple with no children	6	30	40	22	713
Couple with children	12	44	57	34	1069
Missing	+	+	0	+	5
All	100		100	100	3181

Base: All students

Notes: + indicates a percentage that is greater than zero, but less than 0.5

1 Excludes the 523 students who did not report household income

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

2 REASONS FOR STUDYING

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter we focus on students' motivations for study. Existing literature on part-time students' motivations rarely distinguish between why students chose to study part-time rather than full-time, and what triggers their decision to return to study and/or to study. There is a difference between the reasons part-time students give for wanting to study, and their reasons for wanting to study part-time. Of the studies which have explored the latter question, not all have explored the former and vice versa.

The longitudinal study by Feinstein et al. (2007) retrospectively surveyed 3000 graduates of part-time degrees. It explored the characteristics of part-time mature students at Birkbeck University of London and at the Open University in order to find out why the graduates chose to study, what economic and social benefits they gained, and whether there was a relationship between the characteristics of graduates, the reasons they gave for studying, the types of courses they studied, and the benefits they experienced afterwards. However, the survey does not address the question of why they chose to study *part-time*. A limitation of this study is that both motivations and benefits were elicited *after* graduation so that respondents may have reported similar reasons for studying and outcomes of study. Of the students surveyed, Feinstein et al. found that the most common positive responses to suggested reasons for studying were interest in the subject, self-development, and to gain a recognised qualification (over 80% for each reason at both institutions)¹. The authors carried out factor analysis on motivations and found that enjoyment, progression, and personal development were more likely to be reported than finding a new job, improving their current job, and employment requirements. Enjoyment was more important among Birkbeck students who wanted to meet people, presumably reflecting attendance rather than distance systems of learning, with concomitant opportunities for socialising.

Further cluster analysis of motivations showed that "enjoyment" reasons were most popular among students who were not funded by their employers. Such students were most often clustered in "improving the current job" rather than in "changing job". At the same time, students who were carers when they began their studies were very motivated by employment reasons.

Schuller et al.'s earlier study in Scotland of 556 part-time students found similar personal reasons for studying, such as interest in the subject or personal development, as well as vocational reasons, particularly for enhancing their promotion prospects or to protect them from redundancy (Schuller et al. 1999). However, like Feinstein et al. this study also did not explore why these students chose to study part-time.

Callender et al. (2006 (a)) investigated both why students wanted to study and why they wished to study part-time in a similar sized (2654) sample to that of Feinstein et al. However, they used a broader sample survey of current part-time students from old and new universities and HEIs, the Open University and FE colleges. The reasons given for studying were fairly similar to those in the study by Feinstein et al. In the analysis of the distribution of preferences, Callender et al. also included the prior level of qualification and respondents' intensity of study, namely what proportion of a full-time course students were undertaking. They found that interest and gaining qualifications and skills were not mutually exclusive, though instrumental reasons were the most important, particularly for those with low or no

¹ Only 71% of Birkbeck graduates gave getting a recognised qualification as a motivation for studying.

prior qualifications. Similarly, Berker and colleagues' (2003) study of employees who work full-time and study at undergraduate level part-time, in the US, reported that 85% of those surveyed regarded gaining skills to advance in their current job or future career as an important consideration. However, 89% also reported that personal enrichment was an important factor. Yorke et al (2008) also found that the main reasons students were studying was to improve their capacity in their current job and for personal satisfaction.

Callender et al (2006 (a)) found the reasons for part-time study were overwhelmingly financial; 82% said they could not afford to give up their job. Family commitments were also very significant especially for lone parents. Nearly 2/3 of the sample found part-time study "more convenient", especially distance learners, students over 40, and those with dependent children. Part-time provision is thus especially important for those who cannot move away to study either because of employment or family responsibilities.

Yorke et al (2008) confirmed Callender et al's findings and found that for students studying towards a Bachelor's degree the most important reasons for studying part-time were: so that they could study alongside other commitments; they liked the flexibility; and they could not afford the full-time fees.

Stratton et al. (2004) challenge the view that direct financial considerations are paramount in deciding on the mode of study. In a study of a sample of part- and full-time US college enrollers, they found that age and contextual economic factors especially the local unemployment rate rather than cost considerations *per se* affected the choice of mode of study once the decision to study had been taken. Older students and those in areas with lower rates of unemployment were more likely to decide to study part-time. Women with school age children were slightly more likely to choose full-time study. It would seem that for women, marriage and the age of children were more likely to affect the decision to study rather than the mode of study. Though Stratton et al.'s methodology may be replicable in the UK, the demographic and institutional differences between the two countries may make their findings less significant in the UK.

Fuller (2001) focuses on disadvantaged adults returning to study part-time. She argues that such students' motivation to return to study reflects the opportunity to realise aspirations which are not narrowly vocational. They see HE as a resource for their labour market position in the face of uncertainty, or to broaden career options not just through the acquisition of skills but also through personal growth (Fuller, 2001).

Nearly all studies that consider motivations to study consider them as attributes of atomised individuals. However, Schuller et al. (1999), also suggest that the motivation to study is not easy to separate from the decision to do so. The latter may be much more collective, with family encouragement playing a significant role. Similarly, some students have described being encouraged by employers to take an HE course. Schuller et al. suggest that some students experience this as pressure, and feel they could not get promotion without higher level qualifications.

The findings from this earlier research informed the questions asked in the current survey. In particular, students were asked about both their reasons for studying, and their reasons for studying part-time rather than full-time. In addition, there was an emphasis on the factors triggering students' decision to study, which includes familial factors as well as instrumental drivers.

This chapter, therefore, covers what first made students think about starting their course; why they decided to study part-time rather than full-time; why they chose their course; the benefits they hope to gain from studying and whether study was a formal requirement from employers.

2.2 Initial triggers to study

Students were asked “What triggered your decision to study? What *first* made you think about starting your current course?”. They gave a variety of reasons, which fall into four broad areas:

- Needing a HE qualification;
- Wanting to do something useful/different;
- Employment-related; and
- Family or friend related.

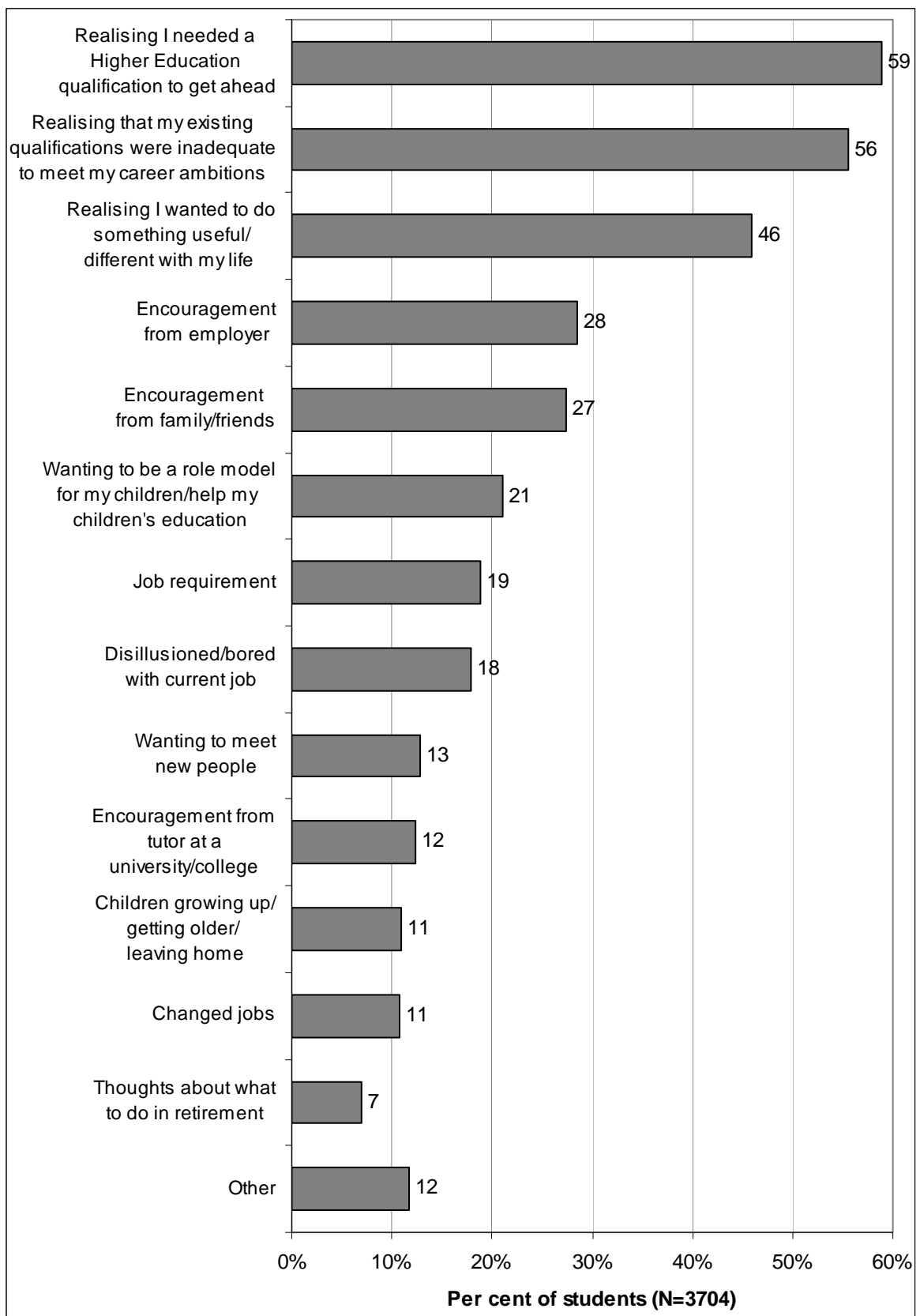
The most common responses related to needing an HE qualification to progress (Figure 2.1). More than half the students reported their initial trigger was “realising I need a Higher Education qualification to get ahead” (59%) or “realising that my existing qualifications were inadequate to meet my career ambitions (56%).

Nearly half the respondents (46%) reported the initial trigger as “realising I wanted to do something useful/different in my life” indicating some dissatisfaction with their current situation.

Students’ employment was clearly an important factor for many students with more than one-quarter of them (28%) citing encouragement from employer as an initial trigger. Other employment related triggers were also cited, with nearly one-fifth of students reporting that the reason they started their course was that it was a job requirement (19%) or that they were disillusioned/bored with their current job (18%).

The influence of family and friends was also important, and so was the desire to be a role model for students’ children. More than a quarter of students reported that encouragement from family and friends was the initial trigger that made them think about starting their course (27%), whilst overall more than one-fifth of student reported that “wanting to be a role model for my children / help my children’s education” (21%).

Figure 2.1 Triggers which made students *first* think about starting their current course



Base: All students

Note: 4 students did not report a trigger that first made them think about starting their course

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Most commonly reported triggers

For the three most common triggers we look at how they vary by some key student and course characteristics (Table 2.1). Differences between the starter and completer cohorts were small, but there were some larger differences by other characteristics. Students in paid employment were more likely to report that their existing qualifications were inadequate to meet their career ambitions (57%) compared with students who were not in paid employment before they started their course of study (48%). These students were more likely to report that the initial trigger for study was “realising I wanted to do something useful/different with my life” (55%) compared with students in part-time paid employment (50%) and full-time paid employment (43%).

Foundation degree students were the most career orientated with 66% reporting “realising I need a Higher Education qualification to get ahead” and 60% reporting “realising that my existing qualifications were inadequate to meet my career ambitions” as their initial trigger compared with 57% and 55% for First degree students and 60% and 52% for Higher National students. First degree students were more likely to be studying to change their lives.

There was also a lot of variation by subject of study. Business and Education students were the most likely to report career-related reasons and Law students the most likely to report that they wanted to do something useful/different with their life.

Table 2.1 The most commonly reported triggers by key student and course characteristics

	Realising I needed a Higher Education qualification to get ahead	Realising that my existing qualifications were inadequate to meet my career ambitions	Realising I wanted to do something useful/different with my life
Starter or Completer			
Starter	58	55	45
Completer	60	57	47
Economic status immediately before starting current course			
Full time paid employment	59	57	43
Part time paid employment	58	57	50
Not in paid employment	57	48	55
Qualification aim			
First degree	57	55	47
Foundation degree	66	60	43
Higher National	60	52	41
Subject			
Engineering/technology	59	54	39
Social sciences	54	55	50
Law	42	44	56
Business	65	60	44
Education	67	57	45
All	59	56	46

Base: All students N= 3,704

Note: 4 students did not report a trigger that first made them think about starting their course

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Employment-related triggers

The responses reported in Figure 2.1 are for all students, so all the numbers in the Figure relate to the same group of students. However, for questions about their employment it is sensible to consider students employment status before they started their course. These are shown in Table 2.2. Here we find that students who were not in paid employment before starting studying were less likely to report employment related triggers than students who were in paid employment. This was true for each of the four employment-related triggers.

Employers were much more likely to encourage students in full-time employment, rather than part-time employment, to study. One-third of students in full-time employment reported encouragement from their employer as an initial trigger to think about studying compared with roughly one-quarter of students in part-time employment. Differences between students in full-time and part-time employment in the other employment related triggers were much smaller.

Table 2.2 Employment related triggers which made students *first* think about starting their current course by whether employed full-time or part-time

Percentage of students reporting employment related triggers					
	All in paid Employment	Full-time paid employment	Part-time paid employment	Not in paid employment	All Students
Trigger					
Realising that my existing qualifications were inadequate to meet my career ambitions	57	57	57	48	56
Encouragement from employer	31	33	24	9	28
Job requirement	19	19	19	17	19
Disillusioned / bored with current job	19	18	21	11	18
Changed jobs	11	11	12	10	11
Base	3252	2720	531	452	3704

Base: All students

Note: 4 students did not report a trigger that first made them think about starting their course

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Children related triggers

In a similar way it is useful to consider the triggers relating to children for those students who report having dependent children. In Table 2.3 we look at the prevalence of these responses by whether the student had dependent children and by the age of their youngest child. More than 40 per cent of the students in the sample had dependent children and for these students; 36% of them reported “wanting to be a role model for my children / help my children’s education” as an initial trigger to thinking about studying; much higher than the 21% of all students in the survey. This trigger was more prevalent for students whose youngest dependent child was aged less than 11 (40%) than students whose youngest dependent child was aged 16 or more (23%).

Roughly one-fifth of students with dependent children reported that their initial trigger that made them first think about their course was “children growing up / getting older / leaving home”. Again there were differences by age of the youngest child, this time with an opposite trend to the role model concept discussed above. In this case the older the child, the more likely the student reported this trigger, which is completely in line with the nature of the question surrounding ageing children.

Table 2.3 Children related triggers which made students *first* think about starting their current course by whether have dependent children and age of dependent children and by gender

Percentage of students reporting children related triggers						
	Students with dependent children	Youngest Child aged less than 11	Youngest Child aged 11-16	Youngest Child aged 16 or more	No dependent children	All Students
Trigger: Wanting to be a role model for my children / help my children’s education						
All	36	40	34	23	9	21
Female	39	46	36	*	9	24
Male	31	31	28	*	9	17
Trigger: Children growing up / getting older / leaving home						
All	19	13	26	31	5	11
Female	23	16	33	*	7	15
Male	9	8	6	*	2	5
Base (All)	1607	982	416	196	2079	3686

Base: All students

Note: 4 students did not report a trigger that first made them think about starting their course

* indicates sample size too small for robust estimates

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

2.3 Why students chose to study part-time

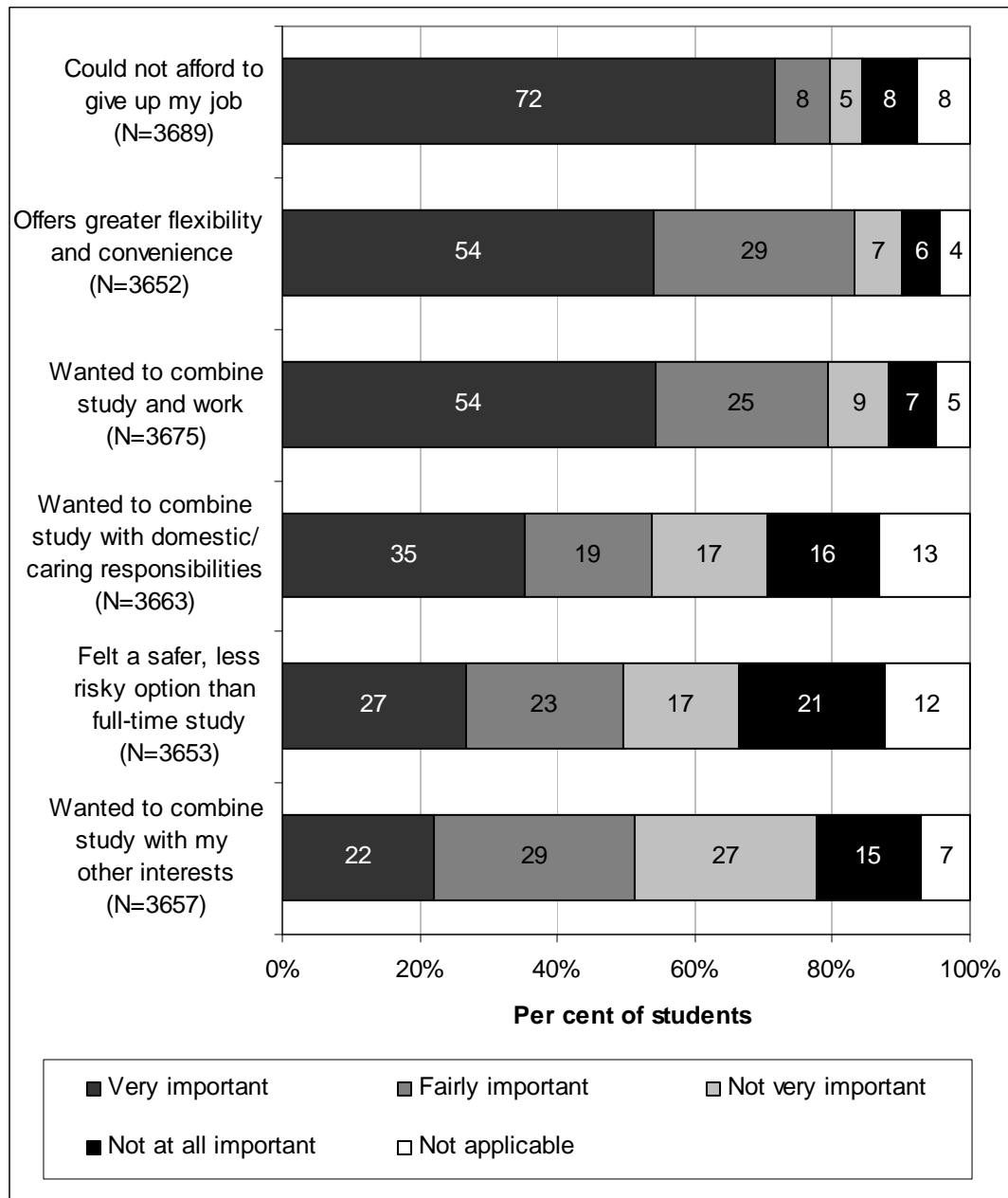
Some students may be able to choose whether to study full- or part-time, so for these students it is important to understand why they chose part-time study. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of six possible reasons for studying part-time (Figure 2.2). The majority of students rated reasons related to affordability and flexibility as very or fairly important.

Nearly three-quarters of students (72%) said that not being able to afford to give up their job was a very important determinant of their decision to study part-time. A further 8% of students said not being able to afford to give up their job was a fairly important factor in their decision.

Similarly, around four-fifths of students said that the flexibility and convenience of part-time study was very or fairly important (83%) and wanting to combine study and work was very or fairly important (79%). For these two possible reasons for part-time study, there were less students reporting the reason as very important compared with affordability discussed above. For both reasons just over a half of students (54% in both cases) reported the reason was very important with 29% and 25% of students reporting the factor as fairly important for the flexibility and convenience of part-time study and wanting to combine study and work respectively.

Roughly a half of students rated as very or fairly important the other three possible reasons for part-time study covered in the survey, namely wanting to combine study with domestic/caring responsibilities (54%), feeling part-time study a safer, less risky option than full-time study (50%) and wanting to combine study with other interests (51%).

Figure 2.2 Reasons why students decided to study part-time rather than full-time



Base: All students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

We can also consider these reasons by key student and course characteristics and this is shown in Table 2.4. Starters were more likely to report that they wanted to combine study with something else than completers. Combining with work 82% compared with 77%, domestic/caring responsibilities (56% and 52%) and other interests (54% and 49%). This may reflect that completers may have adjusted how they combine their study with other things during the course and this is reflected in how they thought back to their initial reasons for studying part-time.

Students employed full-time were more likely than those employed part-time to report that they could not afford to give up their job (88% compared with 81%) and that part-time study felt a safer option (52% compared with 46%), whilst other issues were more prominent for

those employed part-time. They were more likely to want flexibility (91% compared with 82%) and reported wanting to combine employment and study with other things, in particular domestic/caring responsibilities (74% compared with 49%). This is also reflected in gender differences where 63% of female students wanted to combine study with domestic/caring responsibilities compared with 39% of male students.

Table 2.4 Percentage reporting reason why decided to study part-time was very or fairly important by key student and course characteristics

	Could not afford to give up job	Offers greater flexibility	Wanted to combine work and study	Wanted to combine study with domestic / caring responsibilities	Felt a safer option	Wanted to combine study with other interests
Starter or Completer						
Starter	81	84	82	56	50	54
Completer	79	82	77	52	49	49
Economic status immediately before starting current course						
Full time paid employment	88	82	84	49	52	49
Part time paid employment	81	91	88	74	46	57
Not in paid employment	24	80	42	60	41	55
Qualification aim						
First degree	79	83	76	53	48	50
Foundation degree	84	86	88	60	55	53
Higher National	72	76	85	40	47	49
Gender						
Female	82	85	80	63	51	51
Male	76	80	78	39	47	51
All	80	83	79	54	49	51
Base	3,689	3,652	3,674	3,663	3,653	3,657

Base: All students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

2.4 Why students chose their course of study

Respondents were also asked to rate the importance of various factors related to their choice of course of study. The reasons most commonly cited here as being very or fairly important were not directly related to employment, although employment factors were still extremely important.

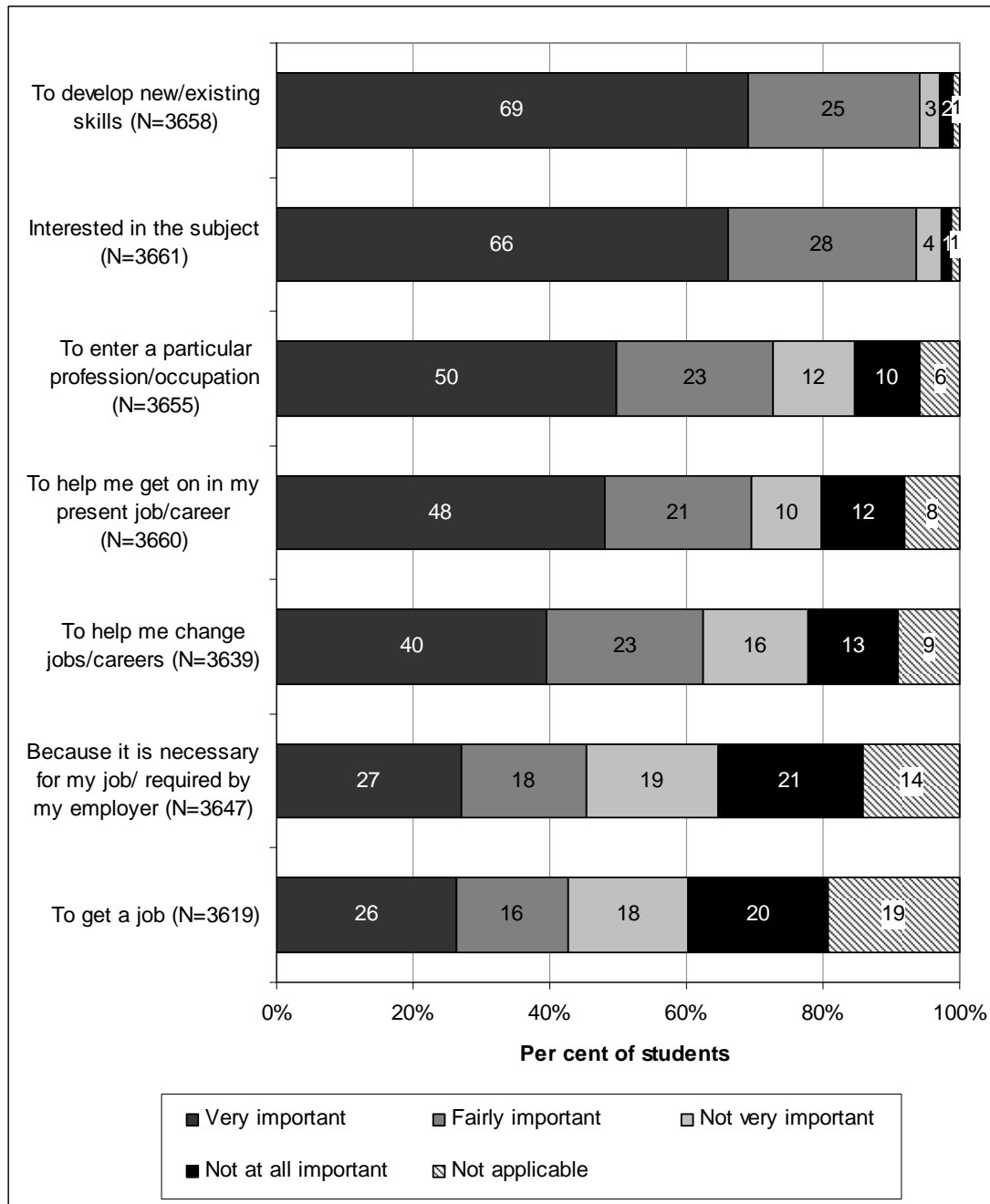
Students desire to “develop new/existing skills” and “interest in the subject” were the key drivers for their course choice (Figure 2.3). Nearly all students (94%) said that these factors were very or fairly important in their choice of course. In most cases these factors were rated as very important (69% and 66% respectively).

Changing jobs and entering new occupations were also important reasons for choosing the course of study for most students. Roughly three-quarters of students (73%) said that “to enter a particular profession/occupation” was a very or fairly important factor in their choice of course and 63% reported that “to help me change job/career” was a very or fairly important factor in their choice of course.

Progression in their current job/career was also important for many students. Roughly seven out of ten (69%) students said that “to help me get on in my present job/career” was a very or fairly important factor in their choice of course and 45% reported that “because it is necessary for my job/required by my employer” was a very or fairly important factor in their choice of course.

Interestingly the extent to which the importance of the course as a job requirement was reported is much higher here at 45% than for the initial trigger as to why a student started their course from Figure 2.1 (19%). This suggests that once employed students decided they wanted to study, what course they studied was important to their employer.

Figure 2.3 Reasons why students chose their particular course of study



Base: All students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Differences by student and course characteristics shown in Table 2.5 were often not evident. Starters were more likely to relate their course to their current job than completers with 72% of starters reporting “help get on in present job or career” as why they chose the course compared with 67% of completers.

First degree students were less likely to relate their course choice to “help get on in present job or career” or “necessary for their job” than other students, but more likely to report it was to “help change jobs or career” or to “get a job”.

There is further evidence here about the study of Law being less related to employment than other subjects. Only 43% of Law students reported that their course choice was to “help get

on in present job or career” compared with 69% of all students and just 23% of Law students reporting that their course choice was “necessary for their job” compared with 45% of all students.

Table 2.5 Percentage reporting reason why decided to take particular course was very or fairly important by key student and course characteristics

	Develop new / existing skills	Interested in subject	Enter profession or occupation	Help get on in present job or career	Help change jobs or careers	Necessary for job	To get a job
Starter or Completer							
Starter	95	94	74	72	63	47	41
Completer	93	94	72	67	61	43	44
Qualification aim							
First degree	94	95	72	64	64	41	44
Foundation degree	95	93	73	84	58	54	37
Higher National	93	89	75	80	57	64	47
Subject							
Engineering/technology	94	91	74	77	54	58	41
Social sciences	93	96	68	59	61	43	45
Law	91	98	83	43	68	23	42
Business	96	91	68	75	67	41	41
Education	96	94	78	84	64	53	44
All	94	94	73	69	63	45	42
Base	3,658	3,661	3,655	3,660	3,639	3,647	3,619

Base: All students

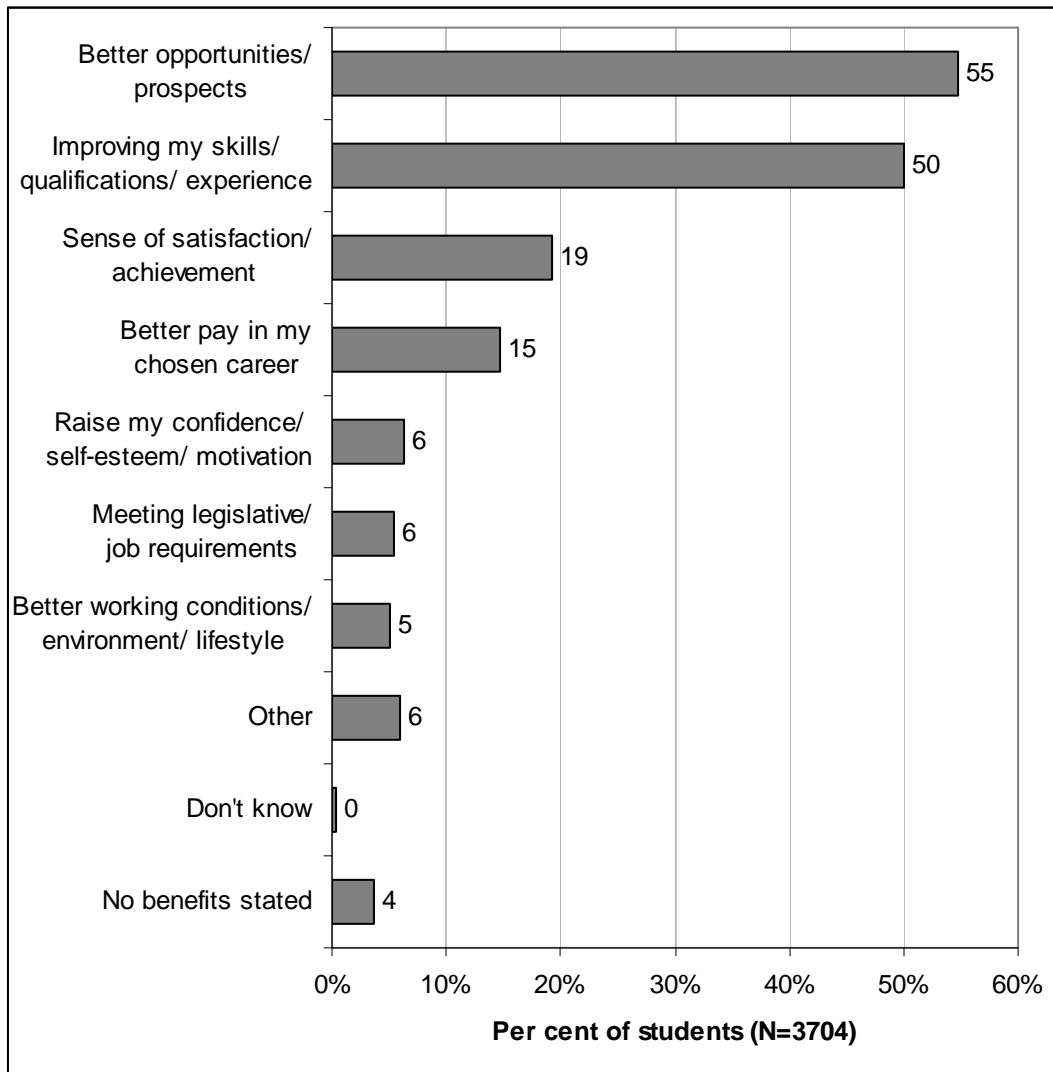
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

2.5 Benefits hoped for

Students were asked to report the personal or professional benefits they were hoping to achieve from their studies. Figure 2.4 shows a wide range of potential benefits, but for most cited benefits only a small proportion of students hoped for such benefit. The only commonly cited potential benefits were quite generic ones. More than one-half of students hoped for better opportunities/prospects (55%). Half the students hoped to improve their skills, qualifications, or experience. Roughly one-in-five students hoped for a sense of satisfaction or achievement (19%).

A minority of students hoped for better pay in their chosen career (15%) and the other hoped for benefits were reported by less than ten per cent of respondents. These benefits included raised confidence/self-esteem/motivation (6%), meeting legislative/job requirements (6%), better working conditions/environment/lifestyle (5%).

Figure 2.4 Personal or professional benefits students hoped to gain from study



Base: All students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

2.6 Conclusions and summary

The part-time student population is extremely heterogeneous and this is reflected in their wide range of reasons for studying. The initial factors triggering their decision to study, influencing their choice of course, and shaping their aspirations were primarily instrumental. They were employment and career driven. They were manifest in their desire for an HE qualification to get ahead and to meet their career ambitions, and to develop new or existing skills and better opportunities in the future. However, the students also valued the intrinsic rewards of studying in terms of wanting to do something new and different, their interest in their subject of study, and for mothers especially, acting as a role model for their children. Students' reasons for studying part-time as against full-time were both financial and pragmatic. They could not afford to give up their job to study full-time. In addition, part-time study offered them greater flexibility and they could fit their studies around their existing work and domestic commitments. These findings confirm those of earlier studies and Kember et al's (2001) observation that students hold 'multiple orientations', which inevitably influence experiences upon entry to a course and beyond.

Detailed findings

What triggered students' decision to study

- The key triggers that made students first think about taking their course of study were:
 - Career and employment related:
Most students identified realising they needed a Higher Education qualification to get ahead (59%) and that their existing qualifications were inadequate to meet their career ambitions (56%), as the key triggers, especially employed students or those with taking more vocational qualifications (i.e. Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals).
 - Change related:
Just under a half (47%) of all students wanted to do something useful or different with their lives, especially students who were not employed (55%).
 - Family related:
Just under a half (46%) of female students with a child under the age of 11 first started to think about taking their courses because they wanted to be a role model for their children or to help with their children's education.
- A slightly higher proportion of completers - students in their final year of study - than starters – students in their first year of study – identified these first two sets of triggers.

Why chose to study part-time

- Over a half of all students rated the following reasons as very important in their decision to study part-time as against full-time:
 - They could not afford to give up their job (72%), especially students in full-time employment, or doing a Foundation Degree ;
 - Offered greater flexibility and convenience (54%), especially students in part-time employment or taking a Foundation Degree; and
 - Wanted to combine study and work (54%), especially students in part-time employment or taking a Foundation Degree;

A slightly higher proportion of starters than completers identified these three reasons.

Why chose their course of study

- The majority of students rated the following reasons as very important in their decision to study their particular course of study:
 - To develop new and existing skills (69%), especially students studying the Law and Business or taking a Foundation Degree;

- Interest in the subject (66%), especially students studying the Law; and
- To enter a particular profession/occupation (50%), especially students studying the Law.

There were no marked differences by whether students were starters or completers.

Benefits hoped for

- At least a half of students identified the following generic personal or professional benefits that they hoped to achieve from their studies:
 - Better opportunities and prospects (55%); and
 - Improving their skills/qualification/experience (50%).

3 CAREER RELATED STUDY AND CAREER AIMS

3.1 Introduction

Linking part-time study with the needs of employers and the labour market were high on the Labour government's skills agenda. In Chapter 2 we explored students' motivations for studying, like previous studies on part-time students. We highlighted how students' reasons for studying were related to career improvement and their career ambitions. A few of these existing studies also have examined the links between students' desire for career improvement and the career outcomes of part-time study (e.g. Brennan et al, 1999; Feinstein et al, 2007; Jamieson et al, 2009; Woodley and Wilson, 2002). This is something we will consider in the next stage of this study. However, hardly any of these studies specifically assess the relationship between students' study and their career aims, and how students view their course in relation to their careers. In other words, the extent to which part-time study is meeting the Labour government's skills agenda.

Chapter 2 clearly showed how the initial trigger which made students think about starting their current course were employment related. Now we look at how students viewed their course in relation to their careers. In this chapter, therefore, we examine the extent to which students' studies are career related. We explore both whether students' decision to study and whether their subject of study is career related as well as the extent to which students' courses were related to their current occupation or employment. It also considers whether and how students' ideas about their careers have changed since they started their course and how clear they are in terms of long-term career planning.

3.2 Career related study

Studying and career aims

Nearly all students (89%) reported that their decision to study was related to their career aims (Figure 3.1). Figure 3.1 shows how the extent to which students' decision to study was related to their career aims varied considerably by their socio-economic characteristics and by the type of course they were undertaking. However, some of these characteristics are inter-related. For instance, women are more likely than men to work part-time and more likely to study social sciences. To disentangle which of these numerous factors were most important, we undertook multivariate analysis.

We estimated a multivariate logistic regression model to determine the key factors associated with whether students' decision to study was related to their career aims. The models include indicators of:

- whether the student was a starter or completer;
- age;
- gender;
- family type;
- ethnicity;
- employment status;
- household income;
- existing qualifications;

- qualification studying for;
- whether any family member has a HE qualification;
- subject of study;
- whether studying at the open university; and
- whether studying at an FE college

In Table 3.1 we report the factors that are associated with whether students decision to study was related to their career aims once we have controlled for all the factors outlined above. In Figure 3.1 we show the percentage of students' who reported their decision to study was related to their career aims by some key factors.

We adopt this approach throughout the rest of the report, first reporting the significant associations from multivariate analysis and then plotting descriptive information for some of these factors. The associations identified by the multivariate analysis provide the key findings of the analysis because they control for other influences on the question under consideration. The descriptive information is shown to provide an indication of how big the differences are without controlling for these other factors.

In general, large differences in the descriptive figures are reflected in significant differences in the multivariate analysis, but this is not always the case. Where the two pieces of analysis are different this is noted in the text.

Table 3.1 then shows that students who were aged less than 25, employed, studying for a foundation degree, studying engineering or technology or education and not studying at the Open university or at an FE college were more likely to report that their decision to study was related to their career aims.

Table 3.1 Factors associated with whether students' decision to study was related to their career aims

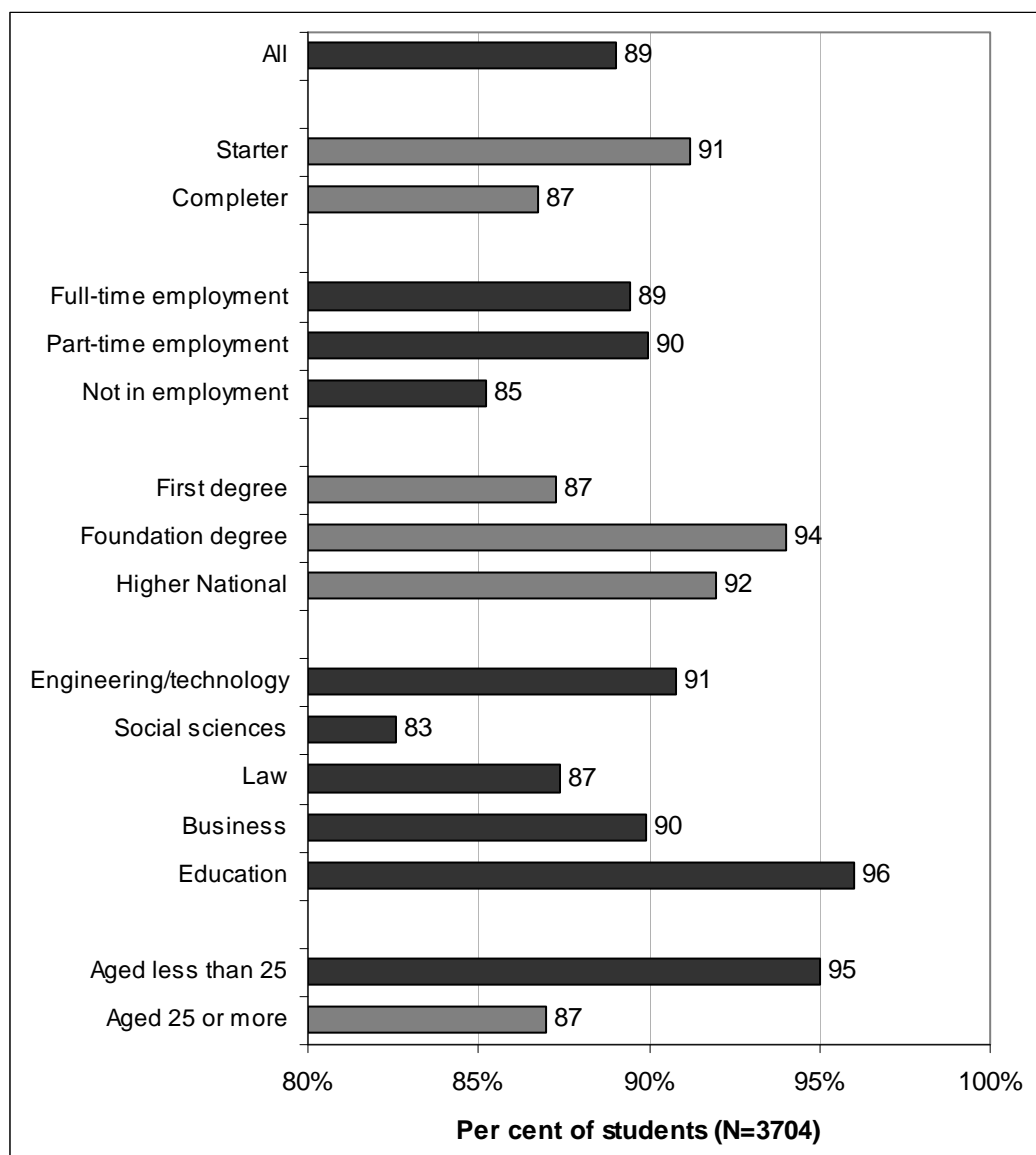
Factors associated with study more related to career aims	Factors associated with study less related to career aims
Students aged less than 25	Students aged 25 or more
Employed	Not employed
Foundation degree students	First degree and Higher National students
Students studying Engineering and Technology or Education	Students studying Social Sciences, Law or Business
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University
Not studying at an FE college	Studying at an FE college

Figure 3.1 then shows that students taking an Education qualification were the most likely (96%) to report career-related study, closely followed by students aged less than 25 (95%) and Foundation degree students (94%), whilst students who were undertaking a Social Sciences qualification (83%) and students not employed before starting their course (85%) were the least likely to report career-related study. Even for these groups more than four out of five students reported that study was related to career aims.

The biggest differences were by subject of study. However, there was no clear divide between vocationally orientated subjects and non-vocationally orientated subjects. Arguably, the Law could be classified as vocational yet a lower proportion of students taking this subject reported that their decision to study was related to their career plans compared to those taking all other subjects except Social Sciences.

Younger students (95%) were more likely than older students (87%) to report career related study. There were also differences by type of qualification undertaken. As noted above Foundation Degree students were among the most likely to report their study was related to their career aims (94%), but there was also a higher than average percentage of students undertaking Higher National qualifications (92%) who reported that their study was related to their career aims. A lower than average percentage of students undertaking First Degrees (87%) reported that their study was related to their career aims.

Figure 3.1 Percentage of students' who reported their decision to study was related to their career aims, by key student characteristics



Base: All students
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Employed students, irrespective of whether they work full-time or part-time, were more likely to report that study was related to their career aims than students who were not employed. This is not surprising given the extent to which study is a requirement of a number of jobs, see Figure 2.1 which shows that 19% of students reported their initial trigger to study was that it was a job requirement and Figure 2.3 which shows that 45% of students reported that a very or fairly important reason why they chose their course was because it was necessary for their job or required by their employer.

The above differences were also evident in the multivariate analysis.

Starters (91%) were more likely than completers (87%) to report that their decision to study was related to their career aims. However, as we see from Table 3.1, this difference was not significant once we controlled for other factors associated with career-related study.

Subject of study and career aims

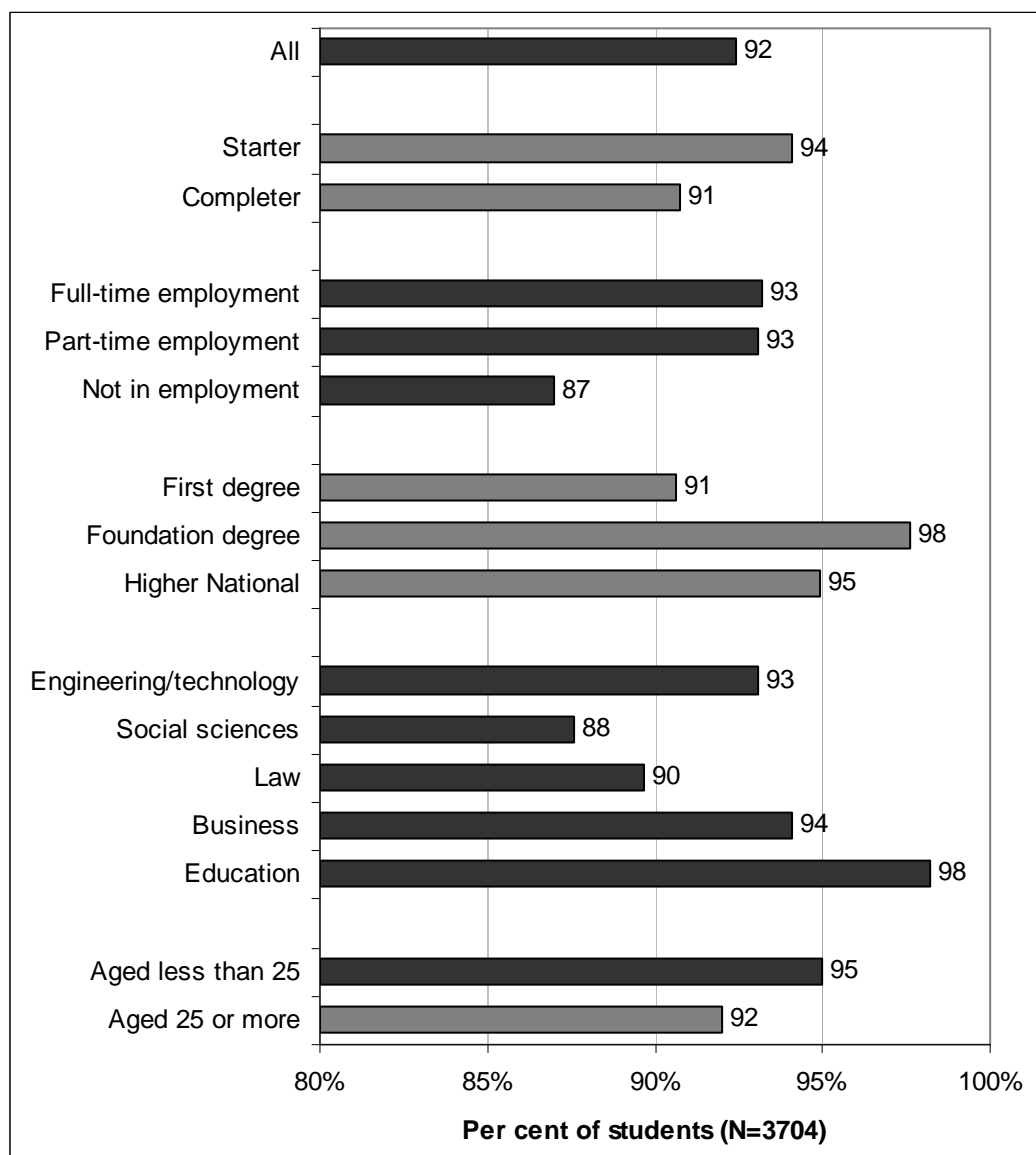
A slightly higher percentage of students reported that their subject of study was related to their career aims than their overall decision to study (92% compared with 89%). This is perhaps not surprising as it is a student's subject of study and actual course which is likely to help them realise their career aspirations.

Here our multivariate analysis showed that most of the same factors that were associated with the decision to study being related to career aims, shown in Table 3.1, were also associated with whether the subject of study was related to career aims. However, here we also found that students with no children were less likely than other students to report that their subject of study was related to career aims, and that students with a level three qualification were more likely than students with other qualifications to report that their subject of study was related to career aims. In addition there was no difference in whether the subject of study was related to career aims by attendance at an FE college.

Figure 3.2 reports the descriptive statistics which clearly show the differences by employment status, qualification aim, subject of study and age, whilst in line with the previous analysis the difference between starters and completers was not significant once we controlled for other factors.

Students undertaking an Education qualification (98%) and Foundation degree students (98%) were the most likely to report subject of study was related to career aims. Students who were not employed (87%) or students undertaking a Social Sciences (88%) qualification were the least likely to report study related to their career aims.

Figure 3.2 Percentage of students' who reported their subject of study was related to their career aims, by key student characteristics



Base: All students
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

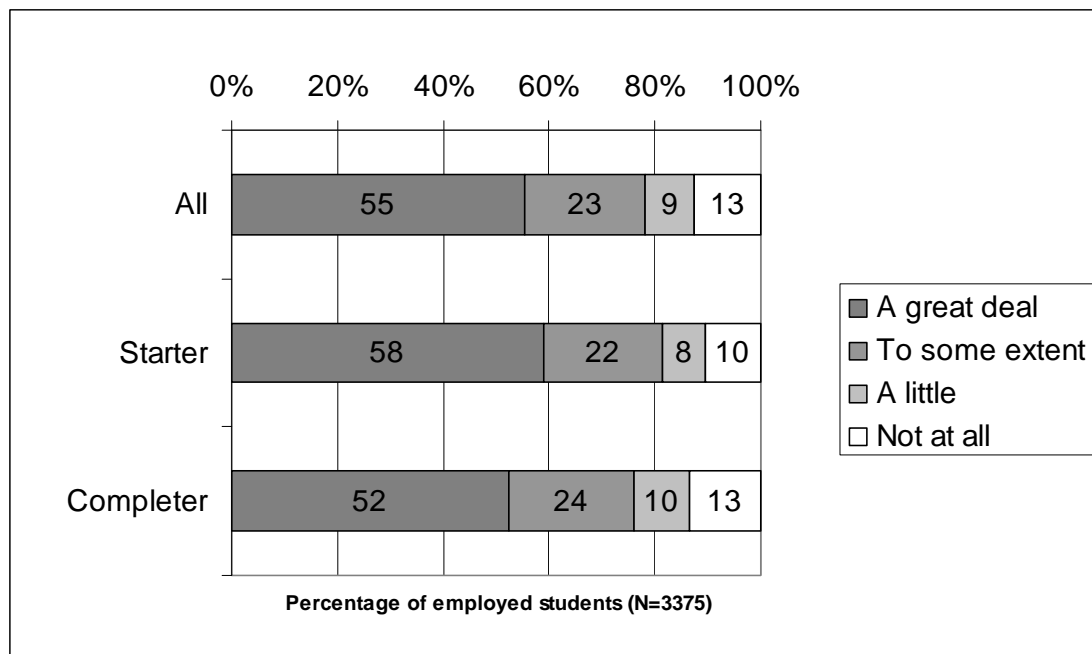
Course related employment

Given that study was clearly strongly related to career aims it is interesting to consider the extent to which students' courses are related to their current occupation or employment. Figure 3.3 shows this by whether students were starters or completers. Overall 55% of students reported that their course was related a great deal to their current occupation or employment. A further 23% reported that their course was related to some extent to their current occupation or employment and 9% reported that their course was related a little to their current occupation or employment. Just 13% reported that their course was not at all related to their current occupation or employment, a figure broadly in line with the percentage reporting that their decision to study was not related to career aims (11%) and that their subject of study was not related to career aims (8%). There were some differences by whether students were starters or completers. More starters saw their course as a great deal related to their current employment than completers indicating that the relationship between study and

employment may change through the course of study. However, once we control for other factors in the multivariate analysis this difference disappears.

These top line figures do not indicate a very strong relationship between study and current occupation for nearly half of the students surveyed. This is an interesting finding given the widespread government rhetoric about higher education courses meeting the needs of employers and the labour market, for example as articulated in *Higher Ambitions* (BIS, 2009). However, it is clear that students' reasons for studying were employment orientated and linked to their career aims. In other words, it is possible that some students were using their current studies as a stepping stone to a particular future employment outcome rather than feeding into their current employment or occupation. This suggests that these students were pursuing a somewhat broader vision of the relationship between part-time study and the labour market, than the rather narrow one presented in *Higher Ambitions*.

Figure 3.3 Percentage of students' reported the extent to which their course is related to their current occupation or employment by whether starter or completer



Base: Employed students
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

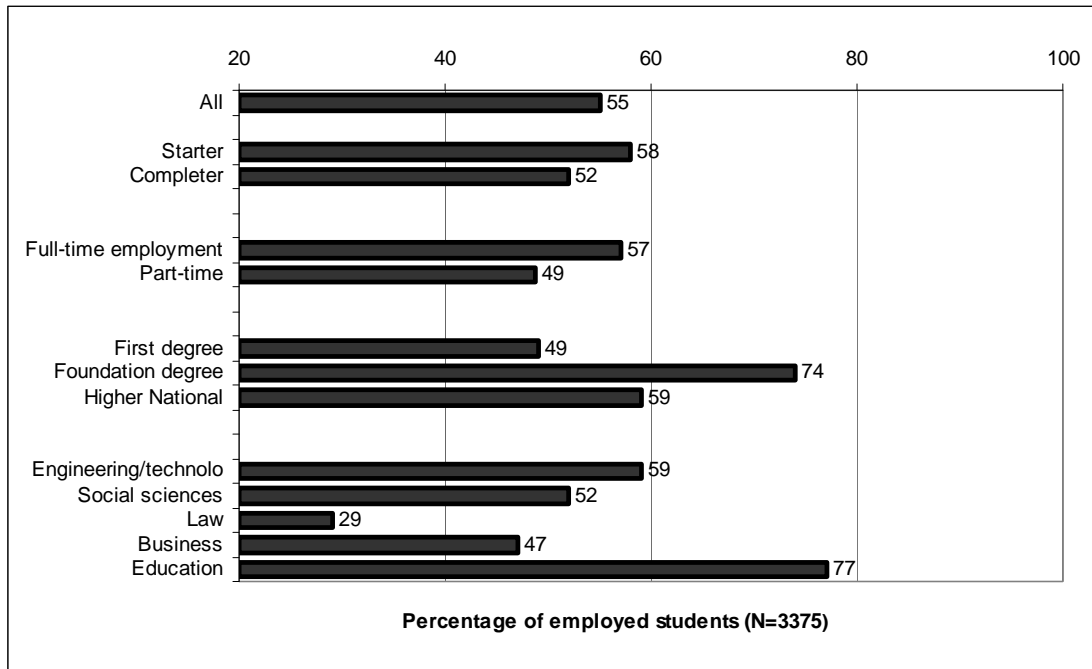
However, further analysis did reveal a much stronger relation between a student's course and their current employment for certain student groups, particularly those taking vocational qualifications and studying education.. The multivariate analysis shows that women, students with children, white students, those employed full-time, students studying for a Foundation degree or Higher National qualification, students studying Education and students not at the Open University were all more likely to report that their courses were a great deal related to their current occupation or employment (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Factors associated with whether students' courses were a great deal related to their current occupation or employment

Factors associated with course more related to current occupation or employment	Factors associated with course less related to current occupation or employment
Female students	Male students
Couples with children or lone parents	Single students without children
White students	Not white students
Employed full-time	Employed part-time or not employed
Foundation degree or Higher National students	First degree students
Students studying Education	Students studying Law or Business
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University

Figure 3.4 shows how the percentage of students who reported that their course was related a great deal to their current occupation or employment varies by some key student characteristics. Here the differences are in line with the multivariate analysis except for differences by whether the student was a starter or completer, as discussed above. Education students were the most likely to report that their course was a great deal related to their current occupation or employment (77%) followed by Foundation degree students (74%) whilst Law students were by far the least likely to report that their course was a great deal related to their current occupation or employment (29%) again emphasising the limited links between studying Law and employment.

Figure 3.4 Percentage of students' reporting that their course was a great deal related to their current occupation or employment by key student and course characteristics

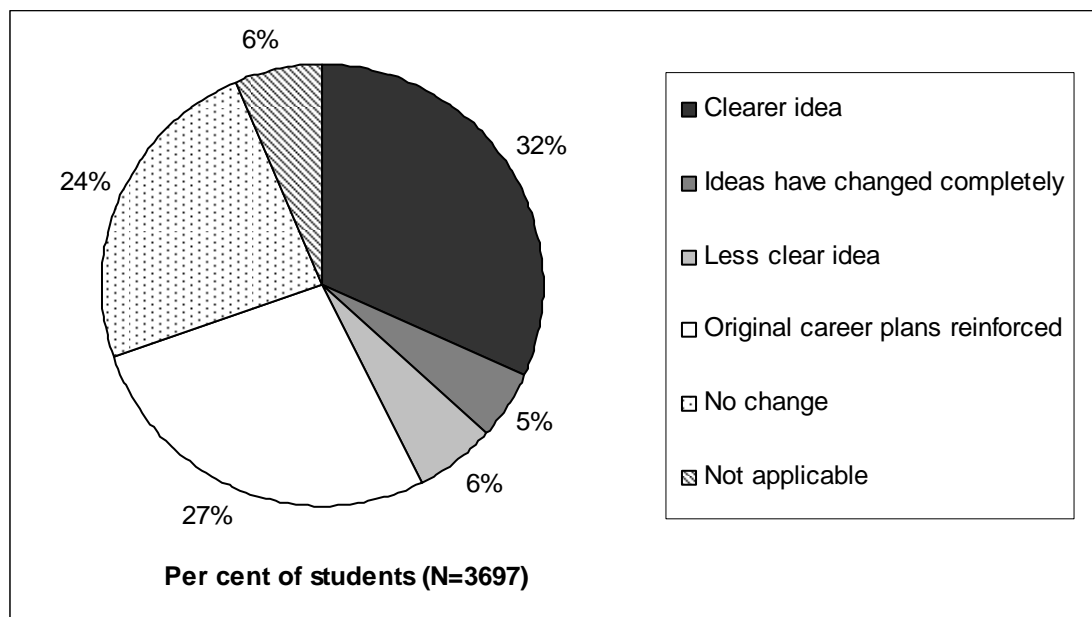


Base: Employed students
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

3.3 Career plans

Students were then asked how their ideas about their career have changed since they started their course (Figure 3.5). Almost one-third of students reported a clearer idea about their career (32%) and more than one-quarter reported that their original plans were reinforced (27%) and a further quarter that there had been no change (24%). Only 5% reported that their ideas had changed completely or that they had a less clear idea. This indicates a student group who are pretty set in their ideas relating to study and career planning.

Figure 3.5 How student's ideas about their career plans had changed since starting their course



Base: All students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

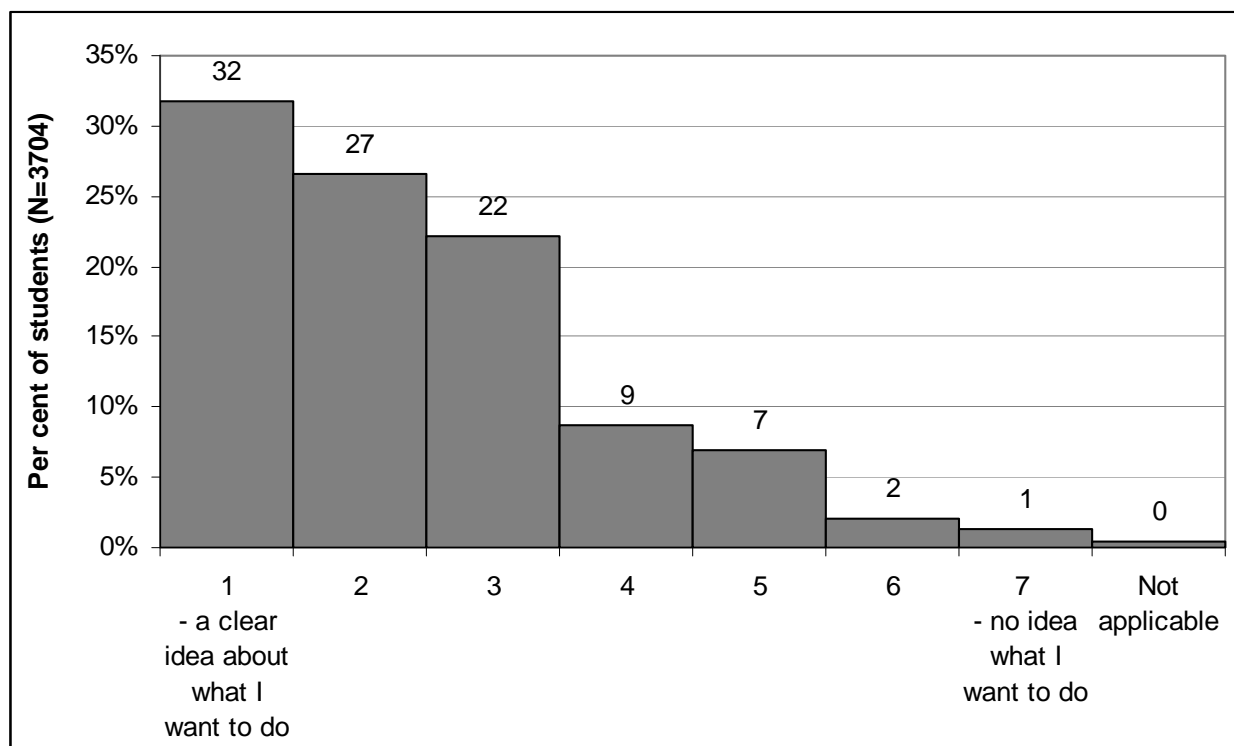
Multivariate analysis considering the factors associated with students' having a much clearer idea about their career indicates a limited number of factors were important (Table 3.3). Interestingly completers were more likely to report a clearer idea about their careers than starters, suggesting that ideas about what students want to do change while studying.

Table 3.3 Factors associated with students' having a much clearer idea about their career since they started their course

Factors associated with students having a much clearer idea about their career	Factors associated with students not having a much clearer idea about their career
Completers	Starters
Not employed	Employed full-time
Students from low-income households	Students from high income households
Students with level 3 qualification	Students with level 4 or 5 qualification and students with entry level or level 1 or 2 qualification

Students were also asked to rate how clear they were at the time of the survey in terms of their career planning. At one extreme they could report that they have “a clear idea about what I want to do” and at the other extreme “no idea about what I want to do”. The pattern of responses is shown in Figure 3.6. In general students were clear about their long-term career plans. Nearly one-third reported at the extreme that they have “a clear idea about what I want to do” and more than 80% reported a score of less than 3 indicating a large degree of clarity about what they want to do.

Figure 3.6 How students rated the clarity of their long-term career planning



Base: All students
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Multivariate analysis identified the factors associated with reporting at the extreme “a clear idea about what I want to do”. These are shown in Table 3.4. Students who already had a level 4/5 qualification, who had a family member who had an HE qualification and students studying Law or Education were more likely to report that they were clear about what they want to do. There were no differences between starters and completers, even though the analysis reported in Table 3.3 showed that completers were more likely than starters to report that since starting their course they had a much clearer idea about their career.

Those with previous exposure to HE, either personally or through a family member, felt that they knew what they were doing whilst students without this exposure were less certain. Education students are clearly very career focussed and clear about what they are doing the evidence is consistent in relation to career related study (Figures 3.1 and 3.2), but Law students may have more clarity about what they are doing but report their study to be less career related than students of other subjects with the exception of Social Sciences (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

Table 3.4 Factors associated with students’ having a clear idea about what they want to do in terms of career planning

Factors associated with students having a clear idea about what they want to do	Factors associated with students not having a clear idea about what they want to do
Students with level 4 or 5 qualification	Students with level 3 qualification
Students who have a family member with an HE qualification	Students who do not have a family member with an HE qualification
Students studying Law or Education	Students studying Social Sciences, Engineering or technology and Business

Note – Students with a clear idea about what they want to do are those that coded themselves as 1 to this question

3.4 Conclusions and summary

Both students’ decision to study and choice of subject were firmly linked to these career aims. Most students had clear career ambitions and well-reasoned long-term career plans – they knew what they wanted to do. This was especially the case for students who understood what higher education was about and had had some exposure and experience of higher education before undertaking their current course of study. For a sizable minority their ideas about their careers had crystallised and been re-enforced as a result of taking their course. Their career aims had been influenced by their experiences while studying, especially for those nearing the end of their course and those who were less likely to have social networks that could help them in their career decision making - students who were not employed, who entered higher education with low level qualifications, and came from low-income households. However, for around a half of those students not taking vocational qualifications or studying education, their courses were not always directly related to their current employment or occupation which suggests that they were using their studies as a springboard to realise their ambitions in a different area of work.

Detailed findings

The relationship of students' study and their career aims and current employment

- Nearly all students' (89%) decision to study and their subject of study (92%) was related to their career aims, particularly younger students, those who were employed, who were taking a Foundation Degree, or were studying Engineering, Technology or Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- Overall 55% of students said their course was related a great deal to their current occupation or employment, especially, female students, those with children, white students, those employed full-time, taking a Foundation Degree or Higher National, and studying Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- Only 13% reported that their course was not at all related to their current occupation or employment, a figure broadly in line with the percentage reporting that their decision to study was not related to career aims (11%) and that their subject of study was not related to career aims (8%).

Career plans

- Students had pretty set ideas about their career plans.
- Almost one-third of students had a clearer idea about their career plans since starting their course. For a further 27% of students their original career plans had been reinforced since starting their course, while for another quarter their plans remained unchanged. Only 5% had changed their ideas completely, or had a less clear idea.
- The students most likely to have a clearer idea about their career plans were in their final year of study, were not employed, from low-income households, or had a Level 3 entry qualification.
- Most students (59%), at the time of the survey, were clear about their long-term career plans and what they wanted to do. Students who already had a level 4/5 qualification, who had a family member with an HE qualification and students studying Law or Education were more likely to report that they were clear about what they want to do, once other characteristics were controlled for. There were no differences between starters and completers.

4 USE OF CAREERS SERVICES

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw how students had fairly clear career plans but for a sizable minority their ideas had been re-enforced as a result of their higher education experiences. This chapter examines some of the factors influencing the career decision-making process and in particular, the role of those agencies and organisations designed to help students formulate their career ambitions. In doing so, it help fills a large gap in the existing literature on issues related to career guidance for part-time students.

Despite an enormous upsurge in policy and research interest in the role of career services in enhancing graduate employment, through appropriate careers advice and guidance, issues related to part-time students are largely ignored (Callender and Feldman, 2009). This is the case even where the studies' main foci are on diversity and widening participation (e.g. Harvey et al. 2002, Morey et al. 2003). Indeed, where these are central concerns, part-time students are almost always subsumed under either "mature" or "non-traditional" students, or both (Harris 2001, Harvey et al. 2002, Morey et al. 2003, OECD 2004, Maguire 2005). Even when the fact that part-time students are mostly in employment is recognised, its implications for service delivery are generally ignored (ASW Consulting et al. 2003, Booth 2004).

There is one very useful review of employability concerns drawing on studies of part-time students which recognises their variability (Little et al. 2005). It explores the implications of the characteristics of part-time students on ideas of effective learning for employability. The authors draw on a study by McDowell who found that many part-time students were resistant to work-related skills development (transferable skills) inputs, and found them a waste of time as they felt they used such skills every day at work. Rather than making links with the "real world", they preferred to learn to abstract and reflect (McDowell, 1993).

However, Little et al. (2005) also consider part-time students who are not supported by employers and who may have different concerns. Referring to research findings that employer support is not equally available to all students, they suggest that students who study primarily to *move out* of current employment might especially benefit from parallel "co-curricular activities." The value of Little et al.'s report is that it recognizes the different work situation and work experiences of part-time students from full-timers and the need to focus on concurrent workplace experience. It argues that the career development activities in HE institutions, which "prepare" students for employment need to be re-oriented towards preparation for career advancement or career change. This may mean giving more appropriate placements to students who already have work experience and providing extensive local labour market information, particularly as part-time students are less mobile than their full-time counterparts (Little et al. 2005).

Butcher et al. (1998) comment on the lack of special attention within general careers guidance policy to the needs of ethnic minority students or "work-based, part-time, mature, and distance students." They comment that it is institutional policies rather than professional priorities that determine the quality of careers provision for these groups. Thus the extent to which careers services are tailored to the needs of such students depends on how much they are prioritised by the institutions and have careers resources allocated to them. They do not, however, spell out how what changes are needed to provide better guidance to part-time students.

Morey et al. (2003) observe that the needs of mature and part-time students are not being met with respect to employability. A careers advisor is quoted as saying, "No-one is ever going to give me a promotion or a new car for succeeding with part-time students," yet part-time

students are not mentioned in their recommendations. Although their concern is much more with the integration of part-time work into full-time study, than of full-time work into part-time study, the same team does advocate that government, Regional Development Agencies and Sector Skills Councils should enable their employees to engage in work-based learning on part-time higher education courses (Harvey et al. 2002).

Killeen and White's (2000) study of experiences of career guidance and part-time students relates to pre-entry advice. They found that employed adults benefited from guidance through an increased entry rate into both full-time continuing education and training, and through increased participation in other (part-time) education and training not arranged by their employers. The overall effect of this was that recipients of guidance obtained more qualifications (Killeen and White 2000). However, their study did not make clear the level of the courses or whether "additional" education and training were short or part-time courses. Guidance at low entry qualification levels is also emphasised in other studies about part-time students' experience (e.g. Bamber and Tett, 2000, Jones, 2003, Hart and Nelson 2006).

It is clear that very little information exists as to the contribution that careers services can or do make to the career decisions of part-time students. There is little reference in the literature to career advice *during* studies for part-time students despite evidence from studies such as Brennan et al. (1999) and Morgan-Klein and Gray (2000), as well as many other studies which address the time conflicts of work and part-time study. The emphasis on career management skills in current careers debates, in the context of both flexible and lifelong learning, needs to include discussion of how to manage one's career during a course of part-time study.

In attempting to fill these gaps in our knowledge, this chapter considers whether students had sought any careers information, advice, or guidance before starting their course. For those that did seek this information we explore the sources of this information, advice, and guidance and which source was the most helpful and whether the information advice and guidance was sufficient. Similarly, we explore the use of career services whilst studying and explore the reasons why some students had no contact with university/college career services and overall students' views about the career services at their university/college.

4.2 Careers information, advice and guidance before studying

Whether sought information, advice or guidance

Starters – students in their first year of study - were asked whether they had sought any careers information, advice, or guidance before starting their course. Overall one in three students did seek information, advice, or guidance before starting their course (Figure 4.1).

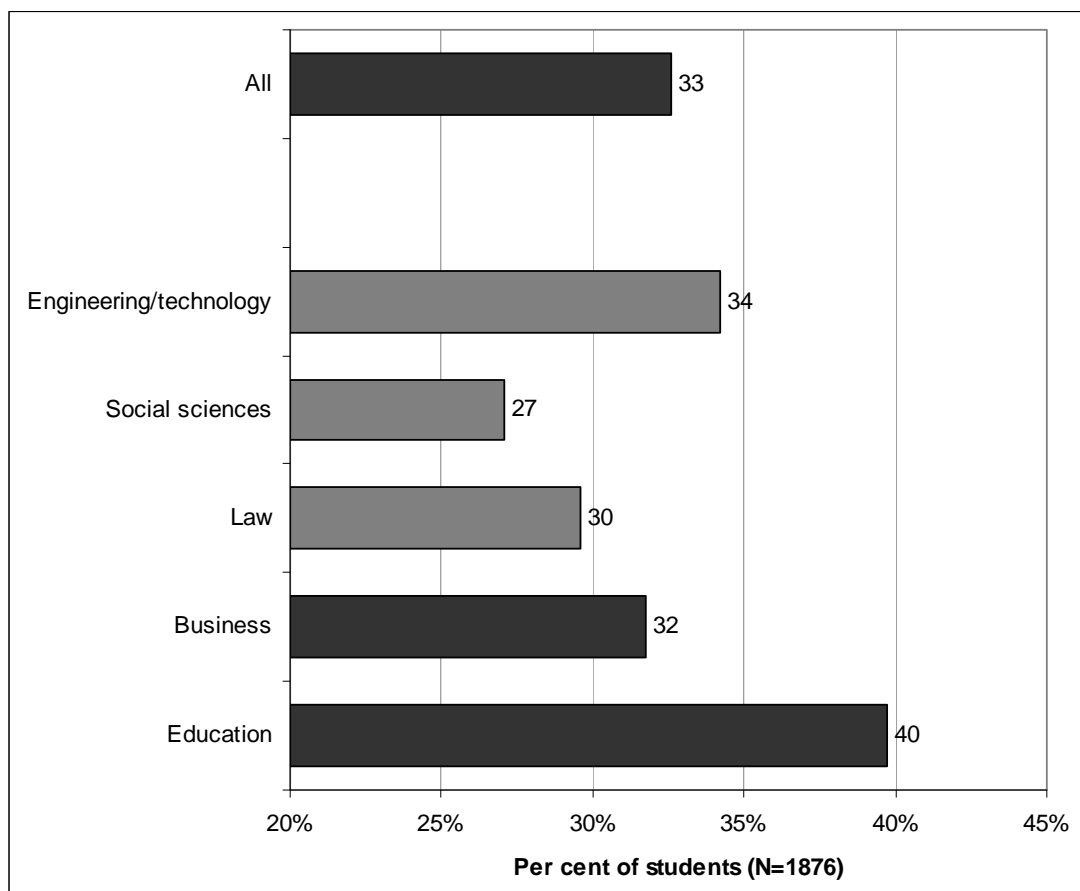
Our multivariate analysis showed that younger students, students in a couple, students from ethnic minority backgrounds, students from low-income households and students studying engineering or technology or Education were more likely to have sought careers information, advice or guidance before starting their course (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Factors associated with first year students' having sought careers information, advice and/or guidance before starting their course

Factors associated with first year students having sought careers information, advice and/or guidance before starting their course	Factors associated with first year students having not sought careers information, advice and/or guidance before starting their course
Age less than 25	Age 25 or more
Students who are in a couple	Single students
Not white students	White students
Students from low-income households	Students from high income households
Students studying Engineering or Technology and Education	Students studying Social Sciences and Law

Differences by subject of study are shown in Figure 4.1 with Education students the most likely to have sought information, advice or guidance (40%) and Social Science students the least likely (27%).

Figure 4.1 Percentage of first year students who sought careers information, advice and/or guidance before starting their course by subject



Base: Starters – students in their first year of study
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Sources of information, advice, or guidance

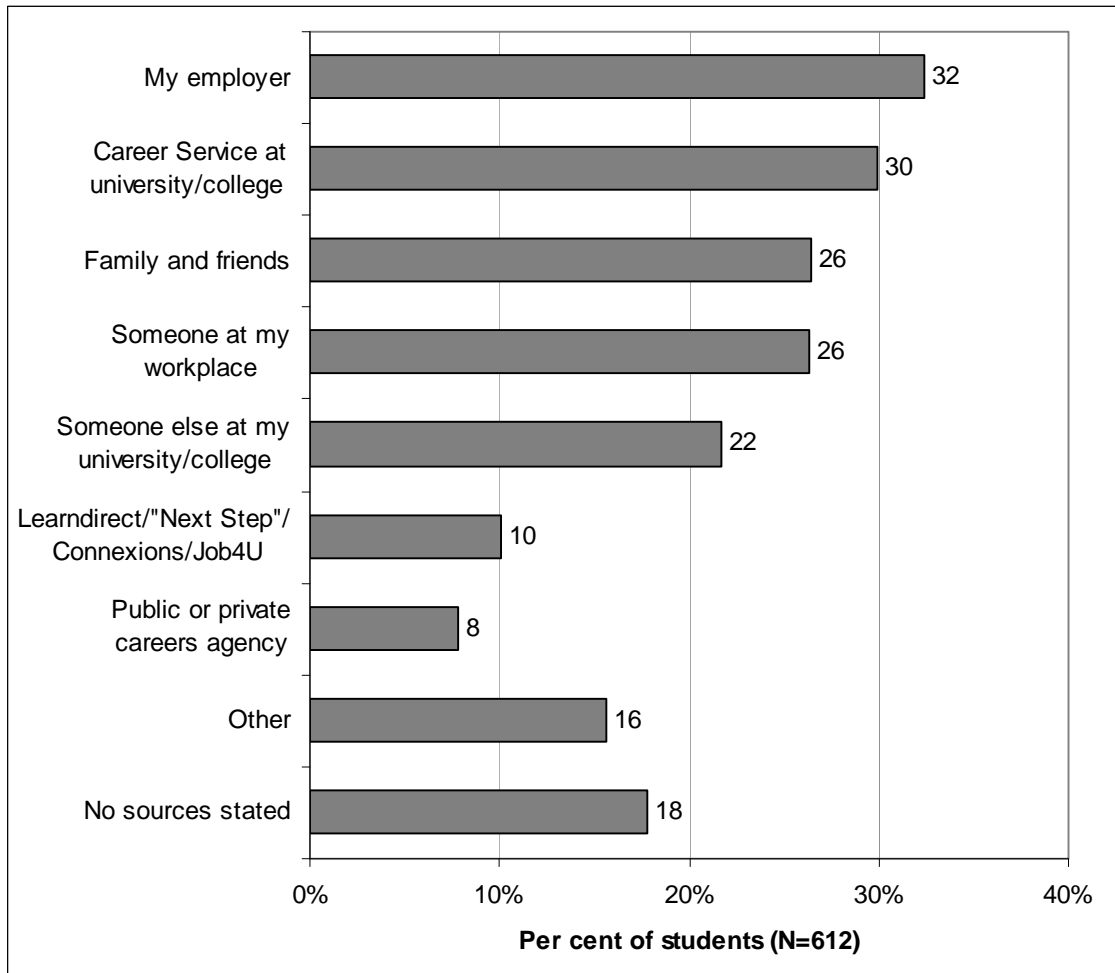
For those students who did seek information, advice or guidance the source where they got that advice is given in Figure 4.2. There was a range of sources cited including employers and other people at their workplace; careers services at universities and colleges as well as elsewhere; other sources at universities and colleges and family and friends. There was no single dominant source for information, advice, or guidance. The four most common sources where students sought information, advice, or guidance were:

- Their employer (32%);
- Careers service at university/college (30%);
- Family and friends (26%); and
- Someone at my workplace (26%).

Students' reliance on their employers or someone at their workplace for careers advice raises some important issues. Arguably, the information, advice, and guidance provided are unlikely to be as well or as broadly informed as that supplied by a qualified career guidance professional. Moreover, employer-based advice and guidance may not be impartial. Rather the advice may be linked to the employer's or organisation's short-term needs rather than the

long-term career and qualification needs of an individual employee/student. However, it must also be acknowledged, that employers may be better informed about specific career opportunities in their particular field, compared with career guidance professionals who have a broader remit of knowledge and expertise.

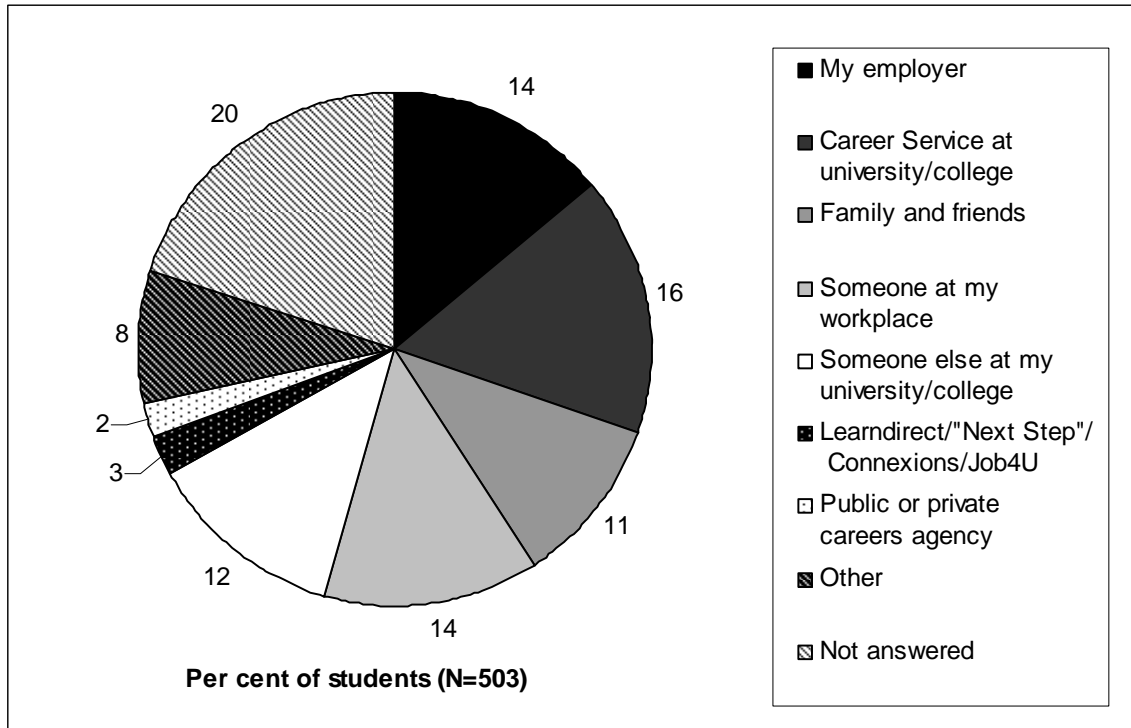
Figure 4.2 Sources of careers information, advice and/or guidance used by first year students before starting their course



Base: Starters who had sought careers information, advice, and/or guidance before starting their course
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Similarly, there was no single dominant source of information, advice, or guidance that students reported as the most helpful (Figure 4.3). For six sources more than 10 per cent of students reported that it was the most helpful indicating the need for a variety of sources of information.

Figure 4.3 The most helpful source of careers information, advice and/or guidance used by first year students before starting their course

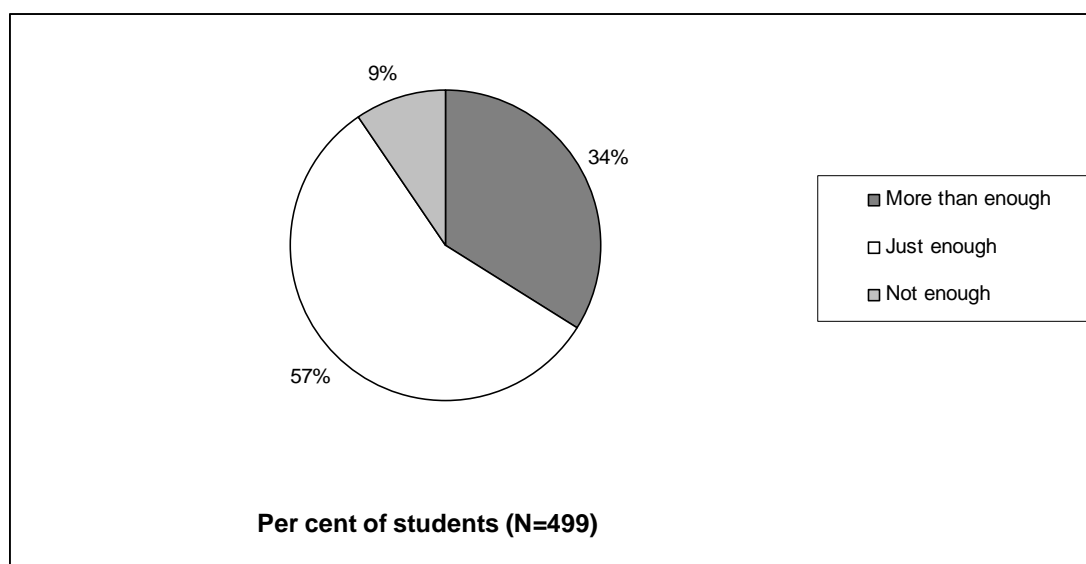


Base: Starters who had sought careers information, advice, and/or guidance before starting their course
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Sufficiency of information, advice, or guidance

For those students that sought information, advice, and/or guidance they were also asked if the amount of information was enough. Here, more than 90% of students reported that the information received was either just enough or more than enough. Thus, whilst only a minority of first year students sought information, advice, and/or guidance, nearly all of them found it sufficient.

Figure 4.4 Whether careers information, advice and/or guidance received by first year students before starting their course was sufficient?



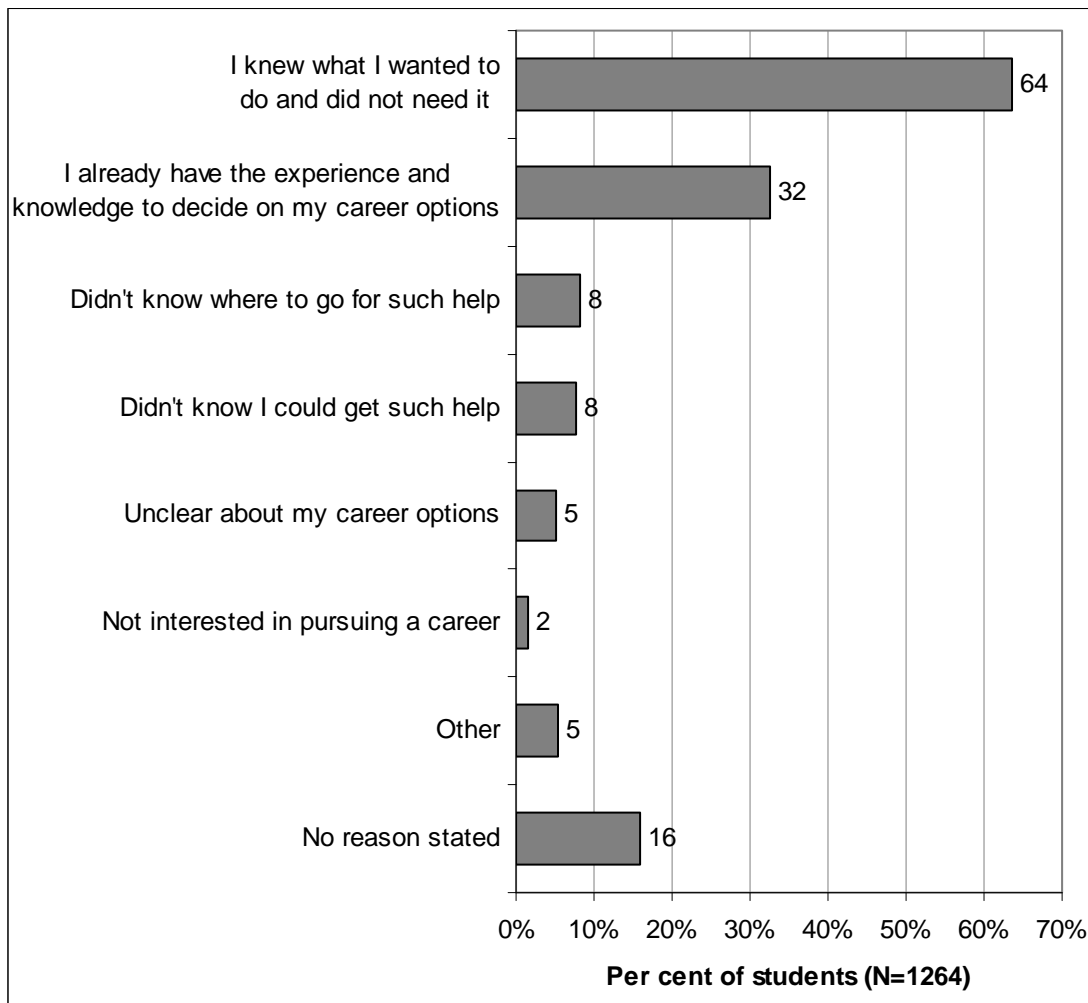
Base: Starters who had sought careers information, advice, and/or guidance before starting their course
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Why students did not seek information, advice or guidance

For the majority of starters that did not seek information, advice or guidance before starting their course Figure 4.5 shows the reasons why they did not to seek information, advice, or guidance. Nearly two-thirds of these students reported that “I knew what I wanted to do and did not need it” and nearly one-third reported that “I already have the experience and knowledge to decide on my career options”. A minority of students reported both of these reasons such that 71% of students who did not seek information, advice, or guidance before starting their course reported at least one of these reasons.

There was a however a significant minority that may have benefitted from some information, advice or guidance. For students who did not seek information, advice or guidance, eight per cent reported that they “didn’t know where to go for such help”; eight per cent reported they “didn’t know I could get such help”; and five per cent reported that they were “unclear about my career options”. With a degree of overlap between these responses, 15% of students reported at least one of these reasons for not seeking information, advice, or guidance.

Figure 4.5 Reasons why students had not sought careers information, advice, and/or guidance before starting their course

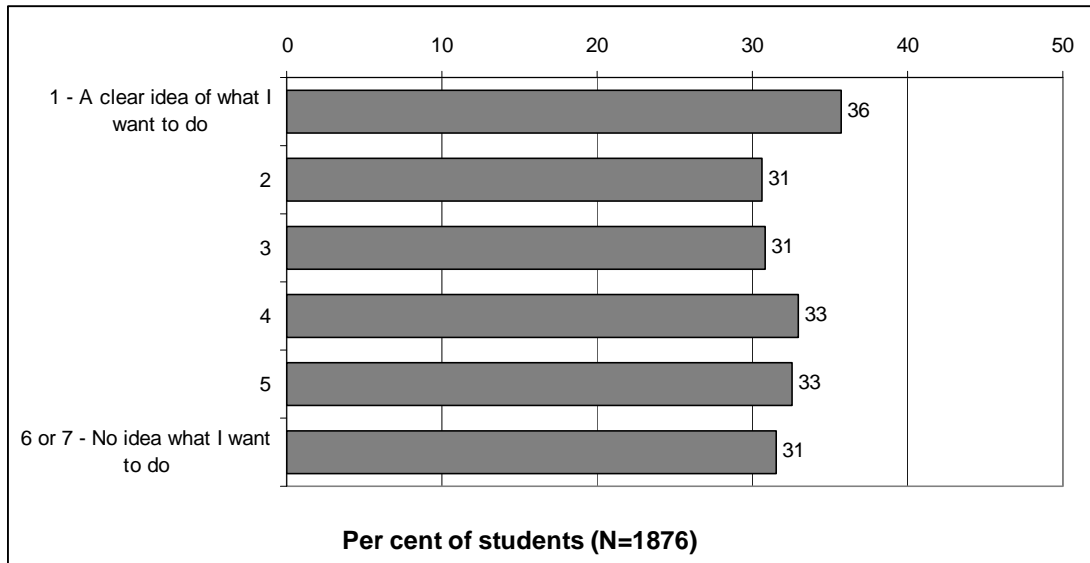


Base: Starters who had not sought careers information, advice, and/or guidance before starting their course
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Clarity of career planning

It may be rational for students who know what they want to do not to use careers services and we can consider this by looking at the percentage of students who used career services by how clear an idea they have about their long-term career planning. This is shown in Figure 4.6. Due to small sample sizes, we have had to combine the lowest two categories for students who had the least idea about long-term career planning, but overall there is little relationship between having a long-term career plan and the use of career services.

Figure 4.6 Percentage of students using career services by how clear they are about long-term career planning



Base: Starters who had sought careers information, advice, and/or guidance before starting their course
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Further insight into the use of career services can be gleaned from answers to a question asking the extent of agreement or disagreement with the following statement “I needed more help choosing which course to study”. Figure 4.7 shows that only a minority of students agreed with the statement: 5% definitely agreed and 9% mostly agreed and 60% who either mostly or definitely disagreed.

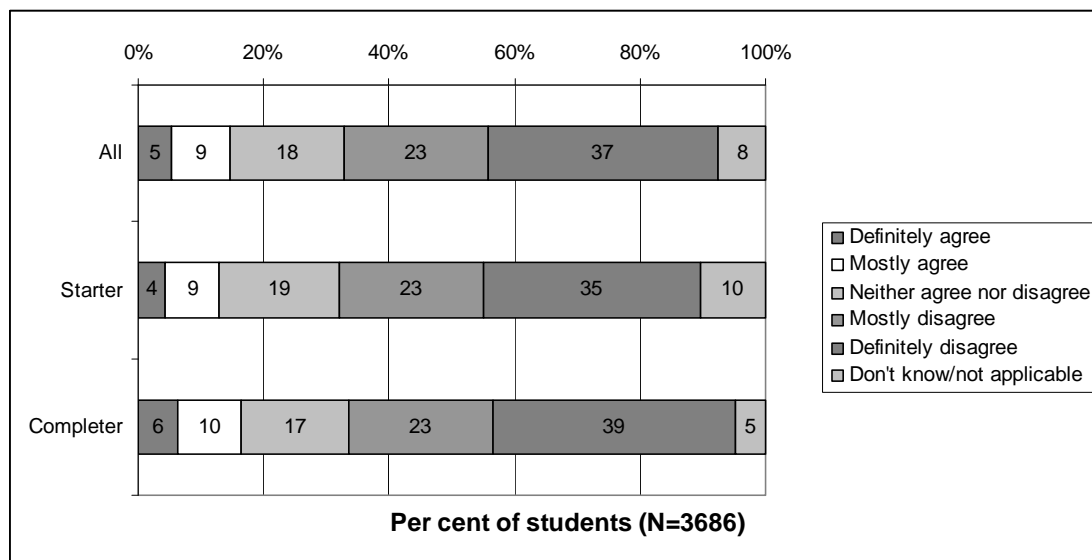
Figure 4.7 also shows some differences by whether the student was a starter or completer, such that a higher proportion of completers (16%) agreed (definitely or mostly) with the statement than starters (13%) which may reflect that as students go through their course they may regret not taking more advice at the beginning of the course.

In our multivariate analysis of whether students definitely or mostly agreed that students need more help and advice in choosing course to study we found that the difference between starters and completers was statistically significant. We also found that ethnic minority students, students employed part-time, students from low-income households, students taking First or Foundation degrees, those studying engineering or technology or business and students studying at the Open University were more likely to agree that students need more help and advice in choosing course to study (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Factors associated with agreement or disagreement that the student needed more help and advice in choosing course to study

Factors associated with agreement	Factors associated with disagreement
Completer	Starter
Not white students	White students
Employed part-time	Employed full-time
Students from low-income households	Students from medium or high income households
Students studying first degrees and foundation degrees	Students studying higher national qualifications
Students studying Engineering or Technology and Business	Students studying Social Sciences and Law
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Figure 4.7 Percentage of students reporting agreement / disagreement with whether they needed more help and advice in choosing which course to study by whether starter or completer



Base: All students
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

4.3 Careers information, advice and guidance whilst studying

Whether students had contact with university/college career services

We next turn to consider information, advice, and guidance whilst studying. All students, irrespective of their year of study were asked whether they had any contact with their university/college career services in the academic year. Roughly one-third of students reported some contact (Figure 4.8).

Our multivariate analysis found a number of factors associated with use of the career service. Starters, male students, ethnic minority students, those not in full-time employment, students from low-income households, students with a level three qualification or below, students studying subjects other than engineering or technology and students at the Open University were more likely to have had some contact with their university or college career services during the academic year (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Factors associated with whether students' had any contact with their university or college career services

Factors associated with contact	Factors associated with no contact
Completer	Starter
Male	Female
Not white students	White students
Not employed full-time	Employed full-time
Students from low-income households	Students from medium income households
Students with level 3 qualification or below	Students with level 4 or 5 qualification
Students studying Social Sciences, Law and Education	Students studying Engineering or Technology
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Differences between starters and completers may reflect that completers were about to gain a new qualification and may be looking to use it to further their careers.

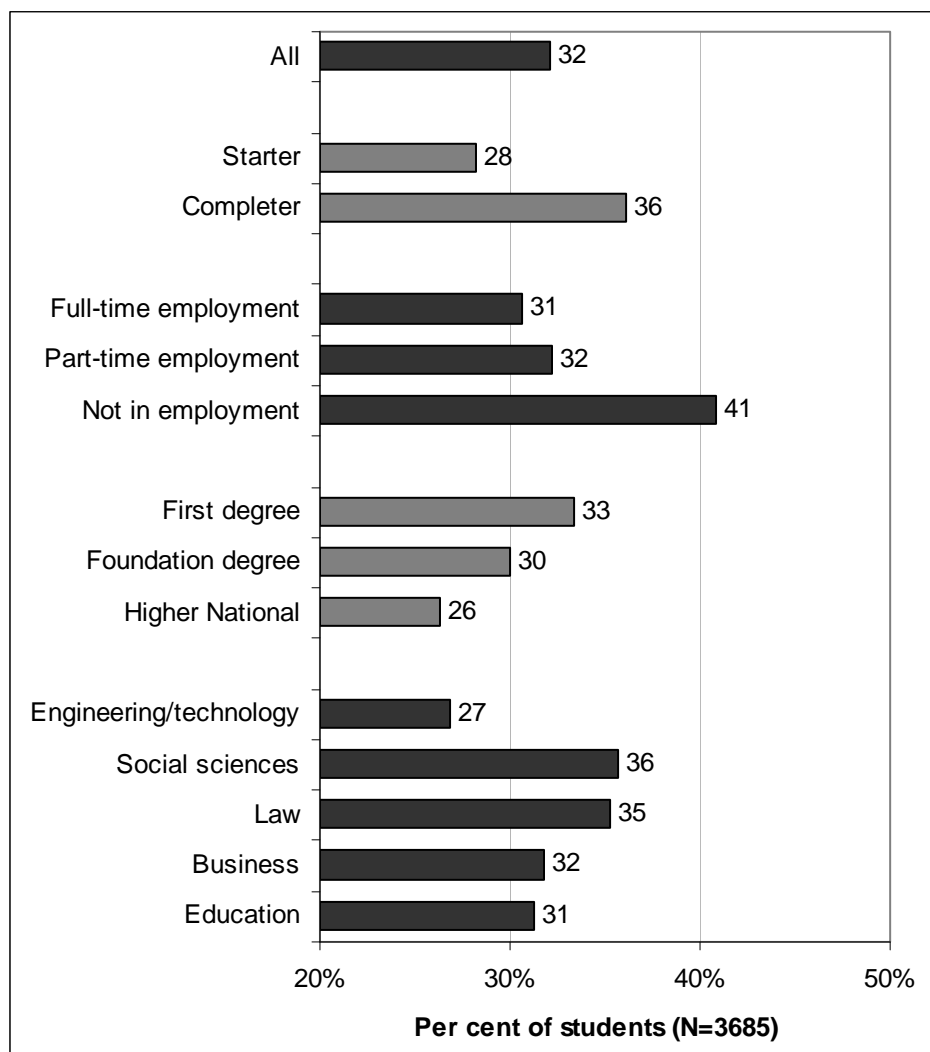
Students employed full-time were less likely to have had any contact with their university/college career services in the academic year, reflecting that they were more likely to get information, advice, and guidance from their employers (Figure 4.11).

Differences by subject of study are broadly related to how clear students were about their careers, such that students that reported clarity about their career planning Table 3.4 were the least likely to report any contact with their university/college career services.

The above differences also are evident in the descriptive data shown in Figure 4.8, which indicates that students not in employment (41%) were the most likely to have contact with the career services, whilst starters (26%), those taking higher national qualifications (26%) and

engineering or technology students (27%) were the least likely to have any contact with their university/college career services.

Figure 4.8 Percentage of students who had made contact with their university's/college's Career Service in the 2007/08 academic year, by starter/completer, current economic status, qualification aim and subject



Base: All students

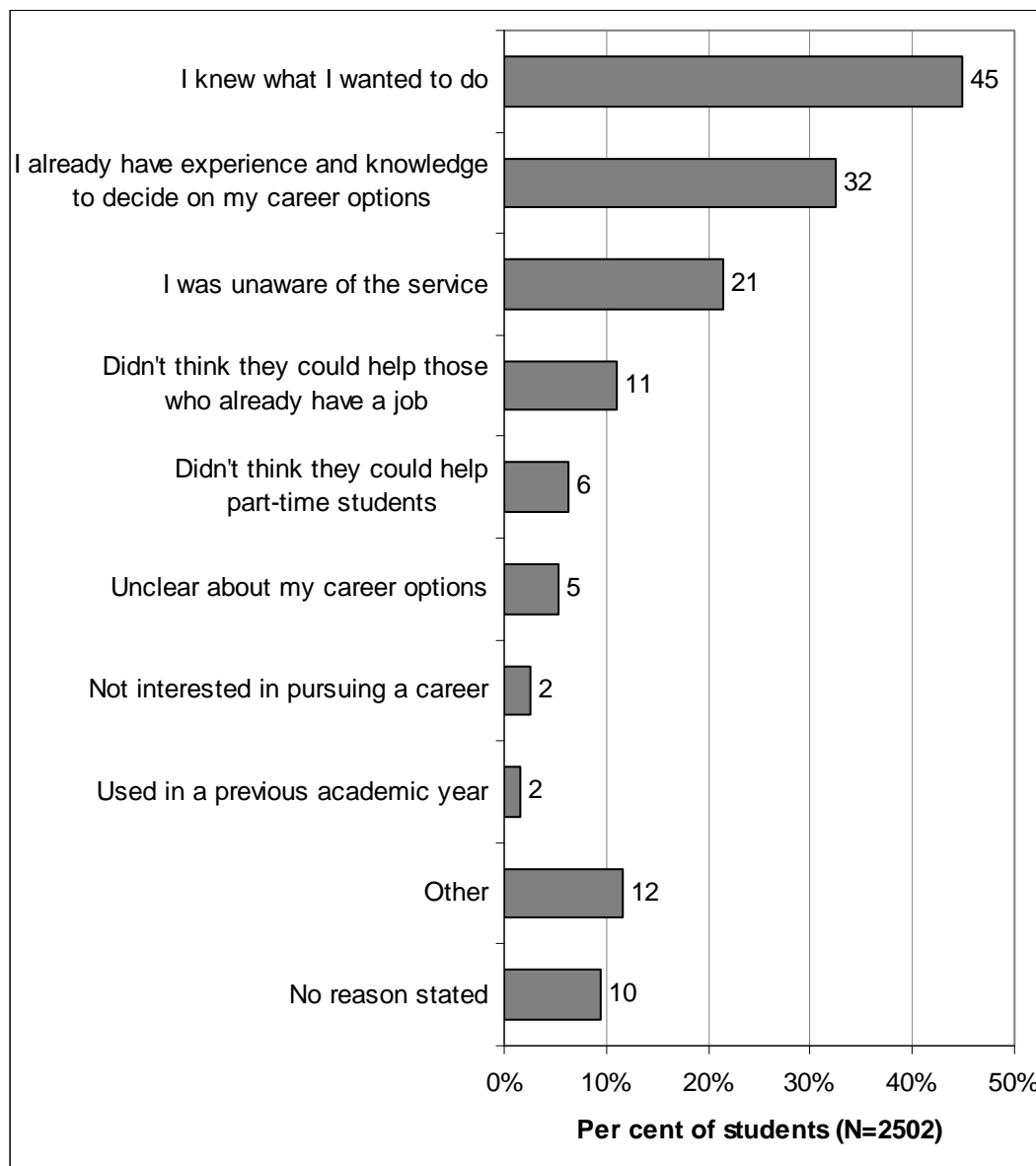
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Reasons why students had no contact with their university/college career services

The reason why students did not have any contact with their university's/college's career service in the academic year broadly mirror those given for why the starter cohort did not seek information, advice and/or guidance before starting their course (Figure 4.9). Nearly a half of students who did not have any contact with their university's/college's career service reported that "I knew what I wanted to do"; and one-third reported "I already have experience and knowledge to decide my career options". Nearly three out of five students (58%) reported at least one of these factors.

The knowledge gap is much greater here than the lack of awareness of the starter cohort before starting their course, with one-fifth of students who did not have any contact with their university's/college's career service in the academic year reporting that "I was unaware of the service". Furthermore significant numbers of students reported: "didn't think they could help those who already have a job" (11%); "didn't think they could help part-time students"(6%); and "unclear about my career options" (5%). Overall, 34% of students reported at least one of these reasons. The university/college career services clearly have scope to help more students and need to consider how they could market their services to a broader group of students, especially those studying part-time.

Figure 4.9 Reasons why students had not used their university's/college's Career Service in the 2007/08 academic year (multi-code)



Base: Students who did not have contact with their university/college career service in the academic year 2007/08
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

As noted above, 58% of students reported either that they knew what they wanted to do or that they already have the experience and knowledge to decide on my career options as the reasons why they had no contact with the career services. Multivariate analysis looked at the key factors associated with these reasons for lack of contact. Table 4.4 shows that completers, younger students, lone parents, students employed full-time, students from high income households, students with a level 4 or 5 qualification, students who had a family member with an HE qualification, students taking a foundation degree or higher national qualification and students studying at the Open University were more likely to report that they had no contact with the career services because they knew what they wanted to do or that they already have the experience and knowledge to decide on their career options.

Table 4.4 Factors associated with students’ reporting no contact with their university or college career services because they knew what they wanted to do or that they already have the experience and knowledge to decide on my career options

Factors associated with students more likely to report above reasons	Factors associated with students less likely to report above reasons
Completer	Starter
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Lone Parent	Student in a couple with children
Employed full-time	Not employed and employed part-time
Students from high income household	Students from low-income household
Students with level 4 or 5 qualification	Students with level 3 qualification or below
Foundation degree	First degree
Family member with an HE qualification	No family member with an HE qualification
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Similar multivariate analysis considers factors associated with students who reported that they were unaware of the careers service as the reason why they had no contact with the career services. The key factors here were just that younger students and female students (Table 4.5) were more likely to report no contact because of lack of awareness. It is perhaps more interesting to note what is not associated with the lack of awareness of the career service and this includes whether the student was a starter or completer, employment status, qualification aim and subject of study.

Table 4.5 Factors associated with students' reporting no contact with their university or college career services because they were unaware of the service

Factors associated with students more likely to report above reason	Factors associated with students less likely to report above reason
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Female	Male

Table 4.6 shows how the three most reported reasons for not having any contact with the university's/college's career service in the academic year vary by characteristics of the students in more detail. It is noteworthy that a similar proportion of students who were starters and completers were unaware of the service, despite the fact that completers, by definition, had been attending university for longer than starters, It would appear that students do not learn about the Careers Service as they undertake their studies. So clearly, the Careers Service needs to undertake more marketing activities so that all part-time students are aware of their services.

Table 4.6 Key reasons why students had not used their university's/college's Career Service in the 2007/08 academic year (multi-code), by starter/completer, current economic status, qualification aim and subject

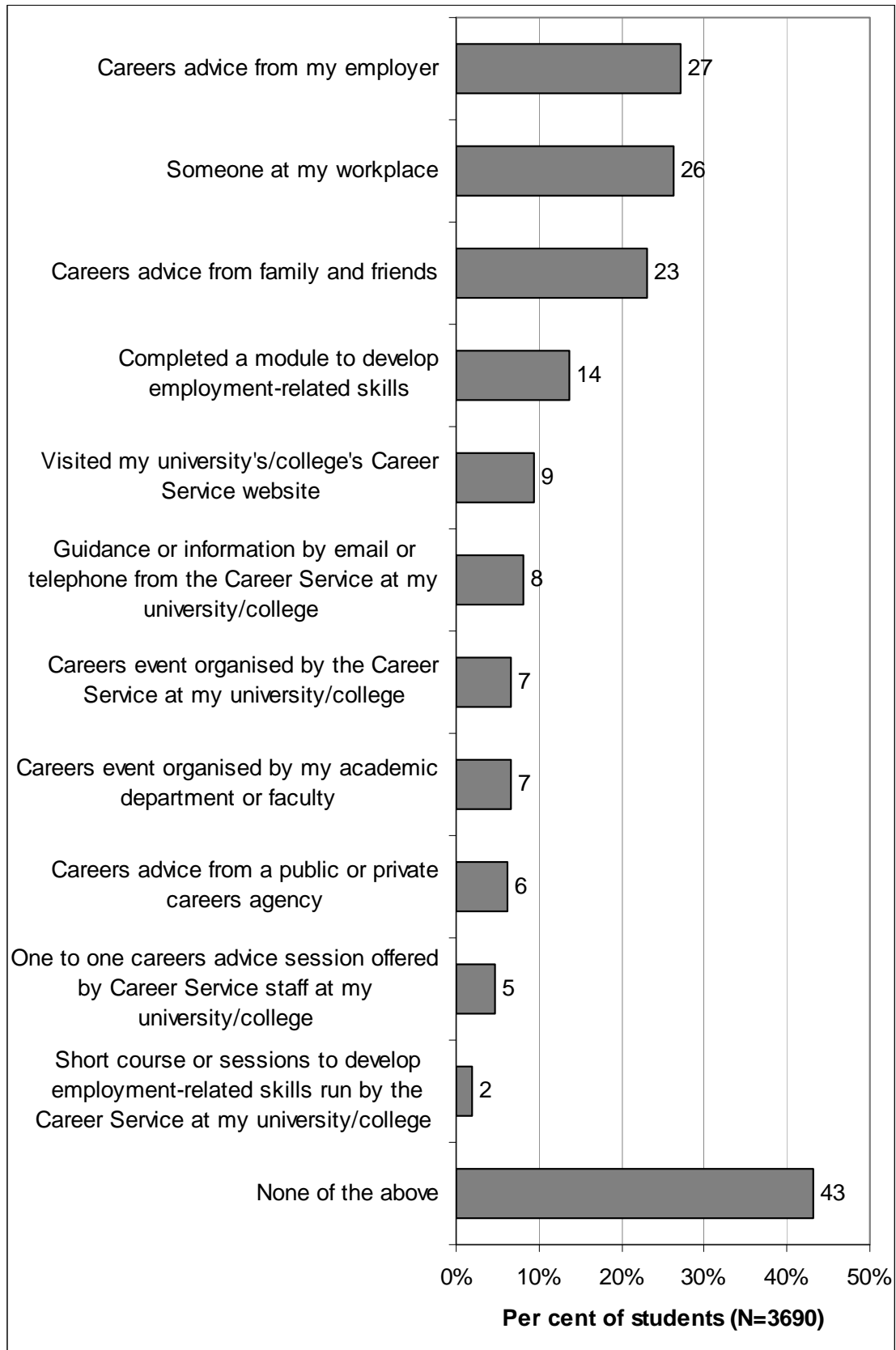
	Key reasons			All
	I knew what I wanted to do	I already have experience and knowledge to decide on my career options	I was unaware of the service	
	%	%	%	N
First year starter or final year completer?				
Starter	42	28	21	1340
Completer	48	38	22	1162
Current economic status				
Employed full-time	47	35	21	1832
Employed part-time	39	27	21	392
Not employed	40	21	26	277
Qualification aim				
First degree	43	32	21	1755
Foundation degree	47	34	24	520
Higher National	50	31	20	227
Subject				
Engineering/technology	49	40	21	498
Social science	44	31	19	629
Law	47	34	21	233
Business	42	28	21	611
Education	44	31	26	492
All	45	32	21	2502

Base: Students who did not have contact with their university/college career service in the academic year 2007/08
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Career guidance opportunities used

We next turn to the types of career guidance opportunities that students have take advantage of during the academic year (Figure 4.10). Students have used a wide range of career information, advice, and guidance and no single source is very dominant. Interestingly here just 43% of students report not having used any of these services, so well over a half of the students accessed some career information. This suggests that there is considerable demand for some form of career guidance among part-time students but this demand currently is not being met by university career services. The fact that most students did not use their university's career service, as discussed above, did not necessarily mean that they did not seek out or want careers advice and guidance. It suggests that university/college career services, as suggested by Little et al (2005), need to re-orientate their services and do more to help part-time students prepare for career advancement or career change.

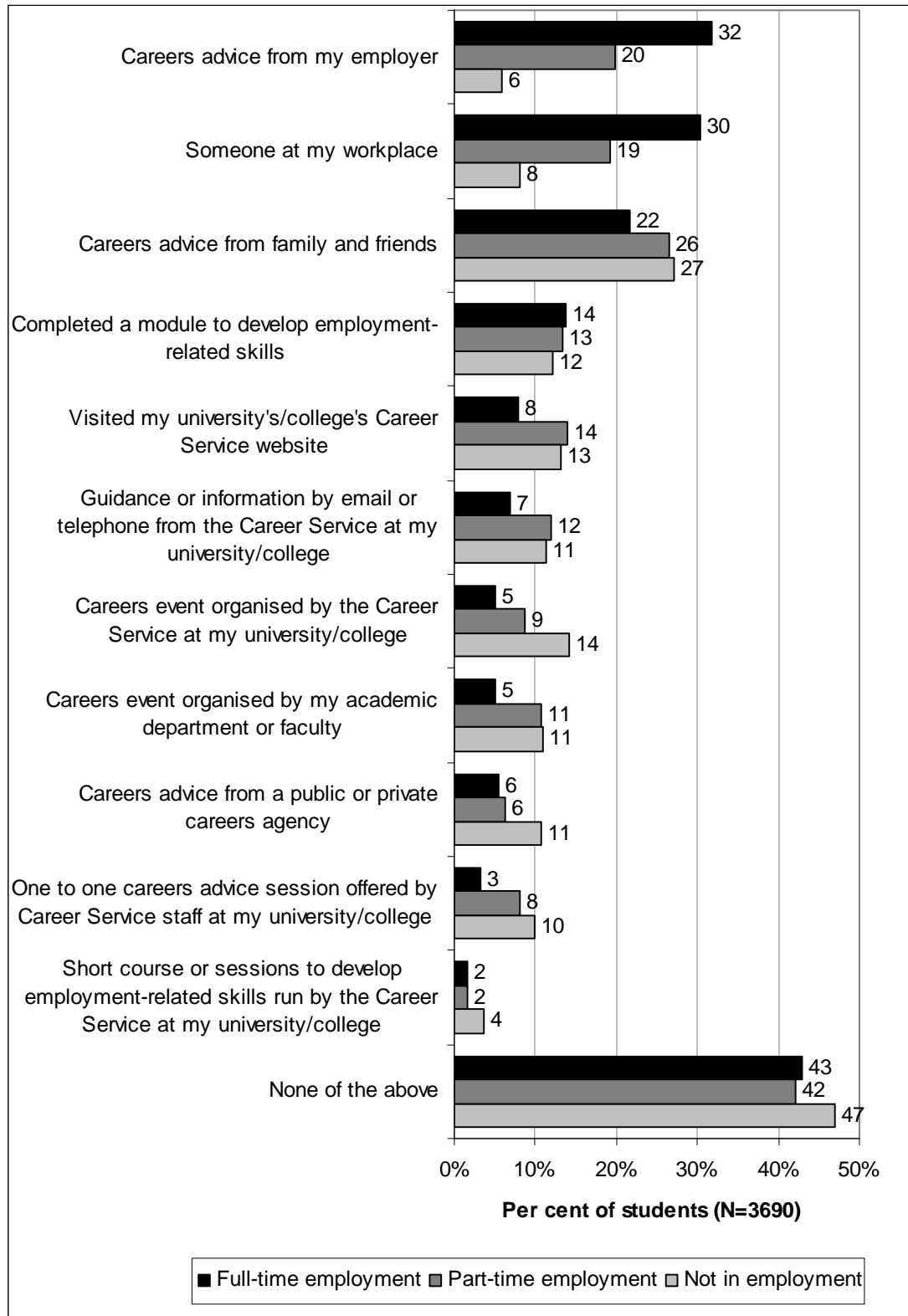
Figure 4.10 Sources of careers information, advice and/or guidance used by students in the 2007/08 academic year



Base: All Students
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Figure 4.11 shows how these figures vary by current employment status and show the importance of career advice from employers for those employed full-time and the reliance on other sources for other students, particularly those who are not employed. It also is of concern that students who are not employed rely most often on their friends and family who are unlikely to be best placed to give detailed career advice compared to the other professional avenues open to students such as their university/college career service.

Figure 4.11 Sources of careers information, advice and/or guidance used by students in the 2007/08 academic year, by current economic status



Base: All Students
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

The most helpful source of career information, advice, and guidance

Table 4.7 indicates the source of information advice and guidance that students reported as the most helpful. Here, in line with the incidence of sources used, employment based sources were most often cited with 25% of students citing their employer and 21% someone at their workplace. Family and friends were the most helpful for 15% of students, whilst 10% cited a module to develop employment-related skills. University/college career services sources were cited as the most helpful by only a minority of students.

Table 4.7 Percentage of students reporting the most helpful source of careers information, advice and/or guidance used by students in the 2007/08 academic year by whether a starter or completer

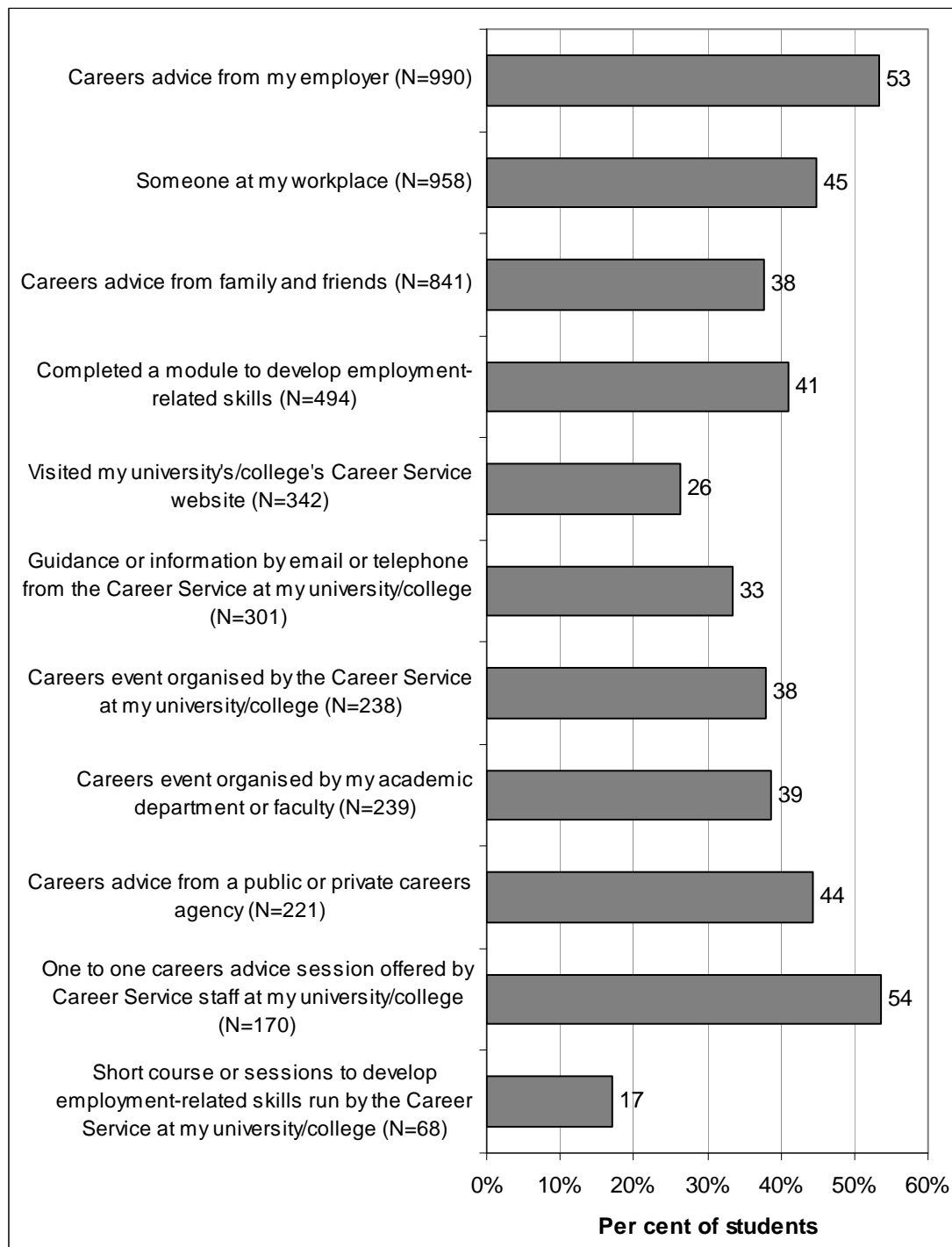
Most useful source of advice	All	Starters	Completers
My employer	25	28	23
Someone at my workplace	21	21	20
Family and friends	15	15	15
A module to develop employment-related skills	10	12	8
University/College career service website	4	4	5
Guidance or information by email or telephone from the Career Service at my university/college	5	5	5
Careers event organised by the Career Service at my university/college	4	4	5
Careers event organised by my academic department or faculty	4	5	4
Careers advice from a public or private careers agency	5	3	7
One to one careers advice session offered by Career Service staff at my university/college	4	3	6
Short course or sessions to develop employment-related skills run by the Career Service at my university/college	1	1	1
Base N	2,070	1,024	1,046

Base: Students who reported at least one source of careers information, advice, and/or guidance used in the 2007/08 academic year

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Figure 4.12 extends this analysis reporting the percentage of students who had used a particular source of information who also reported it as the most helpful. It shows that 53% of students', who accessed career information from their employer, rated this information as the most helpful. Overall, employer sources rate highly with "someone at my workplace" having a helpfulness rating of 45%. Also highly rated were one-to-one careers advice sessions at the university/college (54%) and careers advice from public or private careers agency (44%).

Figure 4.12 Percentage of the students who had used each source of careers information, advice and/or guidance who thought that the source was the most helpful



Base: Students who reported at least one source of careers information, advice, and/or guidance used in the 2007/08 academic year Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

University/college websites gained the lowest rating (26%) perhaps reflecting that they are geared to full-time students and younger students entering the labour market or because the material on these websites tends to provide very general careers information.

It is clear from the sources part-time students rated the most helpful, that these students preferred face to face interaction with a careers advisor and a more personal approach offered by their university/college career service, their employer and staff at careers advice agencies. They also welcomed the opportunities to learn specific employment related skills, a finding that seems to contradict McDowells' (1993) findings. Such provision is more resource intensive than the delivery of IAG via websites, but is more likely to meet the specific needs of part-time students who are older and already engaged in the labour market, unlike most full-time students. Consequently, if higher education institutions want to capture a larger proportion of part-time students and actively help them to formulate and meet their career ambitions, they may need to rethink their information, advice, and guidance strategies for part-time students. Specifically, they may need to tailor their provision so that the information, advice and guidance, offered to part-time students more closely meets the needs of those wanting career progression and career change. This is important so that part-time students can maximise the human capital returns of their higher education and to aid the delivery of wider government HE and skills policies. These findings also suggest, as noted by Butcher et al (1998), that the changes required lie at an institutional level whereby the requirements of part-time students are given greater priority and esteem, and that more resources are allocated accordingly.

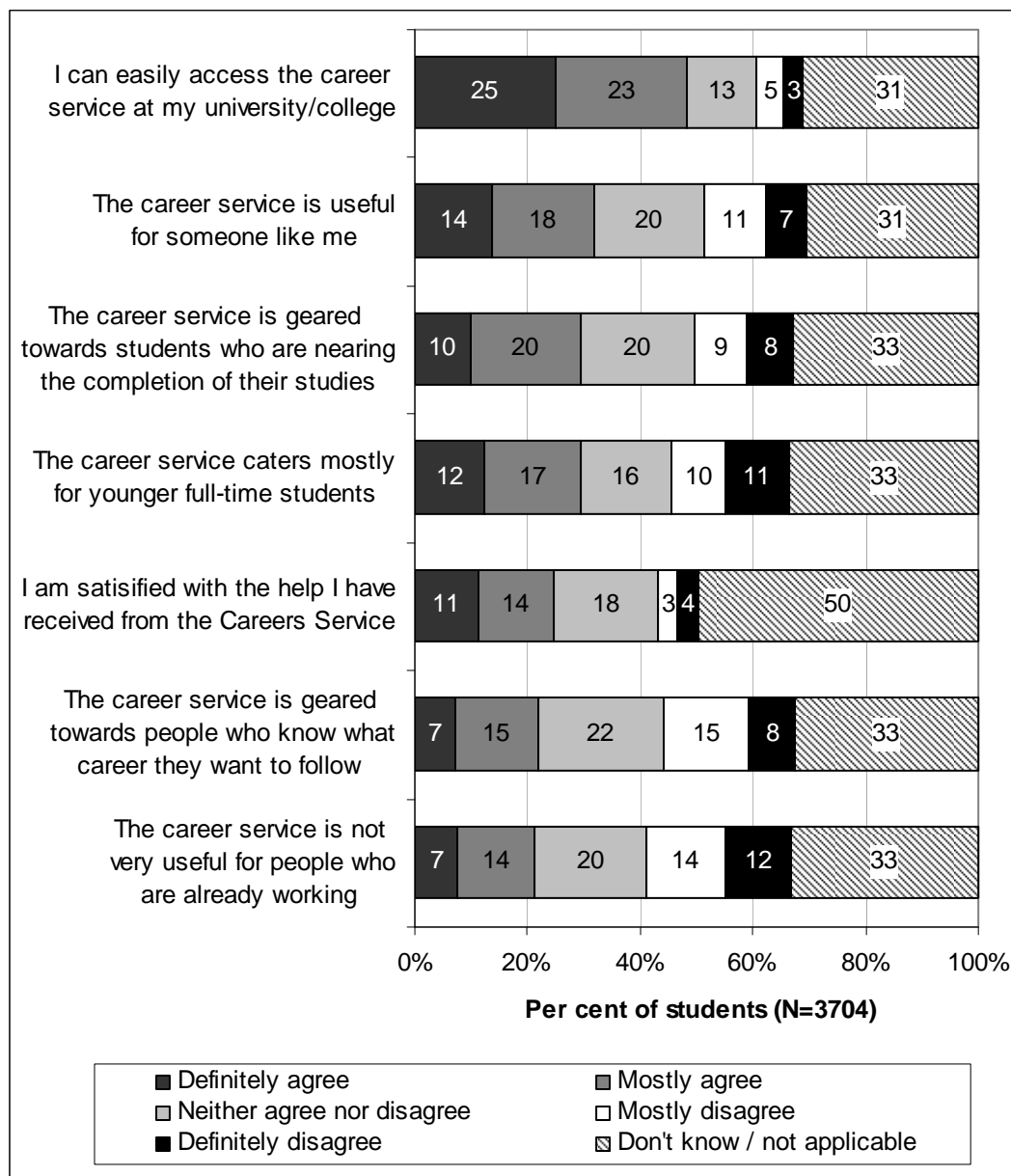
For Foundation degree students, the Careers Service may have a special role to play in terms of guiding students to the most appropriate defined progression routes. As research suggests (Dodgeson and Whitham 2005), appropriate information, advice and guidance is required to aid progression to articulated awards and other progression opportunities. In turn, such progression furthers the policy aim of widening participation.

Student views about the career service at their university/college

Students were asked a series of questions about the career services at their university/college with the option to agree or disagree with a number of statements (Figure 4.13).

It is not possible to unpick 'don't know' or 'not applicable' responses which are common across all questions and might have different interpretations. Roughly one-third of students reported 'don't know' or 'not applicable' to all statements except "I am satisfied with the help I have received from the career service" for which half the students reported 'don't know' or 'not applicable'.

Figure 4.13 Student's views of the Career Service at their university/college



Base: All Students
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

There was a range of responses with quite large numbers of students agreeing and disagreeing to most questions.

Access to the career service did not seem to be a big problem. Nearly half the students (48%) agreed, “I can easily access the career service at my university/college” whilst only a minority (8%) disagreed with this statement.

There was more mixed evidence regarding the views about the appropriateness of the services offered although those that had used them were largely satisfied. Around 30 per cent of students agreed that “the career service is useful for someone like me” (32%); “the career service is geared towards students who are nearing the completion of their studies” (30%); and “the career service caters mainly for younger full-time students” (29%), whilst slightly fewer students disagreed with these three statements (18%, 17% and 21% respectively).

However, 25% agreed, “I am satisfied with the help I have received from the career service” whilst just 7% disagreed. Note also here that half the students did not report a view on this statement so the satisfaction ratings would be doubled – 50% would agree and 14% disagree.

Views are also mixed with regard to career services for people who know what they want to do or are working. A slightly higher percentage of students disagreed with the following statements than agreed with them: “the career service is geared towards people who know what career they want to follow” 23% disagree, 22% agree; and “the career service is not very useful for people who are already working” 26% disagree, 21% agree.

Overall, the university/college career services were working well for some students, but not for others. There are quite widespread perceptions that the services are not for everybody and university/college career service will need to address these beliefs.

4.4 Conclusions and summary

Only a third of new entrants had sought any careers information, advice, or guidance before starting their course. This was because most knew what they wanted to do and had experience to call upon to weigh up their career options. In addition, the vast majority did not think they needed more help and advice in choosing their course of study. It was primarily for these reasons that only a third of students had used their university/college career service once they got to university. However, around a third of students who had not used this service was unaware of its existence, or thought the service did not cater for people already with jobs or for those studying part-time. This suggests that university/college career services need to do much more to market their facilities to increase student awareness and to broaden their provision.

When students did seek careers information, advice, and guidance either before starting their course or during their course, those who were employed mostly relied on their employer or someone at work for such advice, which they also rated the most helpful sources of careers information, advice, and guidance. By contrast, those who were not employed depended primarily on help from family and friends, which they rated as the most helpful source. Non-employed students were also more likely than the employed to have had some contact with their university/college career service while at university, along with those in their final year of study, ethnic minority students, and those without a higher education qualification.

This means that most part-time students may not be receiving impartial or broadly informed career advice, when compared with the advice likely to be provided by a professional career advisor. In addition, the fact that the majority of students sought some form of careers information, advice, and guidance while at university demonstrates an appetite for such help and support, and potential missed opportunities for university/college career services. Therefore, while there is a demand for careers information, advice, and guidance among part-time students, university/college career services are not fulfilling that demand. To meet that demand universities and colleges need to prioritise the requirements of part-time students and allocate more resources to them. Specifically, they need to re-orientate their services away from services preparing younger students to enter the labour market to those catering for older students already with experience of the labour market who want information advice and guidance on career progression and career change. The university and college career services also need to acknowledge these students’ preferences for a more personalised approach and for face-to-face interaction with a careers advisors rather than delivering services via websites.

Detailed findings

Starters' career seeking behaviour before they started their course

- Only a minority of students (33%) in their first year of study had sought some careers information, advice, or guidance before starting their course. Those students most likely to seek help were younger students, those with a partner, ethnic minority students, from low household incomes, and studying Engineering, Technology and Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- The main reasons first year students had not sought advice were because:
 - they knew what they wanted to do and did not need advice (64%), and
 - they have the experience and knowledge to decide about their career options (32%).
- There was no relationship between having a clear long-term career plan and starters' use of their university's career service

Sources of careers information, advice, and guidance used by starters before they started their course

- The most popular sources were:
 - their employer (32%);
 - the careers service at their university/college (30%);
 - family and friends (26%); and
 - someone at their workplace (26%).
- The most helpful sources were:
 - the careers service at their university/college (16%);
 - their employer (14%); and
 - someone at their workplace (14%).
 - The vast majority (90%) of students in their first year of study thought there was more than enough or just enough career information, advice, and guidance.

Students' contact with their university's career service

- Only a minority of all students – a third - had had any contact with their university career service over the academic year of 2007/08. Those most likely to have had some contact included completers, male students, ethnic minority students, students who were not employed, with a Level 3 qualification on entry, and studying Social Sciences, Law and Education, once other characteristics were controlled for.
- The main reasons students had had no contact were:
 - they knew what they wanted to do and did not need advice (45%),

- they have the experience and knowledge to decide about their career options (32%); and
- they were unaware of the service (21%), especially female students and those aged under 25, once other characteristics were controlled for.

Career guidance opportunities

- Over a half of all students (57%) had accessed some careers information, advice, and guidance over the academic year from a wide variety of sources.
- Only a small minority of students had used any of the opportunities specifically offered by their university's career service. The most popular opportunities exploited were careers advice:
 - from their employer (27%);
 - someone at their workplace (26%); and
 - family and friends (14%);
- Students employed full-time relied much more heavily on their employer and someone at their workplace for careers guidance while students employed part-time, or not at all, depended on their friends and family and the opportunities offered by their university.
- The most helpful sources of careers information, advice and guidance for those using the source were:
 - one to one careers session offered by Careers Service staff at their university/college (54%);
 - careers advice from their employer (53%);
 - careers advice from someone at their workplace (45%);
 - careers advice from a public or private careers agency (44%); and
 - a module to develop employment related skills (41%).
- So there was a very marked difference between the most frequently used sources of careers information and those rated the most helpful.

Students' views about their university career service

- The university/college career services were working well for only a minority of students but there were widespread perceptions that the services are not for everybody.
- Accessing the service was not a problem with nearly half believing that it was easily accessible.

5 THE COSTS OF STUDY – WHO PAYS?

5.1 Introduction

Issues concerning the costs of study and the financial support available to help undergraduates with those costs have dominated much of higher education policy in recent years. It was a focus of the 2003 White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003) and the resulting 2004 Higher Education Act, which introduced variable fees for full-time undergraduate courses of up to £3,000. One of the consequences of this change was an increase in income from fees for HEIs. However, part-time HE providers did not benefit from these increases in tuition fees, which placed them at a disadvantage financially. This was particularly the case for HEIs with high proportions of part-time students or those that only catered for part-time students such as the Open University and Birkbeck College, who could not cross-subsidise part-time provision with any increased income from full-time courses. Moreover, while the new student funding system allowed full-time students to defer payment of their tuition fees via government-subsidised student loans until after graduation, no such facility was available to part-time students and they continued to pay their fees up-front. Consequently, this limited the opportunities for HEIs to raise their unregulated part-time undergraduate fees in line with the increase in full-time tuition fees, without putting at risk enrolments.

In addition, full-time undergraduates receive far more generous loans and grants towards their living costs than their part-time peers. While all full-time students are eligible for loans and grants, as we will see, only a very small minority of part-time students are (Fazackerley et al 2009). This is primarily because the government believes that as most part-time undergraduates are employed, they can afford to pay their fees, or that their employers will pay for them. However, as we have seen, employers are very selective in who they help and tend to favour those most advantaged in the labour market.

As the House of Commons (2009) Innovation, Universities, Science, and Skills Committee Report on *Students and Universities* recently concluded:

“In our view, the case for improving the treatment of part-time and mature students is compelling. In equity all students must be treated in the same manner. Any system that does not achieve this will discriminate against groups—in this case part-time and mature students—and this is unacceptable. Nor does it make sense, given the scale of the improvement in education and skills that the Government wants to see by 2020, to deny support to part-time and mature students, who have a crucial part to play in achieving this objective. We recommend that the forthcoming review of fees examine all aspects of support for part-time and mature students, including both the direct financial support to part-time students and the nature of changes required which will enable the sector to develop greater flexibility to meet the needs of part-time students. We further recommend that this assessment set a deadline by which the treatment of, and support for, undergraduate students becomes broadly similar, irrespective of whether students study full-time or part-time.” (para 152)

At the time of writing, the current system of student finances for both full and part-time students was under review. On 9th November 2009, the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, headed up by Lord Browne, was launched with all political party support. The Review arose from a commitment made by the Labour Government during the Commons stages of the Higher Education Act 2004 to appraise the operation of variable tuition fees for full-time students after these had been in force for three years. Specifically, it was ‘tasked with making recommendations to Government on the future of fees policy and financial support for full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate

students' (BIS 2009a), focusing on quality, participation and sustainability. It was to report after the May 2010 general election.

The inclusion of part-time students within the Review's remit was indicative of a shift in policy priorities, discussed in the introduction, and is in marked contrast to the treatment of part-time students in the 2003 White Paper. At the time of writing, the Browne Review had not reported. However, the overview of the first call for evidence published by the Review in March 2010 (Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, 2010 p3) commented in relation to part-time student funding:

'There was also a clear consensus that the student finance system for part-time students is not sufficient, especially when compared to the support provided for full-time students. This creates perverse incentives for both students (who get more support by choosing full-time study) and institutions (which might be discouraged from providing innovative modes of part-time study). The sheer diversity of the part-time student population makes it more difficult to provide authoritative evidence of the knock-on impact of the 2006 reforms, but it is clear that the current system presents skewed incentives at a time when flexible and innovative provision is important.'

This chapter highlights why 'the student finance system for part-time students is not sufficient.' It is concerned with the costs of study and the nature of the financial support, if any, received by students. It first looks at whether students sought any information about financial support before studying and what sources they looked at. It then looks at whether tuition or course fees were payable and if so how much and who paid them. Data on other course costs and expenditures are then considered and eligibility for and take up of government support are examined.

5.2 Information on financial support before studying

Whether sought information on financial support before studying

Nearly two-fifths of students had looked for information about financial support before starting their course (Figure 5.1). Our multivariate analysis indicates a range of factors were associated with whether students sought information about financial support. These are shown in Table 5.1. The students more likely to look for information about financial support before they started their course were starters, ethnic minorities, part-time employees and those not employed, from low-income households, with a level three qualification or lower, had no family member with a HE qualification, taking a first degree, studying Law or education and studies at the Open University. In other words, students most in need of financial help and least likely to get it from an employer, had looked for information.

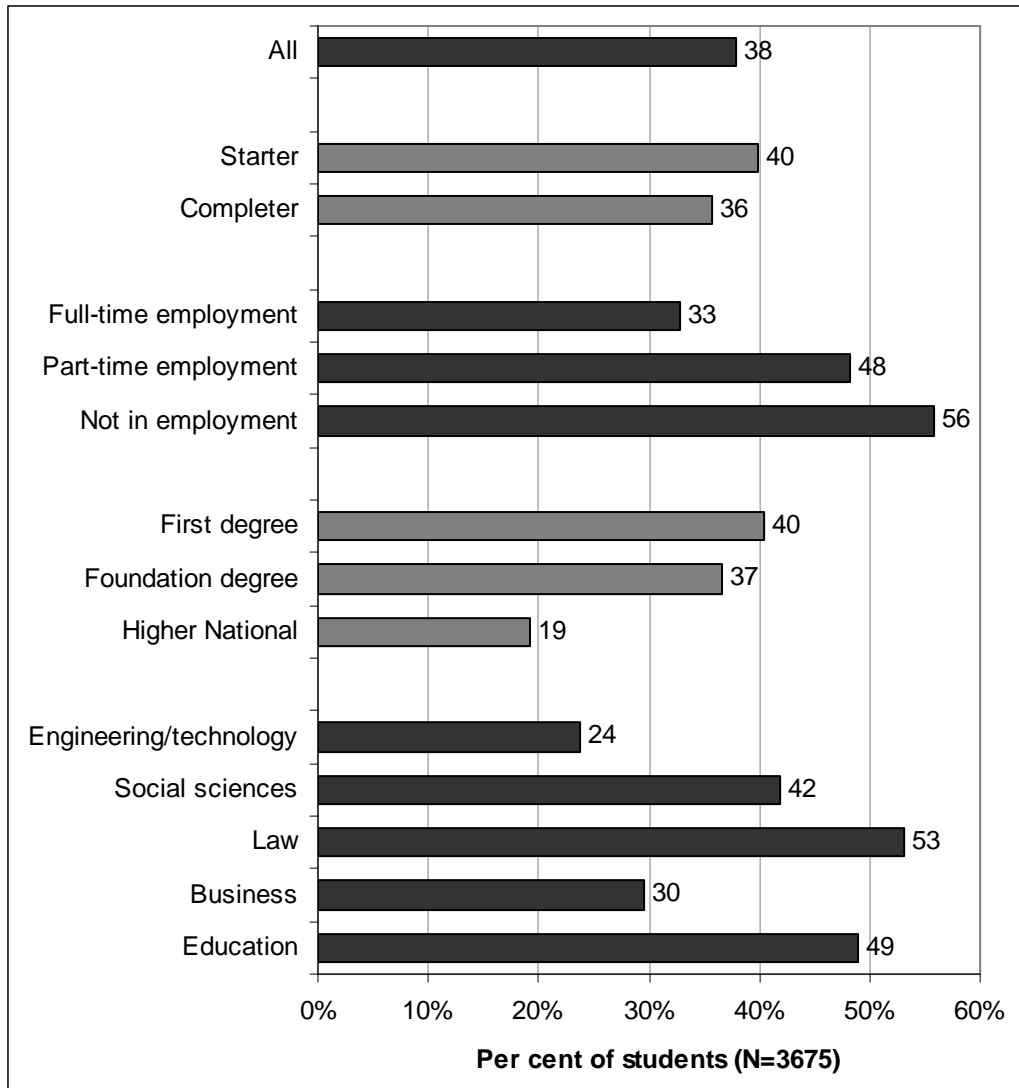
Table 5.1 Factors associated with students' reporting they sought information about financial support for students studying part-time before they started their course

Factors associated with seeking information	Factors associated with not seeking information
Starter	Completer
Not white	White
Not employed and employed part-time	Employed full-time
Students from low-income household	Students from high and medium income household
Students with level 3 qualification or below	Students with level 4 or 5 qualification
No family member with an HE qualification	Family member with an HE qualification
First degree students	Foundation degree or Higher National students
Students studying Law and Education	Students studying Engineering or technology and Business
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Figure 5.1 shows how the percentage of students who sought information on financial support for part-time students before the start of their course varies by some of the key characteristics. Students who were not employed were the most likely to have sought information about financial support (56%), whilst Higher National students were the least likely (19%).

The subject differences are large in these raw percentages with Law (53%) and Education (49%) students more likely to have sought information on financial support and engineering or technology (24%) and Business (30%) students less likely. Starters (40%) were also more likely to have sought information on financial support than completers (36%).

Figure 5.1 Students who sought information about financial support for students studying part-time before starting their course, by starter/completer, by economic status immediately before starting course, qualification aim and subject



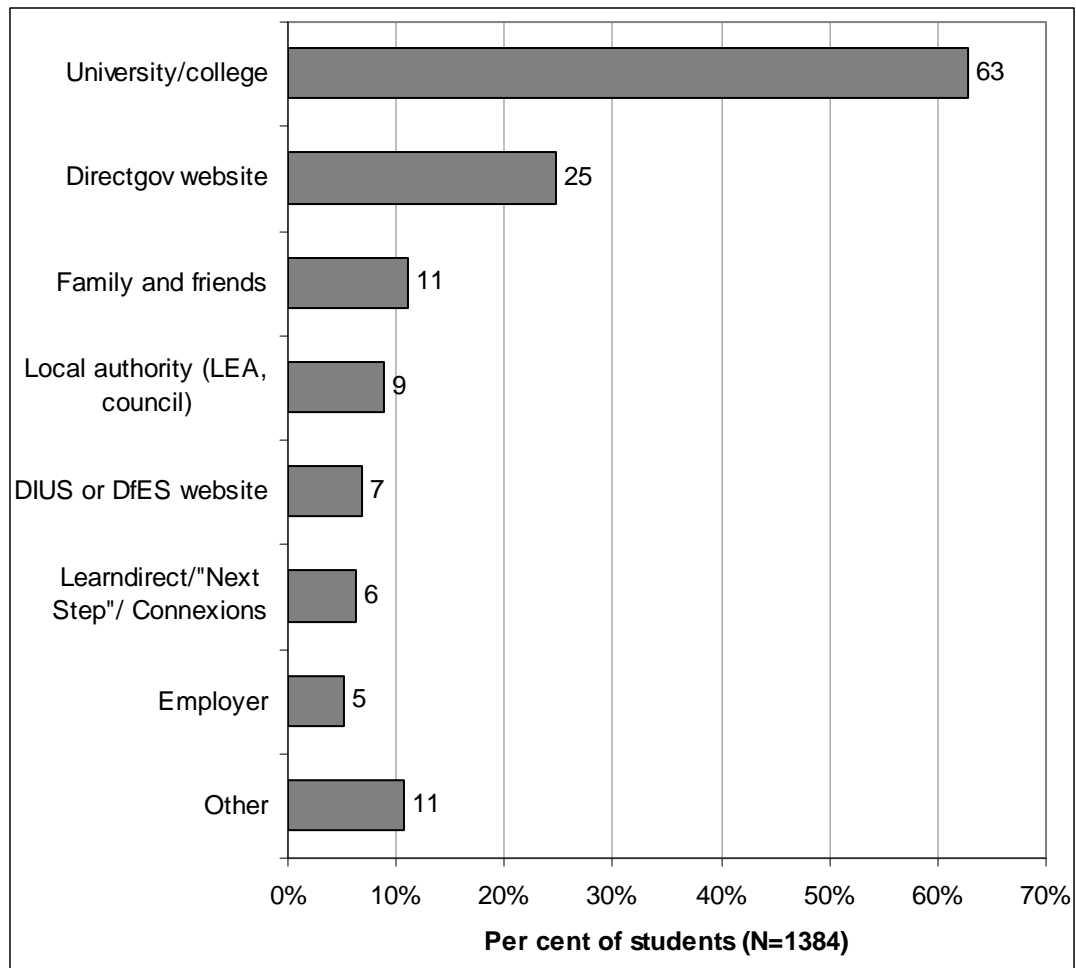
Base: All Students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Sources of information on financial support sought before studying

For those students that did seek information on financial support Figure 5.2 shows the sources of information used. This clearly indicates that the majority of students (63%) sought information from universities and colleges before starting their course, but also a significant minority looked at the Directgov website. These findings illustrate the absence of a centralised source of information, except for the Directgov website, and the decentralised manner in which part-time students have to apply for government-funded support, unlike their full-time peers.

Figure 5.2 Sources of information about financial support for students studying part-time used by students before starting their course



Base: Students who sought information about financial support before starting their course

The other category includes NUS, Internet (unspecified), Student Loan Company / student finance direct, SAAS (Student Awards Agency for Scotland), colleagues / other students, Surestart, Early years / EYDCP

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

5.3 Tuition or course fees

Tuition or course fees payable

Almost all students (98%) reported that tuition or course fees were payable in the 2007/08 academic year. The majority of these fee-paying students (89%) were able to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount, overall reporting a mean amount of £1,166 and a median amount of £900 (Table 5.2).² The 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Survey found similar levels of tuition fees (£1,006) (Johnson et al 2009).

When these tuition fees are compared with those recorded before the introduction of variable fees for full-time students in 2006, it is clear that one of the consequences of the 2004 Higher Education Act is that part-time fees have risen well above inflation. For example, Callender et al's (2006) survey of students in 2005/06 found that average tuition fees were £821 while a year earlier the 2004/05 Student Income and Expenditure Survey reported an average tuition fee of £725 (Finch et al 2006). This suggests a rise of between 39 to 42% in tuition fees. Yet, part-time undergraduates do not have access to the government-funded loans put in place for full-time students following the introduction of variable full-time fees. Instead, they have to pay their fees upfront or in instalments.

The amount of fees payable varied by a range of characteristics (Table 5.2) including qualification aim, subject of study, whether studying at the Open University and the intensity of study. First degree students reported higher average fees but not higher median fees (mean £1209, median £900) than Foundation degree students (mean £1098, median £1000). Higher National students (mean £932, median £800) reported lower mean and median fees.

Law students reported the highest tuition or course fees (mean £1646, median £1500), by a substantial margin, Education students (mean £1006, median £800) and Social Science students (mean £1064, median £750) were the subject areas with the lowest tuition or course fees.

Open University students (mean £910, median £680) had lower tuition or course fees than students studying elsewhere (mean £1233, median £1000).

Tuition or course fees varied by the intensity of study with students studying less than half of the full-time equivalent reporting lower fees (mean £866, median £610) than students studying between 75 and 99% of full-time equivalent (mean £1293, median £1100). Students who reported their intensity of study as 100% or more of the full-time equivalent reported even higher fees (mean £1354, median £1200). Students who were unable to report a figure for the intensity of their study reported figures just above the overall average (mean £1217, median £1000).

The level of these fees by students' intensity of study gives some indication of the extent to which HEIs providing part-time courses are losing out financially compared to those providing full-time courses. At the time of the survey, in 2007/08, most universities were charging full-time undergraduates fees of £3,070. Therefore, we might expect students studying 50% of a full-time equivalent course to be paying £1,535. However, as we can see they only paid an average of £866. Indeed, since 2006, nationally only a minority HEIs had increased their part-time fees pro-rata to the maximum full-time undergraduate fee because of concerns about widening participation and the impact of higher fees on recruitment (UUK 2009).

² The average fees paid by all students irrespective of whether fees were paid was £1,148

Table 5.2 Tuition or course fees payable in the 2007/08 academic year, by qualification aim and subject

		Tuition / course fees payable in the 2007/08 academic year for students paying fees		
		Mean	Median	Base
		£	£	N
Qualification aim				
	First degree	1209	900	2346
	Foundation degree	1098	1000	656
	Higher National	932	800	238
Subject				
	Engineering/technology	1111	900	619
	Social science	1059	750	832
	Law	1646	1500	329
	Business	1249	1000	813
	Education	1007	800	648
Studying at Open University				
	Open University	910	680	672
	Not Open University	1233	1000	2568
Intensity of study				
	Less than 50% full-time equivalent	866	610	316
	50-59% full-time equivalent	1039	720	790
	60-74% full-time equivalent	1171	900	185
	75-99% full-time equivalent	1293	1100	175
	100% or more full-time equivalent	1354	1200	507
	Not reported	1217	1000	1252
All		1166	900	3240

Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

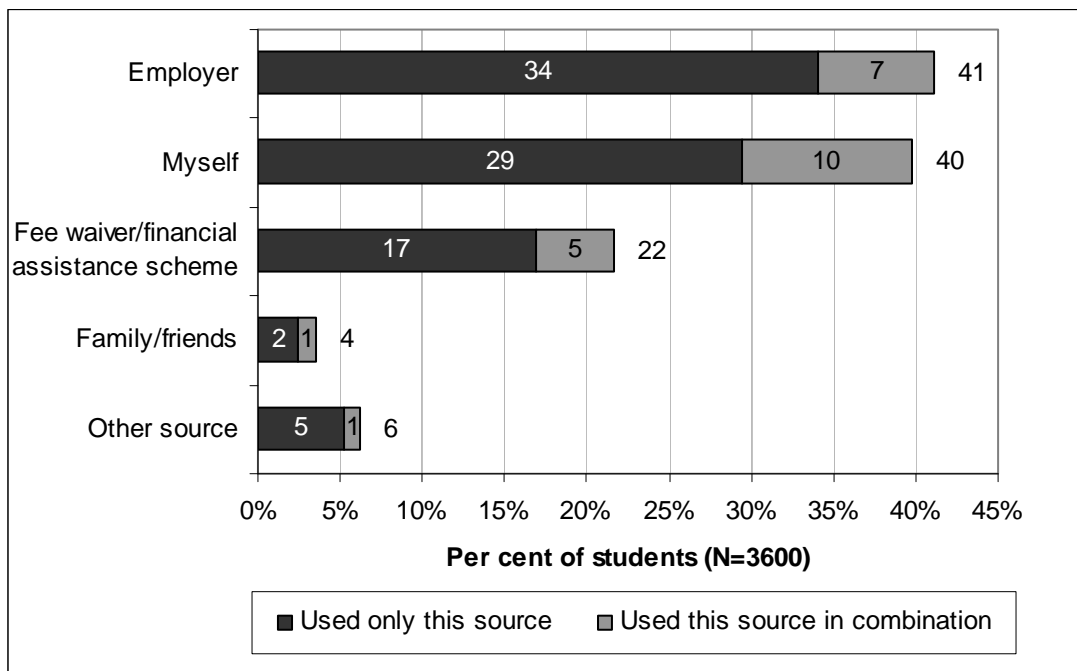
Sources used to pay for tuition or course fees

When fee-paying students were asked who had paid for their 2007/08 tuition or course fees, the majority (88%) reported using a single source of funding. Just 11 per cent of students reported using a combination of two sources, and less than 1 per cent reported using three or more.

Figure 5.3 shows the sources used to pay tuition or course fees. Overall a minority of students – some 41% of students received an employer contribution to their fees, a higher proportion than the third of students reported in the 2007/08 SIES (Johnson et al 2009) but a lower proportion than the 46% observed by Yorke et al (2008). For 34% of students surveyed, employers paid all the fees and for the remaining 7% they paid part of the fees. This suggests that employers can not be relied upon to pay for students' fees, which is one of the assumptions underpinning government policies on support for part-time students.

Two out of five students paid at least some of their fees themselves – a very similar proportion found by York et al (2008). Some 29% paid all of their fees and 10% paid part of their fees. More than one-fifth of students received some support from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme, financed primarily by the government but also by students’ university/college. For example, universities/colleges can use their own income derived from endowments or other sources to help students pay their tuition fees. Institutions can also call on their Access to Learning Funds to help students in hardship or where for instance students experience a shortfall between the value of their government fee grant and the actual fees charged by the institution. In most cases where students received support from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme, this covered all of their fees (17%) with just 5% where the fee waiver or financial assistance scheme covered part of their fees. Only a very small minority had contributions to fees from family or friends (4%) or any other sources (6%).

Figure 5.3 Sources used to pay for tuition or course fees



Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Employer contributions to fees

It is interesting to look at the characteristics of students more likely to receive fee contributions from their employers. Our multivariate analysis of fee contributions also considers the intensity of study as an additional control factor to see at what level of study employers support study with fee contributions.

Table 5.3 shows the factors associated with receiving employer fee support from this multivariate analysis. There are a wide range of factors influencing whether students got fee support from employers. Arguably, students least in need of employer support; those from high or medium income households and those who already had a Level 4 or 5 qualification; were most likely to benefit from such support. Also more likely to receive employer fee support were women, white students, full-time employees, students taking a foundation degree or higher national qualification, students studying engineering or technology and students not studying at the Open University. Employers were also more likely to provide fee support to students studying on a course at least half of a full-time equivalent.

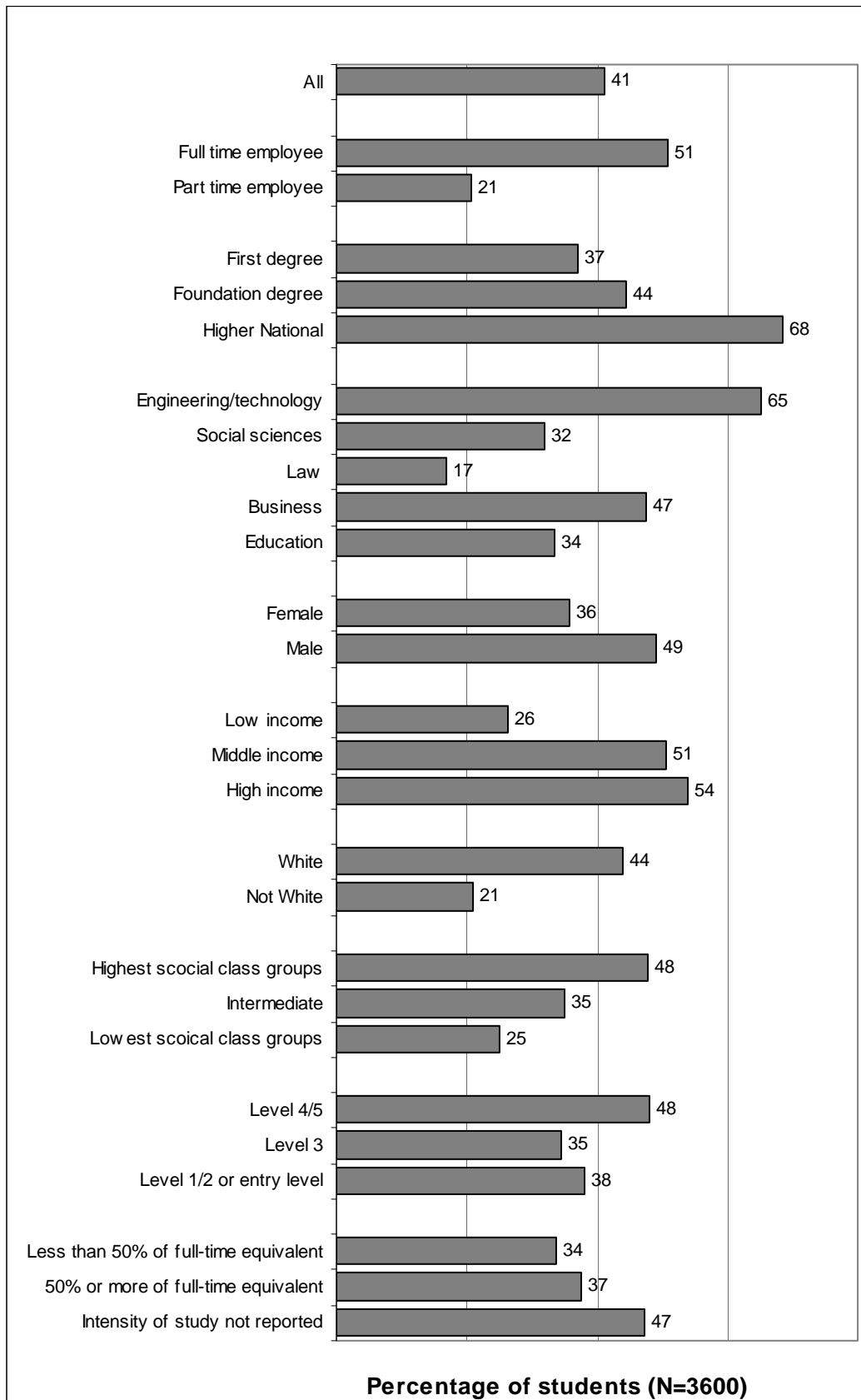
Table 5.3 Factors associated with employers contributing to tuition or course fees

Factors associated with employer fee support	Factors associated with no employer fee support
Female	Male
White	Not white
Full-time employee	Part-time employee
Students from high and medium income household	Students from low-income household
Students with level 4 or 5 qualification	Students with level 3 qualification or below
Foundation degree or Higher National students	First degree students
Students studying Engineering or technology	Students studying Law and Education
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University
Students studying at least 50% of full-time equivalent or intensity of study not reported	Students studying less than 50% of full-time equivalent

Figure 5.4 shows the percentage of students receiving employer support by some of these characteristics. Differences in nearly all of the characteristics presented are large and typically follow the patterns outlined in Table 5.3 except for differences by gender. Figure 5.4 shows a higher percentage of men (49%) received an employer contribution to their fees than women (36%) whereas this difference is overturned in the multivariate analysis when all other factors are taken into account.

Some socio-economic disadvantages were also amplified as shown by both the descriptive and multivariate analysis. Students from low-income households, the lowest social class groups, Non White students and students who did not already have a level 4 or 5 qualification were less likely to receive employer fee support than students from middle or high income households, the highest social class groups, White students and students with a level 3 qualification or less.

Figure 5.4 Percentage of students receiving employer contribution to tuition or course fees



Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

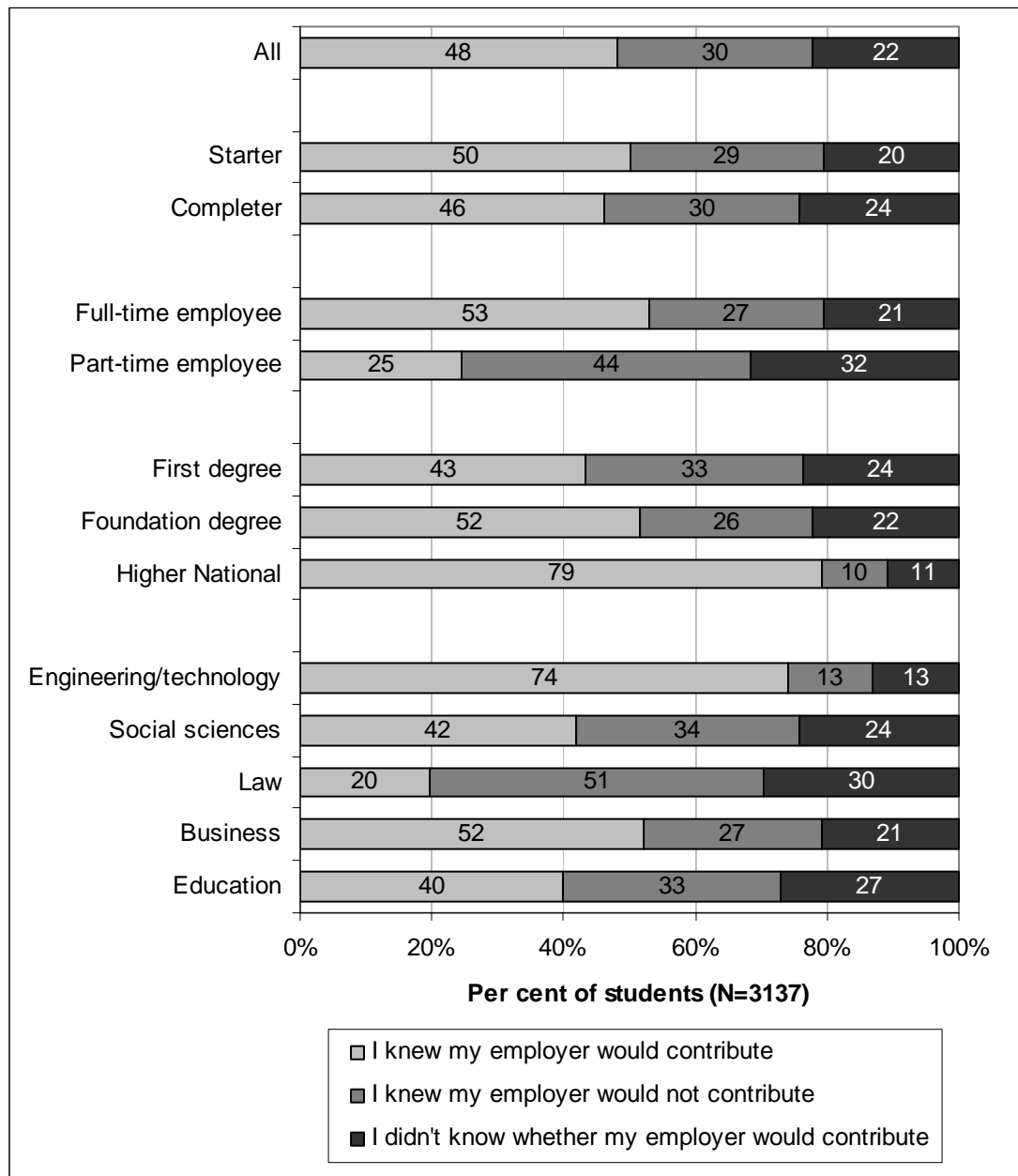
Student knowledge of employer fee support

Students working full-time or part-time for an employer immediately before starting their course were asked whether they were aware that their employer would help with the costs of their tuition or course fees before they applied for their course. Just under half (48%) of these students reported that they knew that their employer would contribute towards their tuition or course fees, while 30 per cent reported that they knew that their employer would not contribute. The remaining 22 per cent of students did not know before applying for their course whether or not their employer would contribute towards their tuition or course fees.

Differences in whether students were aware that their employer would help with the costs of their tuition or course fees before applying for their course are shown in Figure 5.5 by key student and course characteristics. The factors that affected whether the students knew whether their employer would contribute to fees were broadly similar to those for whom the course was a job requirement.

Higher National students were the most likely to have known that their employer would contribute (79%) followed by engineering or technology students (74%). Law students were the least likely to have known that their employer would contribute (20%) followed by part-time employees (25%).

Figure 5.5 Student knowledge of employer tuition or course fee support before starting their course, by key characteristics

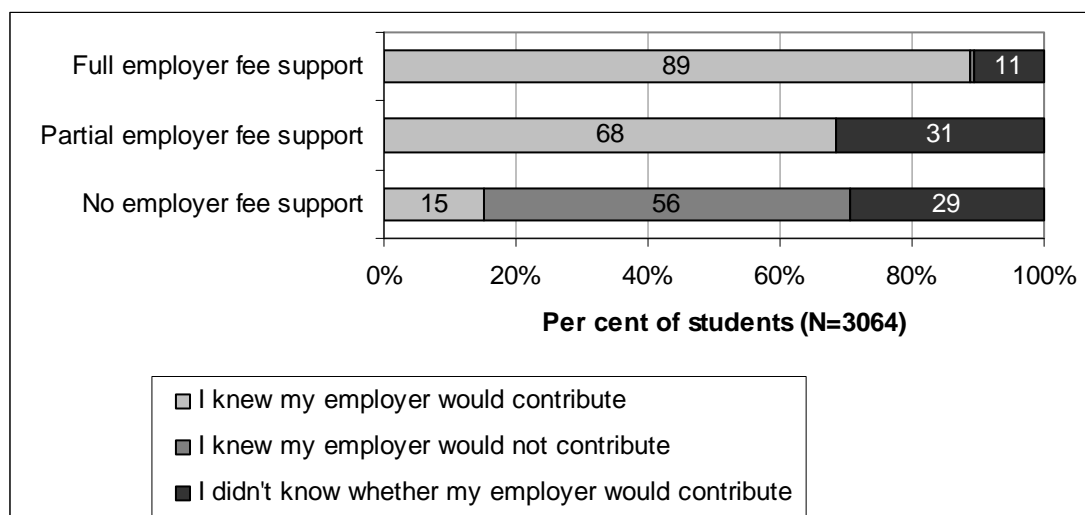


Base: Students employed as full-time or part-time employees immediately before starting their course
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

In addition, students' knowledge of employer tuition or course fee support before starting their current study varied by the level of employer fee support that was actually received (Figure 5.6). The vast majority (89%) of students who received full employer fee support in the 2007/08 academic year knew that they would receive this support before applying for their course, with only 11 per cent reporting that they did not know whether their employer would contribute. Of those students who received just partial fee support, a notably lower proportion (68%) reported that they knew their employer would contribute before applying for their course: these students were more likely to have not known whether they would receive an employer contribution or not (31%).

Interestingly, expected employer fee support was not always realised: 15% of students who received no employer fee support reported that they knew their employer *would* contribute before applying for their course. Nevertheless, just over half (56%) of the students who did not receive employer fee support were aware that their employer would not contribute before starting their course, and the remaining 29% did not know whether their employer would contribute or not.

Figure 5.6 Student knowledge of employer tuition or course fee support before starting their course, by level of employer fee support received



Base: Fee paying students employed as full-time or part-time employees immediately before starting their course
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Personal and fee waiver or financial assistance scheme contributions to fees

We consider students who personally make a contribution to their fees and students who receive help via a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme in the same way as for employer contributions. Table 5.4 shows the factors associated with students making their own contribution to fees, whilst Table 5.5 does the same for students who receive help via a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme. Figure 5.7 and 5.8 show how the percentage of students who received different contributions to fee payments varied by student, course and institution characteristics.

Students studying the Law for a First degree, at the Open University from higher income families who are older and only working part-time and have no children are most likely to pay for their own fees (Table 5.4 and Figure 5.7)

It is noteworthy that students who received help via a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme, from the government, their university/college or elsewhere, tend to mirror those students who do not receive any employer support. This includes low-income students with low level entry qualifications who are employed part-time or not at all and are studying towards a First degree, especially in Education and who are loan parents. In other words, these schemes compensate for the absence of employer support for tuition fees.

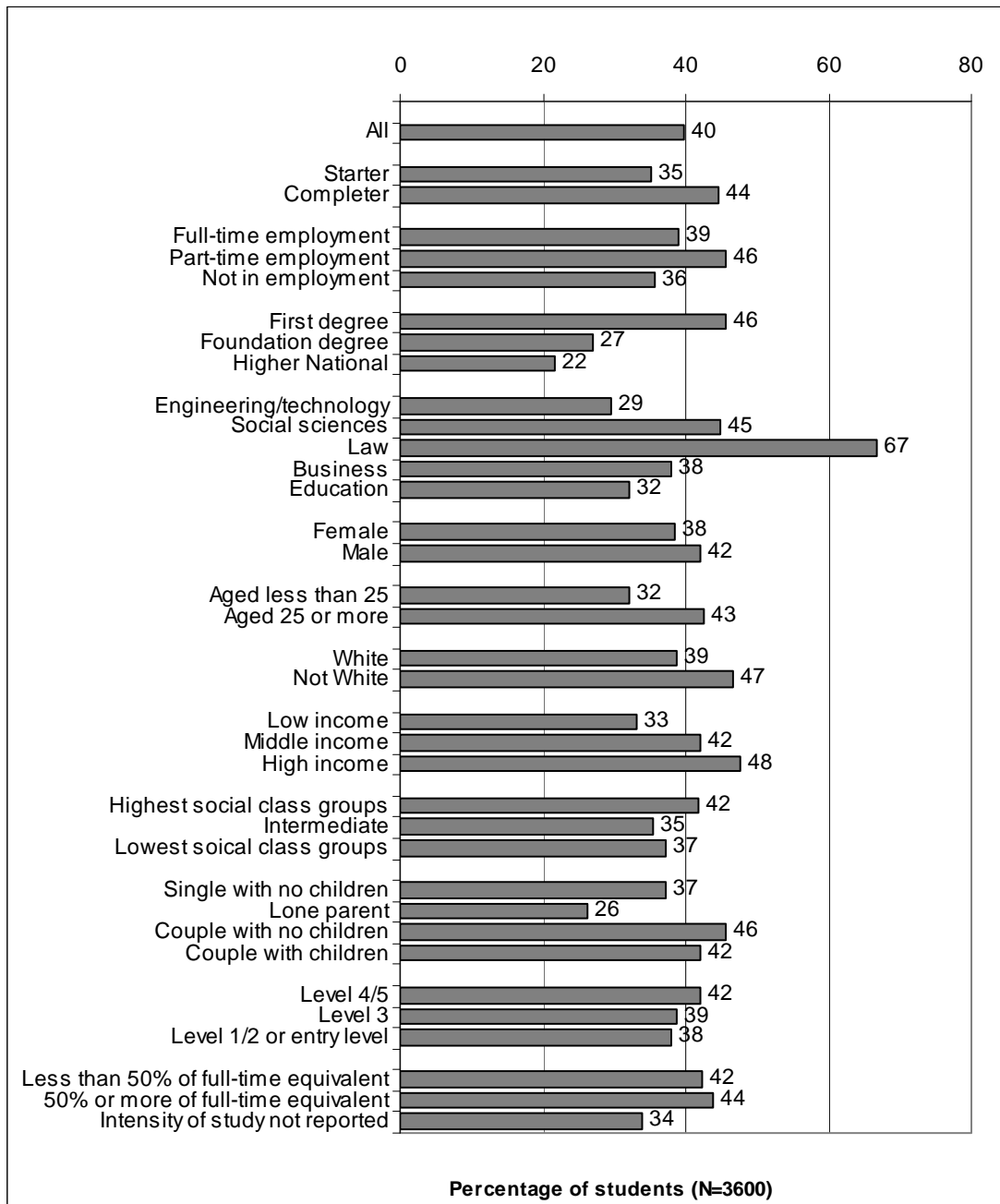
Table 5.4 Factors associated with students who pay some of their own tuition or course fees

Factors associated with paying own fees	Factors associated with not paying own fees
Completer	Starter
Aged 25 or more	Aged less than 25
Male	Female
Single students with no children and part of couple with no children	Lone parents
Employed part-time	Employed full-time and not employed
Students from high and medium income household	Students from low-income household
First degree students	Foundation degree or Higher National students
Students studying Law	Students studying Engineering or technology
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Table 5.5 Factors associated with students who receive help via a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme

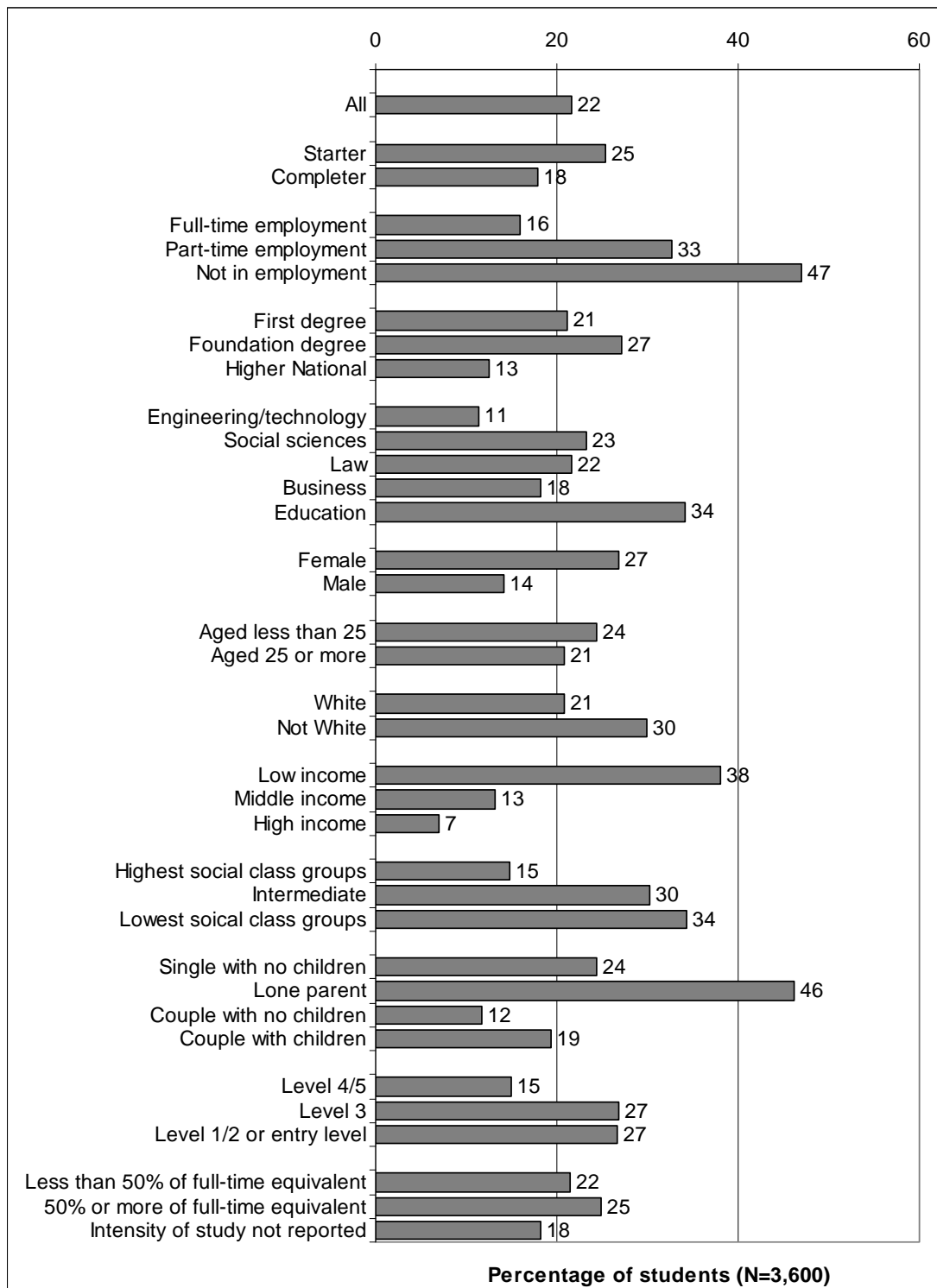
Factors associated with receiving fee waiver or financial assistance	Factors associated with not receiving fee waiver or financial assistance
Starter	Completer
Female	Male
Students with children	Students with no children
Employed part-time or not employed	Employed full-time
Students from low-income household	Students from high and medium income household
Students with level 3 qualification or lower	Students with level 4 or 5 qualification
First degree students	Higher National students
Students studying Education	Students studying Engineering or technology
Studying at the Open University or at FE colleges	Not studying at the Open University or FE college

Figure 5.7 Percentage of students making own contribution to tuition or course fees



Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Figure 5.8 Percentage of students who receive a few waiver or financial assistance for tuition or course fees



Base: Fee-paying students, excluding those unable to estimate their 2007/08 tuition or course fees amount
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

5.4 Course costs and expenditure

Students were asked about their expected expenditure on a range of items. Due to concerns over questionnaire length these questions were cut from the telephone sample part way through the survey period and respondents were asked to give an overall estimate of expenditure on the items (see technical appendix for further details). All online respondents were asked about the range of items. Table 5.6 shows the number and nature of responses.

From telephone interviews, 311 students reported a breakdown of expenditure, whilst 1,639 just reported an expenditure total. A further 129 students did not report any expenditure data. From online respondents, 1,492 students reported a breakdown of expenditure, and 133 students did not report any expenditure data. Overall then we have a breakdown of expenditure for 1,803 students and total expenditure for a further 1,639 students.

Table 5.6 Reporting of expenditure by mode of interview

	Mode of interview		All
	Telephone	Online	
Reported breakdown	311	1492	1803
Reported total	1639	0	1639
No data reported	129	133	262
All	2078	1626	3704

Base: All students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

For the 3,442 students for whom we can calculate total course related expenditure we find a mean of £513 and median £270. These amounts vary by whether the student reported a breakdown of expenditure (mean £564, median £350) or just a total (mean £457, median £200) and by the mode of interview. As noted above, there is considerable overlap between the two measures with all online interviews reporting a breakdown of expenditure and nearly all telephone interviews reporting only total expenditure.

It seems that the differences are driven by whether a breakdown of expenditure is reported or just a total because the total expenditure figures for when a breakdown is reported are similar for online (mean £560, median £350) and telephone interviews (mean £586, median £350).

Table 5.7 Expected total course-related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year, by mode of interview and by whether reported a breakdown of expenditure or just total expenditure

	Expected total course-related expenditure		
	Mean	Median	Base
	£	£	N
Online	560	350	1492
Telephone - All	478	200	1949
Reported breakdown – all	564	350	1803
Reported breakdown – telephone	586	350	311
Reported total – telephone	457	200	1639
All	513	270	3442

Base: All students reporting total expenditure
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Given these differences in total expenditure by whether a breakdown of expenditure is reported are evident, the remainder of our analysis focuses only on students who reported a breakdown in expenditure. This allows us to analyse a consistent sample of students for questions on expenditure and course costs and we also believe that total expenditure figures are likely to be more accurate when a breakdown is reported because it is less likely that students will have failed to include all items of expenditure in the total figures.

Therefore, students' average course costs were £564. This is a lower figure than the £884 reported in the 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Survey (Johnson et al 2009). To obtain a figure for students' average total participation costs, we can add to their course costs their average tuition fee costs of £1,166 (Table 5.2), which amounts to a total of £1,730.

Table 5.8 shows the factors associated with higher or lower total course related expenditure from our multivariate analysis. Table 5.9 shows how expenditure varies by some of the key characteristics that were found to be significant in our multivariate approach.

Table 5.8 Factors associated with higher total course-related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year

Factors associated with higher course-related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year	Factors associated with lower course-related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year
Completer	Starter
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Not White students	White students
Employed part-time or not employed	Employed full-time
Students from low-income household	Students from high income household
No family member with an HE qualification	Family member with an HE qualification
First degree students	Higher National students
Students studying Engineering or technology and Law	Students studying Education, Business and Social Science
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University

Students with higher course related expenditure were completers, younger, from ethnic minority groups, part-time employees or not employed, from low-income households, had no family member with a HE qualification, taking a first degree, studying engineering or technology or law and not studying at the Open University.

Looking at how the raw differences compare (Table 5.9) we find that students who were not employed had the highest mean expenditure, with higher expenditure than employed students across all the main categories of expenditure. Law students also had high expenditure that was related to higher travel and computer costs.

It is also worth noting that mean expenditure was much higher than median expenditure indicating that many students had expenditure well above these mean figures.

Table 5.9 Expected total course-related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year, by current economic status, qualification aim and subject

		Expected total course-related expenditure		
		Mean	Median	Base
		£	£	N
Cohort				
	Starter	522	330	1094
	Completer	630	350	710
Current economic status				
	Full-time employee	509	300	1336
	Part-time employee	674	400	312
	Other	825	400	156
Qualification aim				
	First degree	583	350	1400
	Foundation degree	528	330	298
	Higher National	426	240	105
Subject				
	Engineering/technology	540	220	314
	Social science	535	320	438
	Law	739	500	221
	Business	552	300	494
	Education	528	370	336
All		564	350	1803

Base: All students reporting total expenditure and a break down of expenditure
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Breakdown of course costs and expenditure

Table 5.10 shows the breakdown of course costs and expenditure by key items. Across all students the largest items of expenditure were travel (mean £191, median £100), computer costs (mean £131, median £0) and books (mean £106, median £100). The right hand panel of Table 5.10 shows the incidence of these costs such that the most frequently incurred expenditure was on books (78% or 1409 out of 1803 students reported some expenditure on books), travel (73%) and computer costs (43%). Table 5.9 also reveals some high levels of expenditure for students who incurred certain types of expenditure. For example, 6% of students (115 students) reported childcare costs with an average amount of £723. Similarly 3% of students (57 students) reported residential course costs with an average amount of £884.

Table 5.10 Expected total course-related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year, by item of expenditure

	Expected expenditure				
	All (Base N=1803)		Students who reported this item of expenditure		
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Base
	£	£	£	£	N
Books	106	100	135	100	1409
Travel to and from place of study	191	100	263	150	1310
Computer costs	131	0	304	200	777
Special equipment or materials	21	0	91	50	410
Registration fees	6	0	122	90	89
Childcare costs while studying	46	0	723	400	115
Residential course costs	28	0	884	400	57
Field trips	4	0	114	50	52
Exam fees	3	0	*	*	35
Other	29	0	337	100	156
All items	564	350	592	350	1721

Base: All students reporting total expenditure and a break down of expenditure
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

5.5 Government financial support

As we saw in the introduction to this chapter, government funded financial support for part-time students is deemed to be inadequate. Here we examine in more depth why this is the case.

Eligibility for government financial support

At the time the survey was conducted, in the 2007/08 academic year, part-time undergraduate students were potentially eligible for two means-tested grants: a grant for tuition fees of up to a maximum of £1,150 with a varying amounts depending on the students' intensity of study³; and a course grant to meet the costs of books, travel and other course expenditure of up to £250. Eligibility for these two grants is restricted to a narrow definition of part-time, namely, to part-time students whose HE qualification aim is not lower or equivalent (ELQ) than their existing HE qualification on entry (i.e. who do not already have a Level 4 Qualification (i.e. a First/Bachelor's degree or above) and students studying 50 per cent or more of a full-time course across their years of study. In addition, the grants are means-tested and depend on the students' own income, their partner's income, and the number of dependent children.

If a student has a partner, their partner's gross income is added to the student's income. Then, just like income tax, deductions are made from this amount as follows:

³ Students studying 50% to 59% of a full-time course can get a maximum of £795, those studying between 60% and 74% can get up to £920, and those studying 75% or more can get up to £1,150.

- Student's personal allowance £15,699
- Allowance for partner £2,000
- Allowance for first/eldest dependent child £2,000
- Allowance for each subsequent dependent child £1,000

To receive full support, in the 2007/08 academic year, a student's household income must be less than £15,700 (after the deductions listed above) and if it is between £15,700 and £26,180 partial help is available on a sliding scale, reducing their tuition fee grant, and then their course costs grant.

Thus, students may be ineligible for this student support because of their intensity of study (i.e. studying less than 50%), and/or they have already an undergraduate degree or higher qualification, and/or their household income is too high.

Consequently, access to support is not driven by financial need, but is determined initially by a student's existing qualifications and how many hours they study. Significantly, these two eligibility criteria automatically disqualify the majority of part-time undergraduates from receiving government-funded financial support. Some two-thirds (64%) of all UK domiciled part-time undergraduates studying in English HEIs are excluded because of their prior qualifications and hours of study. This proportion increases to 80% of students studying 'other undergraduate qualifications' but falls to a half of those aiming for a Bachelor's degree, a quarter taking a Foundation Degree, and 16% studying towards Higher Nationals.⁴ These restrictions disproportionately affect women who make up the majority of the part-time undergraduate population, and yet as a group earn less or have less access to alternative forms of financial support.

The exclusion of part-time students with qualifications aims lower or equivalent to their entry qualifications (ELQ) and those with a level 4 qualification from the receipt of government fee and course affects at least 39% of all part-time undergraduates.⁵ The disqualification of such students is at odds with the Labour government's skills agenda of re-skilling and up skilling the labour force, as set out in *Higher Ambitions* (BIS 2009). The policy is likely to deter people from reskilling, especially women who have had a career break, often for caring reasons, or others who have followed unconventional career paths. Similarly, it particularly affects those who find that the skills they acquired at the age of 18–21 are no longer appropriate or sufficient for their career development.

The arbitrary limitation of financial support for students studying 50% or more of a full-time course is similarly unfair. Around a quarter of students studying less than 50% has poor qualifications on entry and do not hold a level 4 qualification.⁶ These are exactly the type of people who, according to *Higher Ambitions* (BIS 2009), the Labour government wanted to attract into higher education - 'Adults in the labour market who do not have higher education qualifications [who] deserve a second chance to improve their own and their family's economic position' (BIS 2009 para 36 p. 37).

The 50% cut off disadvantages students who, for various reasons, cannot devote so much time to their studies. For instance, those with demanding jobs who want to develop their knowledge in a closely defined area, or who cannot get time off work to study, or those with

⁴ Author's own calculations based on HESA Student Record, 2007-08

⁵ Author's own calculations based on HESA Student Record, 2007-08

⁶ Author's own calculations based on HESA Student Record, 2007-08

family responsibilities. In addition, the 50% provision prejudices the chances of students with low-level or no qualifications from taking ‘taster’ courses because they are not ready for a major academic commitment. Again, these were the precisely the people identified in Labour’s *Higher Ambitions* who would benefit from flexible learning and who also were the focus of Labour’s widening participation policies. As *Higher Ambitions* observed ‘This improved flexibility of study will help those who have previously found it difficult to access higher education, such as parents with young children, to improve their skills’ (BIS 2009 para 8 p 26).

The third eligibility criteria for the receipt of government financial support is a student’s household income. However, the household income thresholds used in the calculation of the means-test are low, especially when compared to those used when calculating a full-time student’s access to maintenance grants. It is not possible to ascertain from national data the distribution of part-time students’ household incomes. However, our survey suggests that in 2007/08 approximately two-thirds of part-time undergraduates had annual household incomes of £25,000 and above. Most of these students would be ineligible for student financial support.

Government fee grant

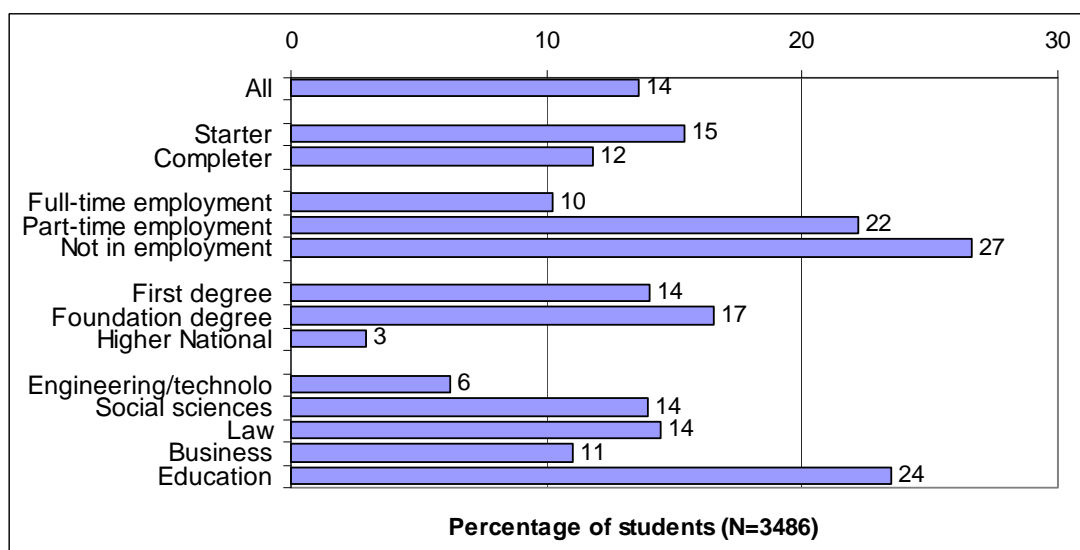
So how many part-time students surveyed actually received a fee grant worth up to a maximum of £1,150? Students who reported that they did not have any fees to pay or that they received some money for tuition or course fees from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme were asked if they had received a government fees grant. All of the students who had no fees to pay reported that they also did not receive a government fees grant, so it was not the case that they did not have fees to pay because they were paid by the government fees grant.

We have already seen that 22% of students had received money for tuition or course fees from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme (Figure 5.3). More than three-fifths of these students reported that they received a government fee grant (61%), such that overall 14% of students reported that they did receive a government fee grant averaging £793. By contrast, the 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Survey reported that 28% of part-time students received a tuition fee grant, averaging £711 (Johnson et al 2009).

The characteristics of students most likely to receive a government fee grant were exactly the same as those who reported that they got some contribution to course or tuition fees from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme (Table 5.5).

Figure 5.9 shows how the percentage of students who reported that they received a government fee grant varies by some of these characteristics. Those most likely to be awarded a grant were the most vulnerable financially. Students who were not employed (27%), studying Education (24%) and employed part-time (22%) were the most likely to receive a government fee grant, whilst students who were studying for a Higher National qualification (3%) were the least likely. On the whole, these were the students least likely to benefit from employer financial support with the costs of their fees, suggesting that government provision is acting as a safety net and compensating for market failure.

Figure 5.9 Percentage of students receiving government fee grant by key characteristics



Base: All students who reported whether they received a government fee grant

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Government course grant

All students were asked if they had received a government course grant. Just under one-fifth of students reported that they received a government course grant (Figure 5.10), worth an average of £242. The 2007/08 Student Income and Expenditure Survey also found the same proportion of student received a government course grant worth a similar amount.

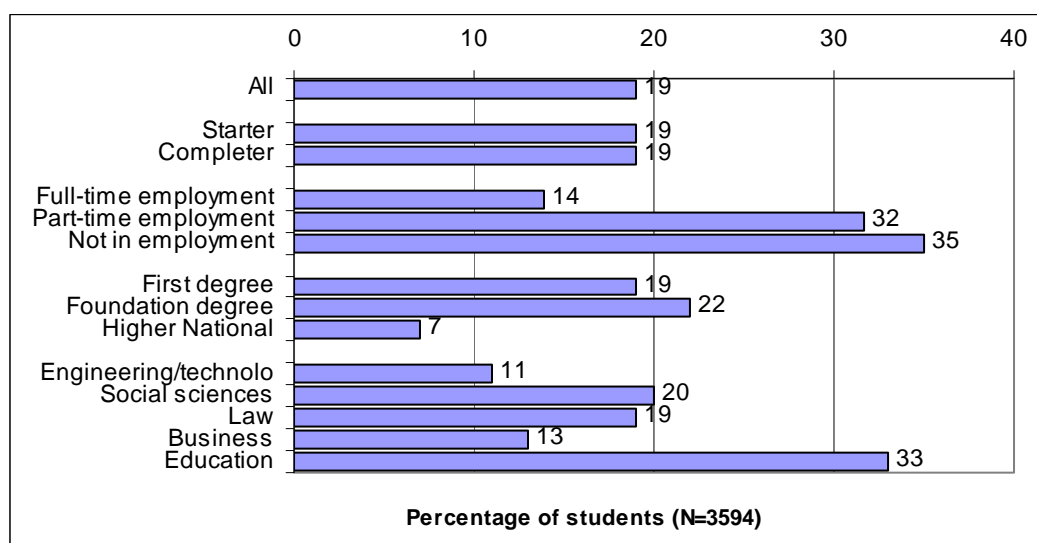
The characteristics of students more likely to receive a government fee grant were similar to those who reported that they got some contribution to course or tuition fees from a fee waiver or financial assistance scheme and those who reported that they got a government fee grant (Table 5.5), but age was a factor in course grant receipt and differences by whether the student was a starter or completer were not evident (Table 5.11).

Table 5.11 Factors associated with students who receive help via a government course grant

Factors associated with receiving fee waiver or financial assistance	Factors associated with not receiving fee waiver or financial assistance
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Lone parents	Part of couple or single with no children
Employed part-time or not employed	Employed full-time
Students from low-income household	Students from high and medium income household
Students with level 3 qualification or lower	Students with level 4 or 5 qualification
No family member with an HE qualification	Family member with an HE qualification
First degree students	Higher National and Foundation degree students
Students studying Education	Students not studying Education
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Figure 5.10 shows how the percentage of students who reported that they received a government course grant varies by some of these characteristics. Students who were not employed (35%), studying Education (33%) and who were employed part-time (32%) were the most likely to receive a government course grant, whilst students who were studying for a Higher National qualification (7%) were the least likely.

Figure 5.10 Percentage of students receiving government course grant by key characteristics



Base: All students who reported whether they received a government course grant

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Adequacy of government support

It is useful to consider how the amount of government fee support relates to total fee costs and the extent to which the government course grant relates to other course costs. The average value of the government fee grant was £793 (Table 5.12), whilst we have seen from Table 5.2 that average fee costs were £1,166. Nearly one-third of students report that the value of their government fee grant was less than the amount of fees paid from the fee waiver or financial assistance scheme, such that they were getting a fee contribution from another source. A further 12% of students who received a government fee grant reported that this was their only source of fee support and that it was less than the total amount of fees payable. Thus for 43% of students in receipt of a government fee grant the grant did not meet all of their fee costs. For these students, the average amount of the shortfall was £576, with a median value of £400, meaning that half of the students who received a government fee grant needed to pay at least £400 in fee costs from other sources.

In a similar way, we calculate the average value of the government course grant, which was £242 (Table 5.12). However, the average course costs were £709 for those students in receipt of a course grant. Consequently, over two-thirds of students in receipt of a course grant incurred course costs in excess of the grant they received. For these students, the average amount of the shortfall was £729, with a median value of £465, meaning that half of the students who reported receipt of a government course grant had course costs at least £465 higher than their grant.

Table 5.12 Value and adequacy of government support

	Mean	Median	N
	£	£	
Value of government fee grant received	793	700	452
Total fee costs	1166	900	3240
Percentage of students reporting fee grant less than fee costs	43		
Value of fee grant shortfall	576	400	193
Value of government course grant received	242	250	337
Total course costs	709	400	337
Percentage of students reporting course grant less than course costs	68		
Value of course grant shortfall	729	465	230

Base: All students who reported a value for their fee costs or reported a breakdown of course costs

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

So clearly, the fee and grant were inadequate and failed to meet all of students' costs. This is in marked contrast to the treatment of full-time undergraduates and the financial support available to them. At the time of writing, all full-time students could pay for their fees once they graduated while part-time students had to pay their fees up front. All full-timers, irrespective of their family background and income, qualified for a government-subsidised loan to meet **all** their tuition fees, and about 85% of full-time students took out these loans. By comparison, the fee grant for part-time students is set too low to meet to their all their tuition fees, and did not even match a pro-rata rate of full-time fees. For instance, at the time of the survey, tuition fees for full-time undergraduate courses were £3,070 per annum, and so full-timers were eligible for tuition fee loans of £3,070. A part-time student doing 50% of such a course, therefore, theoretically should have been eligible for a fee grant of £1,535, but, in reality, they only could get a maximum fee grant of up to £795.

The course grants part-time students received, like their fee grants, similarly were insignificant when compared to provision for their full-time peers. The proportion of students awarded a course grant, and the maximum value (£250) of these grants, pale into insignificance when compared with the maintenance loans and grants available to full-time undergraduates to cover their living and course costs. At the time of the survey, all full-time students were eligible for loans towards their living costs and around 80% benefited from them. In 2007/08, all those living at home while studying could get a maintenance loan of up to a maximum of £3,495 – more than fourteen times the value of a part-timer's course grant. In addition, in 2007/08, over a half (57%) of all new full-time entrants obtained a maintenance grant (SLC/DIUS 2008). The household residual income threshold for entitlement to a maximum grant of £2,763 was £17,910 while the income threshold for entitlement to a partial grant was £38,330 (DfES, 2007). These income thresholds were far

more generous than the income thresholds used in the calculation of part-timers' fee or course grants. There seems little justification for such large differences. Indeed, it has been suggested that if income thresholds for the receipt of part-time fee grants mirrored those of maintenance grants for full-time students, then the proportion of part-timers receiving fee grants would increase substantially (Fazackerley et al 2009).

5.6 Conclusions and summary

There were wide variations in part-time students' total costs of study including both tuition fees and other course costs such as books, computers, travel etc. The average costs amounted to £1,730. Of this, £1,166 was spent on tuition fees and the remaining £564 on other course costs. The nature of the current government-funded financial support for part-time is based on the assumption that students can afford these costs because they are working or that their employers will pay for them. However, only a minority of students received any help with their fees from their employers – around 41%. This study, like others before (Woodley 2004, Callender et al 2006, Johnson et al 2009), confirmed that employers were very selective in terms of who they were prepared to sponsor, favouring the most advantaged in their workforce. Employer support was very unequally distributed to the detriment of those students most in need of help to improve their labour market position and human capital – those from working class households with low-incomes and poorly paid jobs and poor qualification levels. Those most likely to benefit from employer support were students least in need of such help, while the most disadvantaged groups missed out. In addition, any such support students may have received was discretionary rather than an entitlement, unlike statutory provision. Furthermore, this source of financial aid is particularly vulnerable to cuts (Callender et al 2010). Employer sponsored education and training is particularly at risk in times of fiscal constraint, especially where such spending is perceived to be discretionary (Bishop and Mason forthcoming) and where training budgets are competing with other resources to meet more pressing targets. Thus, one of government's justifications for the absence of comprehensive support for part-time is built on an erroneous assumption.

One of the advantages of employer support is that most employers paid for their employees' tuition fees in full, unlike the government fee grants, which low-income, poorly qualified non-employed people, had to rely upon. In addition, students were more likely to get help with their fees from their employer than from the government. Eligibility to both government-funded fee and course grants is highly limited because of their restrictive qualifying criteria. Moreover, entitlement is not driven by financial need but initially is dictated by students' qualifications on entry and the number of hours they study. As a result the vast majority of part-time students do not receive this financial support, including some disadvantaged groups such as students from low-income families or poor levels of entry qualifications. Only 14% of the students surveyed received a fee grant while 19% were awarded a course grant. Moreover, when students do qualify for these grants, the amount they receive is inadequate and does not meet their costs. Over two in five (43%) students surveyed in receipt of a government fee grant, had tuition fees higher than the fee grant they received while 68% awarded a course grant incurred course costs higher than their grant. Nor does the system of financial assistance for part-time students promote widening participation. This is in marked contrast to the much more generous and comprehensive financial support available to full-time undergraduates. These differences in financial support may help explain why part-time student enrolments, outside the Open University, have fallen over time while full-time enrolments have continued to grow.

Detailed findings

Information on financial support

- Nearly two-fifths of students sought information about the financial support available when studying part-time before starting their course.
- Students most frequently obtained information about student financial support from their university (63%) with only a quarter using the official government website - directgov.

Tuition fees

- The mean tuition fee was £1,166 and the median £900.
- The following students had above average fees:
 - First degree students (£1,209);
 - those studying the Law (£1,646) and Business (£1,249);
 - those not studying at the Open University (£1,233); and
 - those studying more than 60% of an FTE.
- 41% of students received an employer contribution towards their fees while a similar proportion paid for some or all of their fees themselves, and a fifth gained some support from a financial assistance scheme.
- The students most likely to get help from their employers were female, white, full-time employees, from households with medium and high incomes, who already held a Level 4 or 5 qualification, were aiming for a Foundation Degree or Higher National, studying Engineering or technology, and were studying at least 50% of an FTE, after controlling for other characteristics. Thus, those students, most in need of financial help did not receive it from their employer.
- About a half of the employed students knew they would receive this help from their employer before starting their course while 30% knew they would get no help, and the remaining 22% did not know whether their employer would contribute to their tuition costs.
- The students most likely to pay for some of their tuition fees themselves were completers, male, aged 25 and over, childless, employed part-time, from households with medium and high incomes, taking a first degree, and studying the Law and at the Open University, after controlling for other characteristics.

Course costs and expenditure

- The mean amount students spent on things like books, travel to and from their place of study, computers etc was £564 and the median was £350.
- The following students had above average expenditure:
 - completers (£630);
 - part-time employees (£674);
 - non-working students (£825);

- first degree students (£583); and
- those studying the Law (£739)
- The most costly items of expenditure for those incurring the costs were:
 - childcare costs incurred while studying (£884); and
 - residential course costs (£723).
 - The vast majority of students paid for these costs themselves with only 15% getting help from their employer.

How many, and type of students received government student financial support

- The vast majority of part-time students receive no government student financial support.
- 14% of all students received a government fee grant towards the cost of their tuition.
- Those most likely to receive such a grant were starters, female, had children, employed part-time or not at all, from households with low-incomes, with a Level 3 qualification or lower on entry, taking a first degree, studying education and at the Open University or an FE college, after controlling for other characteristics.
- These students largely reflect those students least likely to receive employer support – so government help, in part, compensated for the absence of employer financial support.
- 19% received a course grant toward their course expenditure.
- Those most likely to receive a course grant were similar to those most likely to get a fee grant – they were aged less than 25, lone parents, employed part-time or not at all, from households with low-incomes, with a Level 3 qualification or lower on entry, without a family member who had an HE qualification, taking a first degree, studying education and at the Open University, after controlling for other characteristics.

The adequacy of government student support

- For a sizable minority of students, around two-fifths - the support they received from the government did not meet their costs.
- The average value of the government fee grant was £793.
- 43% of students in receipt of a fee grant had tuition fees higher than the value of their grant. The average shortfall was £576.
- 68 % of students in receipt of a course grant had course expenses higher than the value of their grant. The average shortfall was £729.

6 EMPLOYER SUPPORT

6.1 Introduction

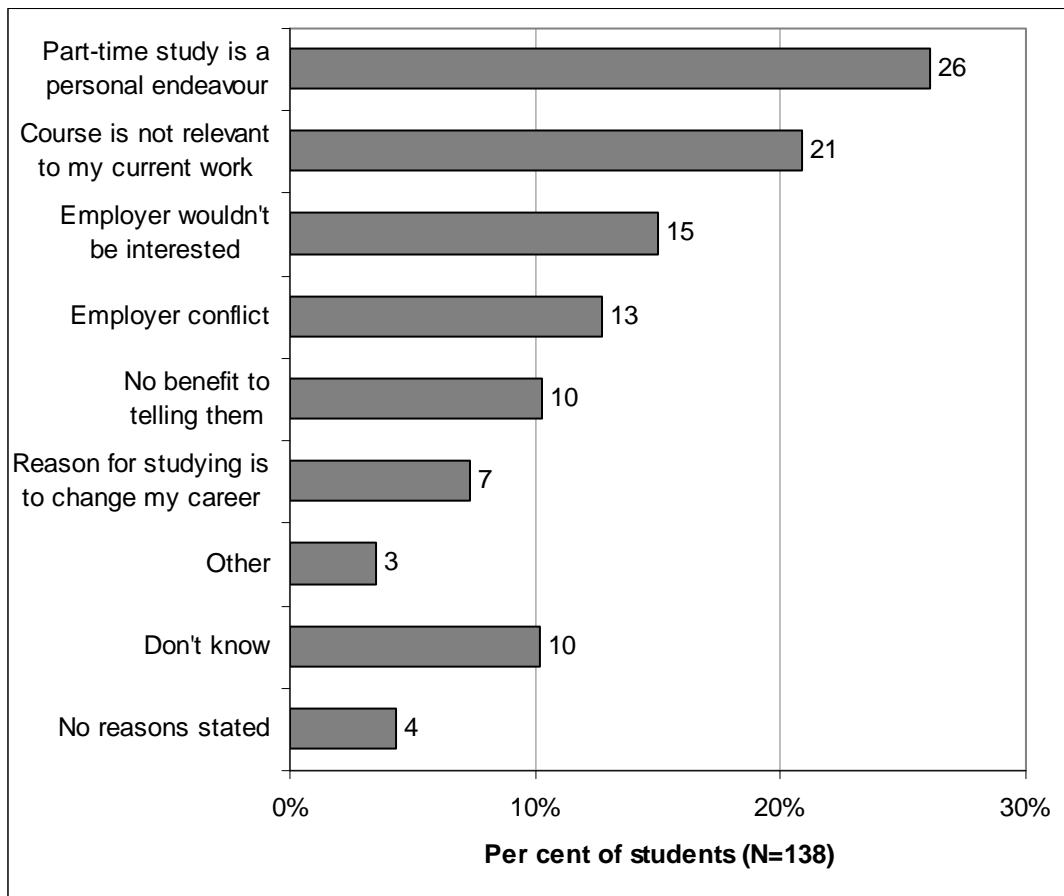
In this chapter, we look in more detail at employer support for part-time students. First, we consider whether students' employers were aware that the student was studying and whether study was a job requirement. Having considered employer support through contributions to tuition or course fees in Chapter 5, we look here at other forms of support in terms of paid or unpaid time off work to study and contributions to other course expenses. Finally, we consider how students rate their employers in relation to supporting their studies.

6.2 Employer awareness of part-time study

Almost all students who were working for an employer (full-time, part-time or voluntarily) while studying reported that their employer was aware that they were taking a part-time course (95%). Only 4% of students reported that their employer was unaware, and the remaining 1% of students did not know if their employer was aware or not.

Students whose employers were unaware that they were studying part-time reported a range of reasons why they had not told their employer (Figure 6.1). Given the small number of students whose employers were not aware that the student was studying these responses are based on very small numbers. Overall they indicate a view from the student that they believed their study to be irrelevant to their current employment or employer. A small proportion of students, however, reported a conscious decision not to tell their employer either because of potential employer conflict or because their reason for studying was to change their career.

Figure 6.1 Reasons why students had not told their employers that they were studying part-time



Base: All students working for employers who were not aware the student was studying
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

6.3 Whether study a requirement of the job

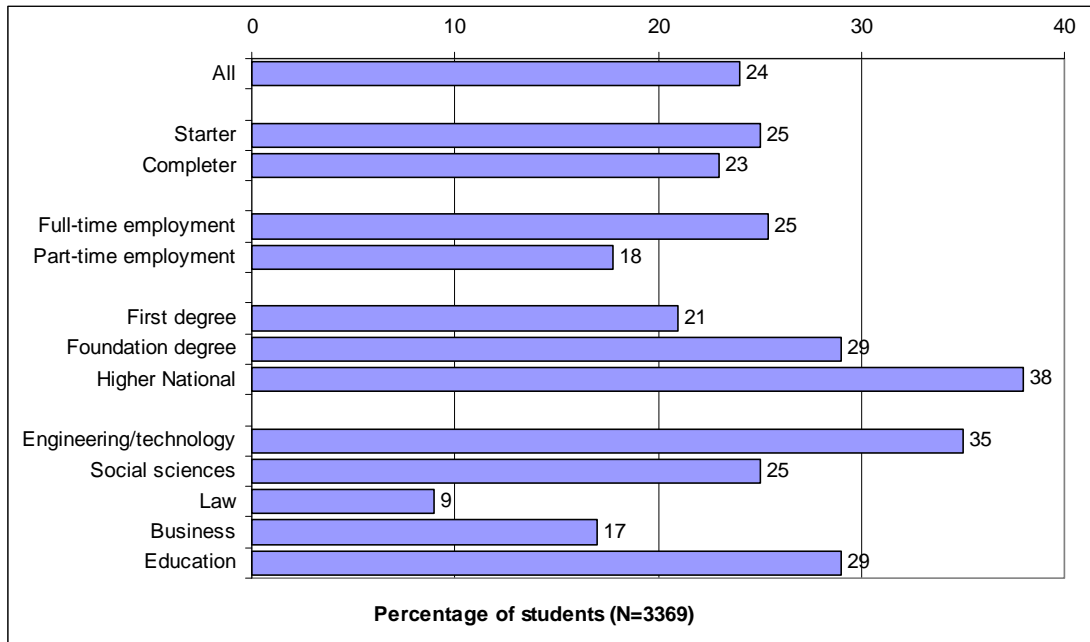
All students who were currently working were asked if their study was a requirement of their job and just under a quarter reported that it was (Figure 6.2). Multivariate analysis indicates that the key factors associated with the course being a job requirement were being older, male, single, from an ethnic minority, employed full-time or a voluntary worker, having a qualification at level 2 or below or level 4 or 5, studying for a foundation degree or higher national qualification, studying engineering or technology, social sciences or education and not studying at the Open University.

Table 6.1 Factors associated with whether current course of study was a job requirement

Factors associated with course being a job requirement	Factors associated with course not being a job requirement
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Male	Female
Single	Part of a couple
Not white	White
Employed full-time or voluntary worker	Employed part-time
Students with level 2 qualification or below or with level 4 or 5 qualification	Students with level 3 qualification
Foundation degree or Higher National students	First degree students
Students studying Engineering or technology, Social Sciences and Education	Students studying Law and Business
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University

Figure 6.2 shows how the percentage of students for whom their course was a job requirement varies by some of these key characteristics. The course was most likely to be a job requirement for Higher National students (38%) and Engineering or technology students (35%) and least likely to be a job requirement for Law students (9%), Business students (17%) and part-time employees (18%).

Figure 6.2 Percentage of employed students whose course of study was a job requirement by key characteristics



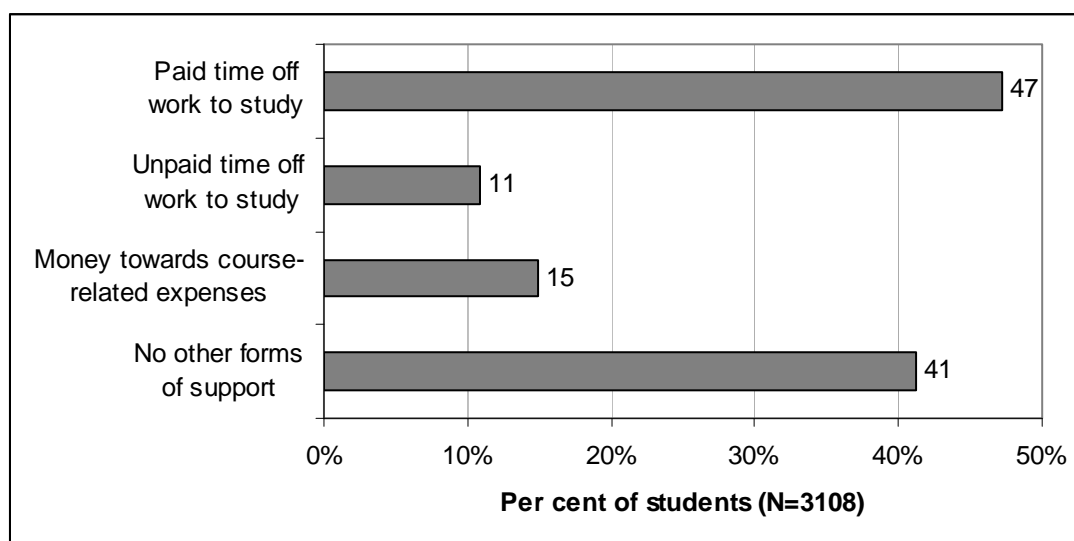
Base: All employed students

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

6.4 Other forms of employer support

Contribution towards tuition or course fees was not the only form of support offered by the employers of students employed full-time, part-time or voluntarily while studying. Just under half of students (47%) reported that their employer offered them paid time off work to study, and 11% that their employer offered them unpaid time off work to study (Figure 6.3). In addition, 15% of students reported employer contributions towards course-related expenses such as books and equipment. Nevertheless, a substantial 41% of full-time, part-time and voluntarily employed students reported that their employer did not offer any other forms of support.

Figure 6.3 Other forms of employer support



Base: Employees or voluntary workers and whose employers knew that they were taking a part-time course
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Table 6.2 shows the factors associated with getting at least one of these forms of support. The types of students who were more likely to get some form of employer non-fee support were single, white, full-time employees, from high or medium income household, studying for a foundation degree or higher national qualification, studying engineering or technology and not studying at the Open University or an FE college.

Table 6.2 Factors associated with non-fee support

Factors associated with support	Factors associated with no support
Single	Part of a couple
White	Not white
Full-time employee	Part-time employee or voluntary worker
Student from high or medium income household	Student from low-income household
Foundation degree or Higher National students	First degree students
Students studying Engineering or technology	Students studying Law and Education
Not studying at the Open University or an FE college	Studying at the Open University or an FE college

Table 6.3 shows the prevalence of such support by some of the key student and course characteristics. Higher National students were the most likely to have received paid time off work to study (69%) followed by engineering or technology students (66%). Part-time employees (21%) Law students (28%) and Education students (36%) were the least likely to have received paid time off to study.

Differences in the percentage of students receiving unpaid time off work to study were small. Notable is that the highest rates of unpaid time off were for part-time employees (15%) which may simply reflect that they were part-time employees because they had unpaid time off to study.

The same groups who were more/less likely to get paid time off work to study were also more likely to have received money towards course-related expenses: Higher National students (28%) and engineering or technology students (25%) compared with part-time employees (6%), Law students (8%) and Education students (7%).

The above patterns are obviously reflected in the types of students getting none of these types of support such that 63% of part-time employees, 60% of Law students and 52% of Education students had no paid or unpaid time off to study and no money towards course-related expenses, whilst just 20% of Higher National students and 23% of engineering or technology students received no paid or unpaid time off to study and no money towards course-related expenses.

Table 6.3 Other forms of employer support by current economic status, qualification aim and subject

	Other forms of employer support				All N
	Paid time off work to study %	Unpaid time off work to study %	Money towards course-related expenses %	No other forms of support %	
Cohort					
Starter	47	11	16	40	1578
Completer	47	11	14	42	1530
Current economic status					
Full-time employee	54	10	17	36	2510
Part-time employee	21	15	6	63	567
Voluntary employee	*	*	*	*	31
Qualification aim					
First degree	43	11	14	45	2138
Foundation degree	52	11	14	37	693
Higher National	69	10	28	20	277
Subject					
Engineering/technology	66	9	25	23	617
Social science	44	11	12	46	777
Law	28	11	8	60	258
Business	52	12	18	36	791
Education	36	11	7	52	665
All	47	11	15	41	3108

Base: Employees or voluntary workers and whose employers knew that they were taking a part-time course

* indicates sample size too small for reliable estimates

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

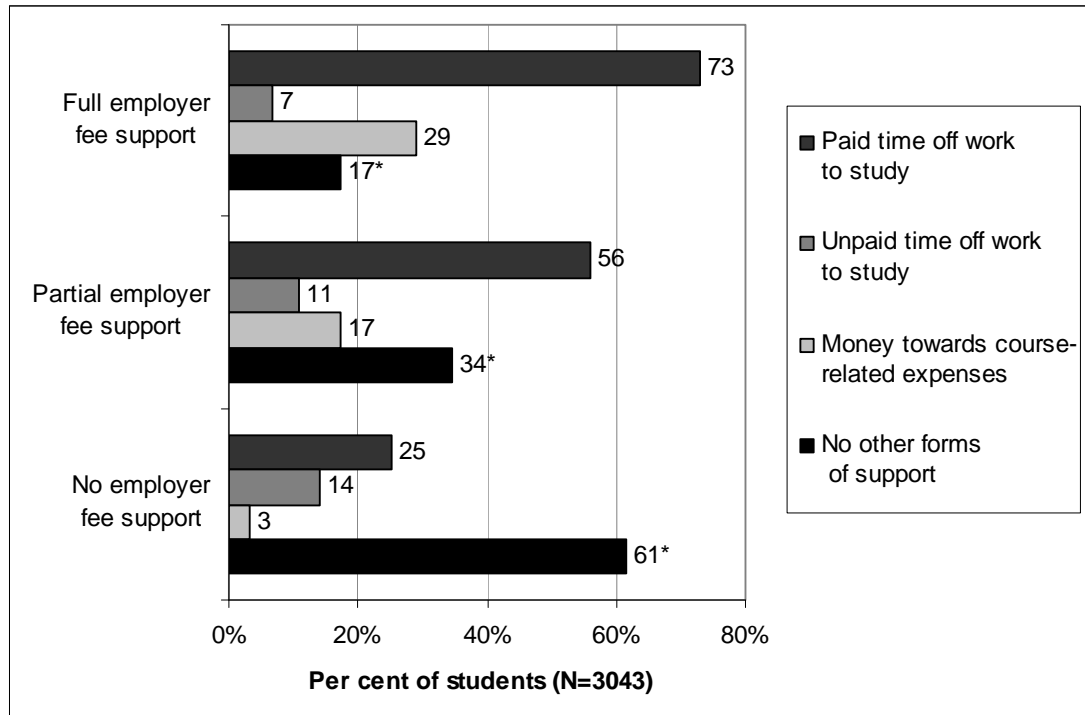
The characteristics of students and courses that received the other support outlined above are broadly similar to those outlined in Table 5.3 for students who are more or less likely to receive some contribution to their fees. It is therefore interesting to see how these other forms of support relate to fee support. Figure 6.4 shows that students in receipt of full employer fee support were substantially more likely to have received paid time off work to study (73%) or money towards course-related expenses (29%) than students in receipt of partial employer fee support (56%; 17%) or no employer fee support (25%; 3%). In other words, those most likely to get all their fees paid for by their employer were also much more likely to get paid time off work to study and money towards their course-related expenses.

Perhaps because they were so much more likely to receive paid time off work, students in receipt of full employer fee support were less likely to receive unpaid time off work (7%) than students in receipt of partial (11%) or no (14%) employer fee support.

A considerably higher proportion of students in receipt of no employer fee support reported no other forms of employer support (61%) than students in receipt of partial (34%) or full (17%) employer fee support.

These findings indicate that where employers contributed towards tuition or course fees there was a far greater likelihood of a broader range of employer support, signalling a commitment on behalf of the employer to the student's successful course completion.

Figure 6.4 Other forms of employer support, by level of employer tuition or course fee support



Base: Fee-paying students employed full-time, part-time or voluntarily while studying and whose employer knew that they were taking a part-time course, excluding missing cases and those who did not report the sources of funding used to pay for their fees
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

6.5 Student views on employer support

Employed students were asked to rate, on a four point scale, how supportive their current employer had been in helping them do their course. Encouragingly, the majority of students reported that their employer had been very (46%) or quite (32%) supportive. Nevertheless, 12 per cent of students reported that their employer had been not very supportive, and the remaining 9 per cent not at all supportive (Figure 6.5).

Table 6.4 shows the factors associated with students' rating their employer as very or quite supportive. They are again broadly similar to those factors that determined the level of employer support. Thus, students who rated their employers as very or quite supportive were starters, single students with no children, white, full-time employees, from high or medium income households, studying for a foundation degree or higher national qualification, studying engineering or technology, and not studying at the Open University.

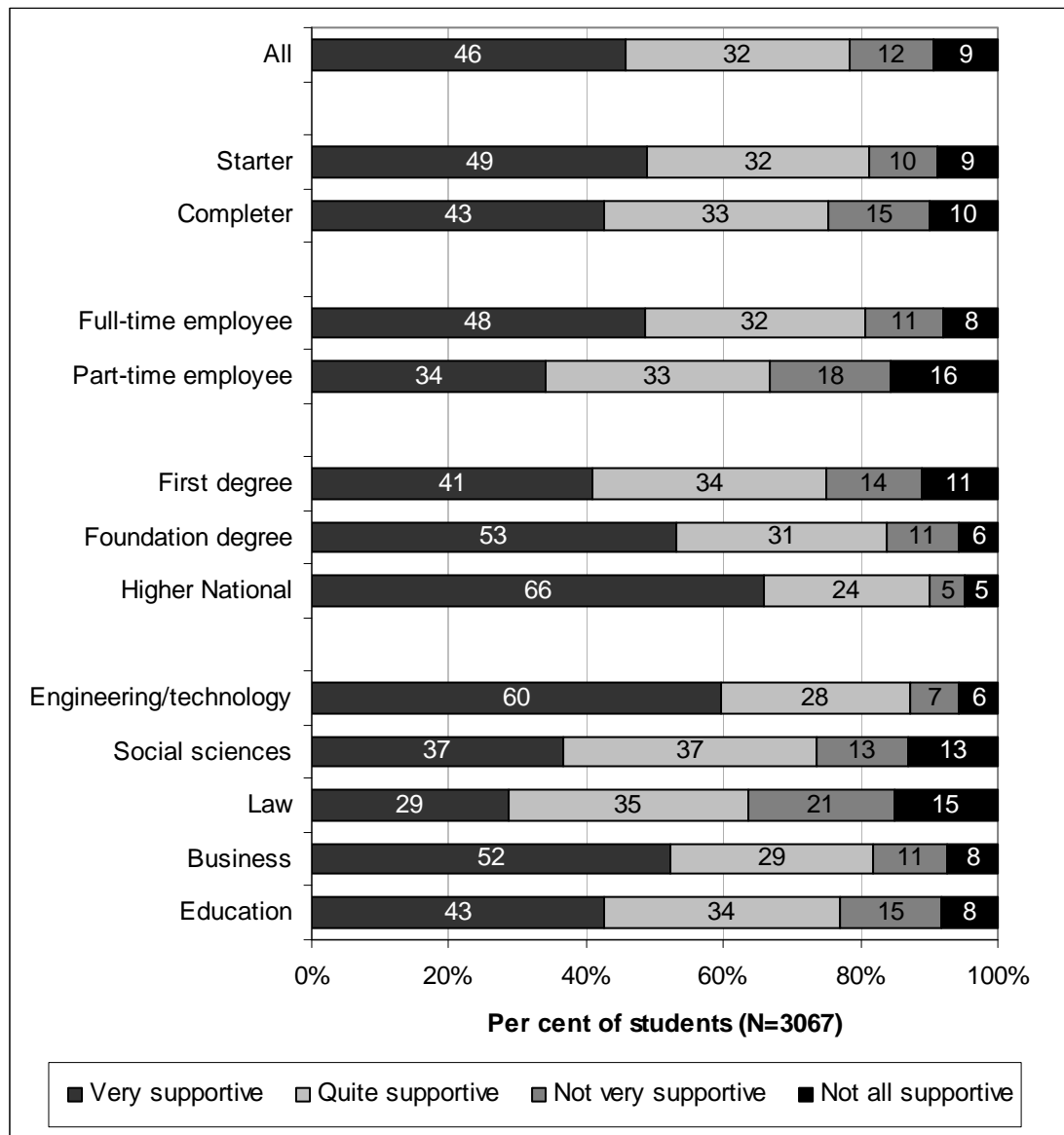
Interestingly, starters were more likely to rate their employers as quite or very supportive than completers, even though there was no evidence from Table 5.3 that employers were more likely to contribute to their fees and no evidence from Table 6.2 that their employers offered them more of other kinds of support.

Table 6.4 Factors associated with having a very or quite supportive employer

Factors associated with having a very or quite supportive employer	Factors associated with having a not very or not at all supportive employer
Starter	Completer
Single students with no children	Part of couple with children
White	Not White
Full-time employee	Part-time employee or voluntary worker
Student from high or medium income household	Student from low-income household
Foundation degree or Higher National students	First degree students
Students studying Engineering or technology	Students studying Law
Not studying at the Open University	Studying at the Open University

Figure 6.5 shows how students' ratings of their employers vary by some of these key characteristics. Higher National students were the most likely to have reported that their current employer had been very supportive (66%) followed by engineering or technology students (60%). Law students were the least likely to have reported that their current employer had been very supportive (29%) followed by part-time employees (34%).

Figure 6.5 How supportive students rated their current employer, by current economic status, qualification aim and subject

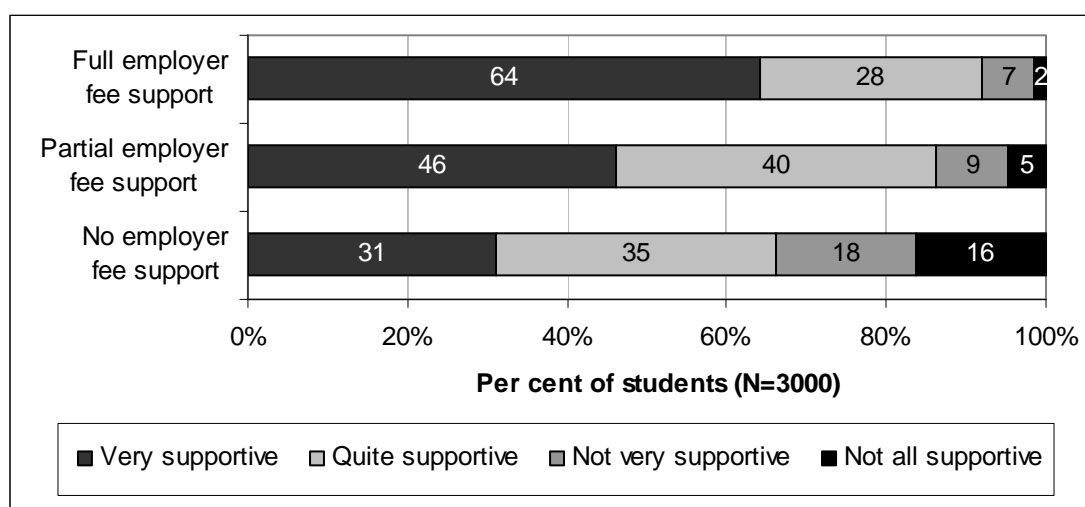


Base: Students employed full-time, part-time or voluntarily while studying and whose employer knew that they were undertaking a part-time course, excluding missing cases

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

The relationship between students' ratings of the supportiveness of their employers and the financial help they received towards their fees and other aid in kind, can be clearly seen in Figures 6.6 and 6.7. Nearly all students who received full employer fee support rated their employers as either very supportive (64%) or quite supportive (28%), with just 2% reporting they were not at all supportive. Ratings for employers providing partial fee support were also high. Again nearly all students' rated their employers either very supportive (46%) or quite supportive (40%), with just 5% reporting that they were not at all supportive. Even when students received no employer fee support, the majority of students rated their employers either very supportive (31%) or quite supportive (35%). In this case, roughly one-in-six employers (16%) were rated as not at all supportive.

Figure 6.6 How supportive students rated their current employer, by level of employer fee support received

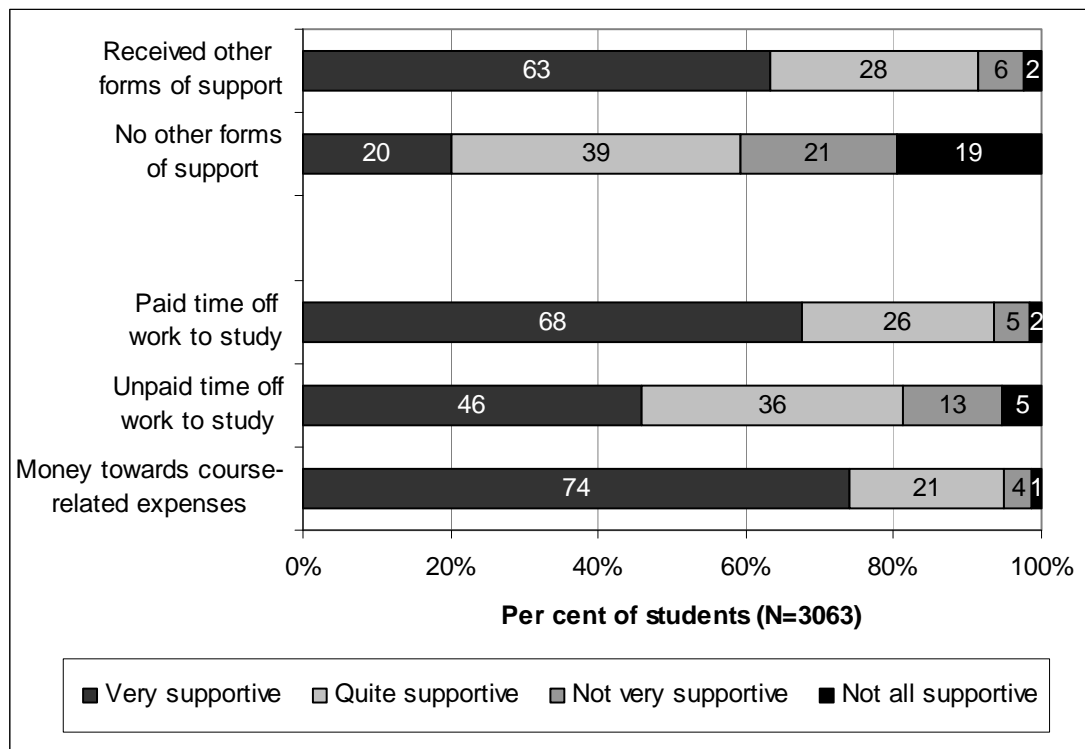


Base: Students employed full-time, part-time or voluntarily while studying and whose employer knew that they were undertaking a part-time course, excluding missing cases and students who did not report the sources of funding used to pay for their fees
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Turning to situations where other forms of employer support were received (Figure 6.7), students who received at least one other form of employer support were much more likely to have reported that their employer was very supportive (63%) than students who received no other forms of employer support (20%). Where other forms of support were available only 2% of students reported that their employers were not at all supportive compared with 19% where no other support was offered.

All forms of other support were valued highly. More than 80% of students who received each of the three forms of other support (paid or unpaid time off work and help with course costs) rated their employers very or quite supportive. Not surprisingly paid time off work to study and money towards course related expenses were related to a higher percentage of students who reported that their employers were very supportive compared with students who received unpaid time off work to study. Students were most likely to have reported that their employer was very supportive when they received money towards course-related expenses (74%) followed by paid time off work to study (68%) and then unpaid time off work to study (45%).

Figure 6.7 How supportive students rated their current employer, by whether other forms of employer support were received and the type of other forms of employer support



Base: Students employed full-time, part-time or voluntarily while studying and whose employer knew that they were undertaking a part-time course

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

6.6 Conclusions and summary

Employers were fairly supportive of part-time students in their studies. Just under a half (46%) of employed students thought their employer was very supportive in helping them do their course. Nearly a half of them have been given paid time off work to study by their employer, and one in six had received financial help towards their course-related costs. However, just like employers' financial contributions towards employees' tuition fees, employers were very selective in terms of in which employees they were willing to invest, and to support both financially and in kind so that their employees could successfully complete their course of study. Those employees most likely to be given paid time off work and help with course-related costs were also the employees most likely to have had their fees paid in full by their employer. For instance, nearly three times as many students whose employer had paid their full tuition fees as students receiving no tuition fee support at all, were also given paid time off work. Consequently, the employees most likely to receive this additional support were some of the most privileged in the labour market – individuals working full-time with high or medium household incomes studying towards vocational qualifications, especially in engineering. Conversely those missing out included some of the most vulnerable in the labour force, part-time employees or those working voluntarily from low-income households taking a First degree and studying education and the Law.

Not surprisingly, the employees most appreciative of their employer, who rated them as very supportive in their studies, were those who had received financial and practical help in the form of: contributions towards their course-related expenses; paid time off work to study, and who had their tuition fees paid in full by their employer.

Detailed findings

Employer awareness of whether their employees were studying

- The vast majority (95%) of students who were working either in paid employment or voluntarily had informed their employer that they were studying part-time.
- The main reasons students had not informed their employer were because
 - they believed that part-time study was a personal endeavour (26%); and
 - their course was not relevant to their current work (21%).

Whether study was a job requirement

- For a quarter of students, their current study was a job requirement.
- Those students most likely to say this were younger students, who were male, single, from an ethnic minority, employed full-time or a voluntary worker, aiming for a vocational qualification – a Foundation Degree or Higher National and studying engineering or technology, social sciences and education not at the Open University, once other characteristics were controlled for.

Other forms of employer support

- Over and above financial help with tuition fees, some employers gave their employees other types of support. The most common form of support was paid time off to study, received by nearly a half of students (47%).
- Students whose employer paid for all their tuition fees also were most likely to be given other forms of employer support.
- The students most likely to get this additional support were single, white, full-time employees, from households with medium and high incomes, studying vocational qualification in Engineering or technology not at the Open University, after taking into account other student characteristics.
- 41% of employees received no other forms of support.

Students' views on their employers' support

- 46% of employees thought their employers were very supportive of their studies, and a further 32% thought they were quite supportive.
- Unsurprisingly, students whose employer paid for all their tuition fees were more than twice as likely as those receiving no such help to rate their employers as very supportive.

7 THE BENEFITS OF PART-TIME STUDY

7.1 Introduction

The limited number of existing studies about the economic benefits of part-time study such as an increase in personal income, promotion, and employment opportunities, tend to focus on students once they have graduated and gained their qualification (e.g. Woodley and Simpson 2001; Woodley and Wilson, 2002; Feinstein et al, 2007; Jamieson et al, 2009). Brennan et al, (1999), however, examined both students and graduates. They found that only a few part-time students saw an increase in their income during their course while others experienced some career progression. These changes were associated with students' socio-economic characteristics, their reasons for study, employer support, and their subject of study. It is clear from Brennan's study that the relationship between career improvements of any kind, students' characteristics and motivations is complex. However, career improvement as a motivation for study was positively associated with career outcomes.

In this chapter, we look at changes that have taken place during the course and as a direct result of studying and expected changes as a direct result of studying, and finally consider student attitudes their course and employers.

7.2 Changes in employment

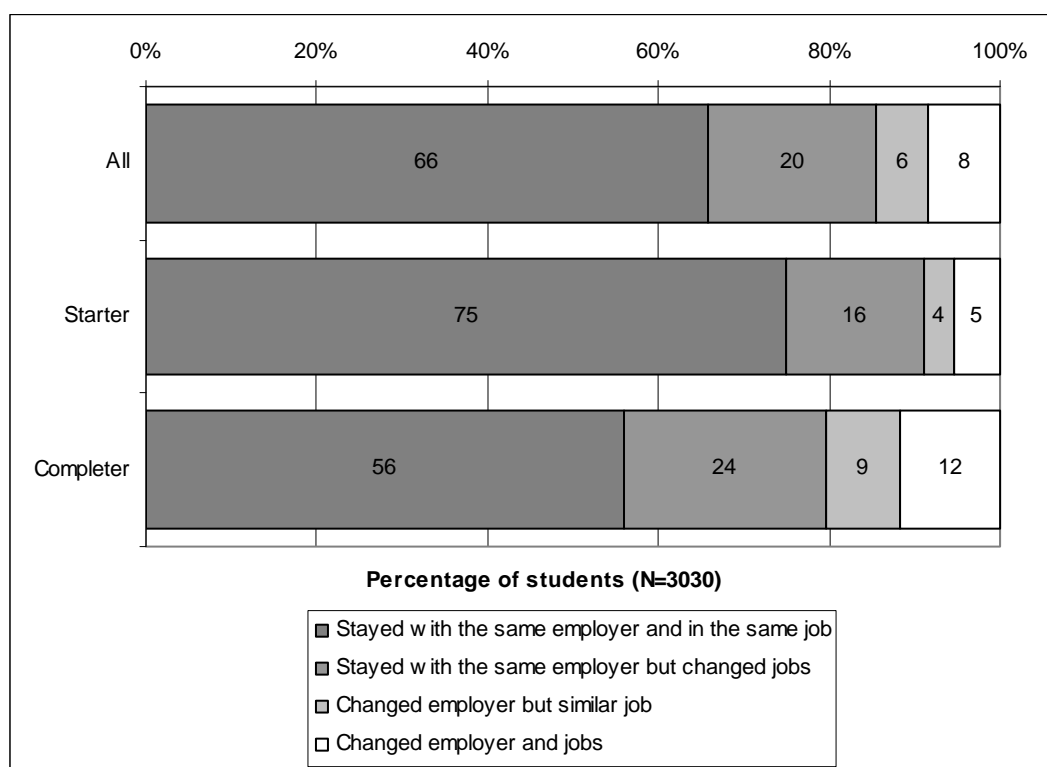
Changed employer or job

Students who reported that they were employees before the start of their course and at the time of the survey were asked about any job changes between these two points in time. Figure 7.1 shows the extent of job changes amongst the students' surveyed by whether they were a starter or completer.

Overall, two-thirds of the students surveyed had stayed in the same job with the same employer as at the start of their course. A further 20% were with the same employer but had changed jobs whilst the remaining 14% of students had changed employers with 6% of them remaining in a similar job with their new employer.

Clearly, completers will have had a much longer period of time since the start of their course than starters, so we expect a higher level of job mobility for them. More than twice as many completers as starters had changed jobs and/or employers (45% compared with 23%). Therefore, there were clear employment benefits to part-time study, which accrued to students and employers before they had graduated and which arose just through participating in part-time study.

Figure 7.1 Whether students changed employers since the beginning of their course



Base: Students who reported they were employees before starting their course and at the time of interview
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

For completers we use multivariate analysis to look at the factors associated with changing employers (Table 7.1) and the factors associated with changing employers and jobs (Table 7.2). Younger completer students and those taking first degrees were more likely to have changed employers since the start of their course, as were students studying Law and Business and students at the Open University.

Table 7.1 Factors associated with completers changing employers since they started their course

Factors associated with changing employers since start of course	Factors associated with not changing employers since start of course
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
First degree students	Foundation degree and higher national students
Students studying Law and Business	Students studying Social Sciences
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

The same factors that were associated with changing employers were also associated with changing employers and jobs. However, in addition students who were in a couple with no children and who were from low-income households were also more likely to change employer and job.

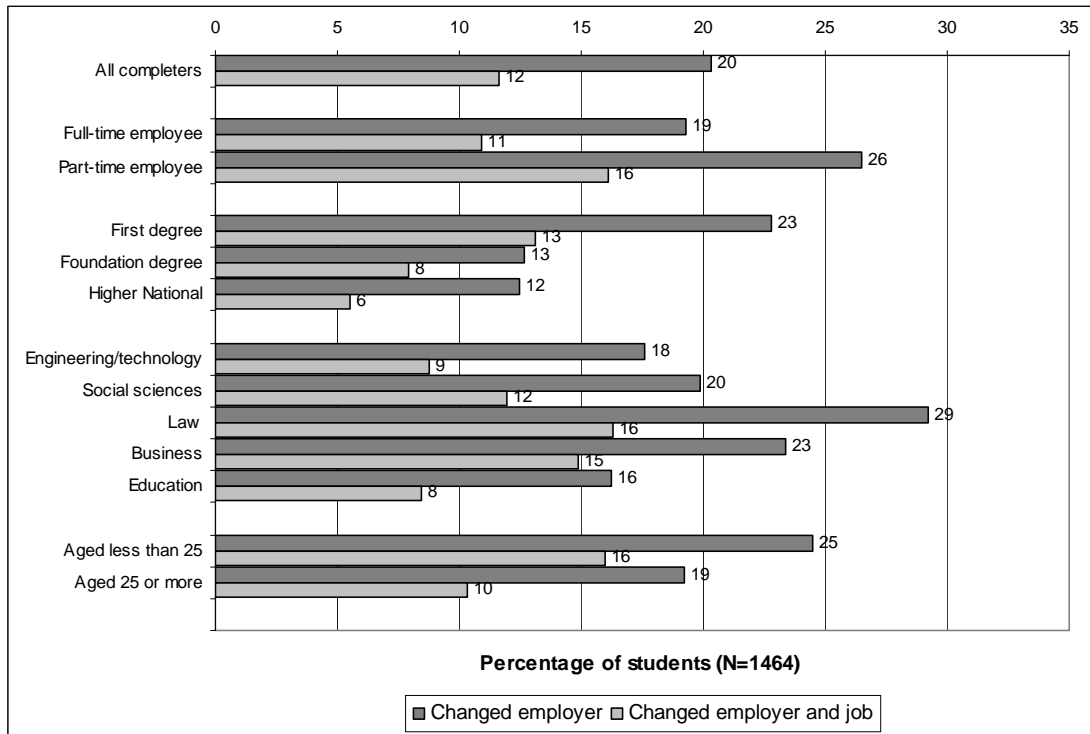
Table 7.2 Factors associated with completers changing employers and jobs since they started their course

Factors associated with changing employers and jobs since start of course	Factors associated with not changing employers and jobs since start of course
Aged less than 25	Aged 25 or more
Part of couple with no children	Lone parent, couple with children, single without children
Student from low-income household	Student from high income household
First degree students	Higher national students
Students studying Law and Business	Students studying Social Sciences and Education
Studying at the Open University	Not studying at the Open University

Some of these factors may be unrelated to study, for example younger people change employers and jobs more often than older people, but it is likely that some of the reasons for changing employers and jobs are related to study.

Figure 7.2 shows the percentage of completer students who changed employers and jobs since the beginning of their course by some of these factors. Law students (29%), part-time employees (26%) and students aged less than 25 (25%) were the most likely to change employers whilst Higher National students (12%) and Foundation degree students (13%) were the least likely, perhaps because they were more likely to get more employer support. Indeed, as Mason's (2010) study of employers of part-time students suggests, one of the reasons employers sponsor students is to retain them.

Figure 7.2 Percentage of completer students who changed employers and employers and jobs since the beginning of their course by key characteristics

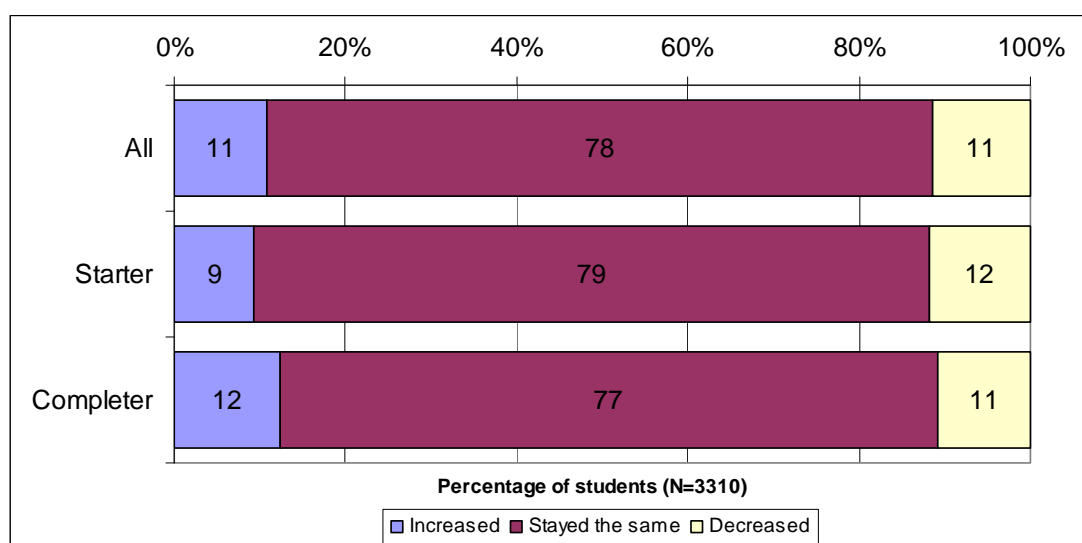


Base: Students who reported they were employees before starting their course and at the time of interview
 Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Changed hours of work

Employed students were also asked whether their hours of paid work have changed because of their current study. Figure 7.3 shows that hours of paid work remained unchanged for more than three-quarters of the students, but there was a roughly even split between those that reported an increase in paid hours of work and those that reported a decrease in paid hours of work. This pattern was roughly the same for starters and completers and it was difficult to identify other factors associated with changes in hours worked.

Figure 7.3 Whether students' paid hours of work have changed since the beginning of their course



Base: Employed students
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Other changes in employment

Employed completer students were also asked whether a number of other employment changes had happened as a direct result of taking their course. Employed starter students were asked the same set of questions, but about whether they expected the changes to take place. The results are presented in Figure 7.4.

Nearly all starters (96%) expected at least one of the listed changes to occur as a result of their study, but just 82% of completers reported that these changes had taken place for them. It is possible that the expected changes would not materialise until after the completion of the course, so it is still possible that the expected changes may occur, but it is interesting to consider the gaps in the percentage of starter students reporting expected changes and completer students reporting realised changes.

The most common expected impact of study for starters was on their expected ability to do their job. More than two-thirds of starters (68%) expected to do their jobs better. This was one of the few expected changes that were more or less matched by a realised change with 65% of completers reporting that their ability to do their job has improved. Consequently, students' courses had an impact on their performance and productivity at work.

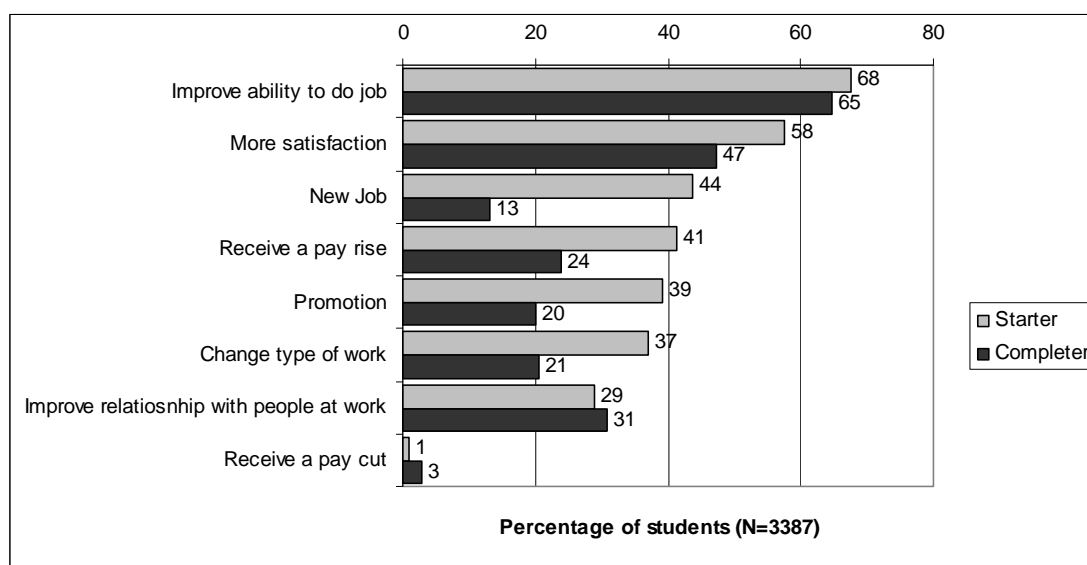
Most starters (58%) also reported that they expected more satisfaction from their work and nearly half of the completers (47%) reported they had derived more satisfaction from their work.

Most other expected changes reported by starters were aligned with a much lower percentage of completers indicating that such a change had taken place for them. The biggest difference between the reported percentages by cohort was in finding a new job. Nearly one half of starters (44%) expected to find a new job as a direct result of their course, but just 13% of completers reported that they had found a new job as a direct result of their course. Similarly, there were differences in promotion: 39% of starters and 20% of completers reported that they expected/gained promotion as a direct result of their course. The corresponding figures for

“changing the type of work I do” were 37% and 21%; and for “receive a pay rise” 41% and 24%.

The remaining two changes had a slightly higher percentage of completers reporting the change than starters expecting the change. In terms of improved relationships with people at work, 29% of starters expected an improvement whilst 31% of completers reported an improvement. This may indicate that improved relationships with colleagues were partly an unexpected benefit from studying. Just 1% of starters expected that their pay will go down as a direct result of taking their course, but 3% of completers reported that their pay had gone down. Thus, lower pay may be an unexpected penalty from studying for a small minority of students.

Figure 7.4 Expected (starters) and realised (completers) changes for students as a direct result of taking their course



Base: Employed students
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Other student attitudes

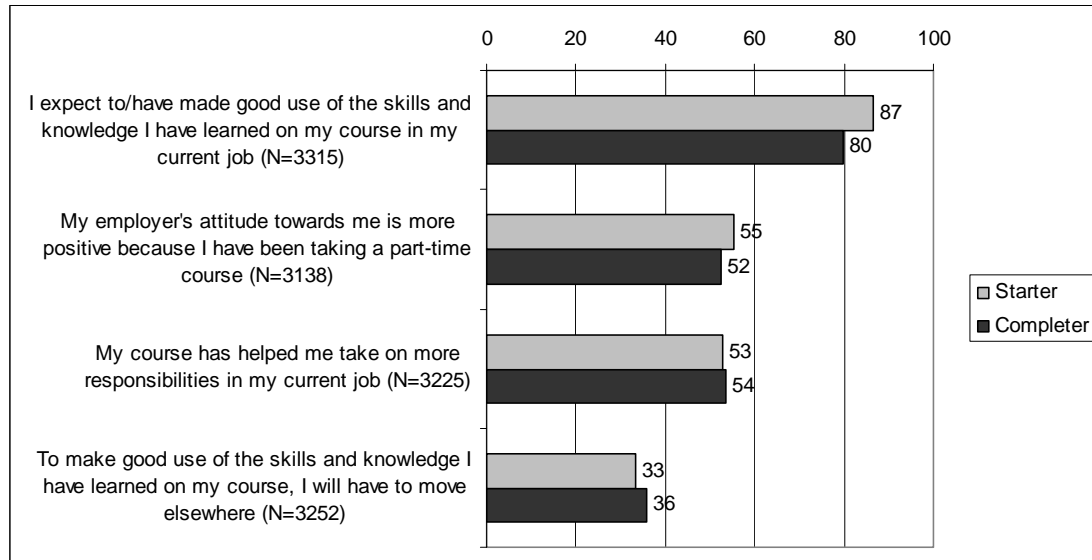
Employed students were also asked the extent to which they agree or disagree with a number of employment related statements (Figure 7.5). In general, for these statements there was little difference in the percentage of responses between the starter and completer cohorts. The first statement was similar to the questions reported in Figure 7.4 whereby starters were asked about expectations and completers about what had materialised. Here we find that the vast majority of both starters (87%) and completers (80%) definitely or mostly agreed that they expect to/have made good use of the skills and knowledge they have learned on their course in their current job. There was a 7 percentage point gap between the starters and completers that may reflect starters’ expectations that are not yet realised by completers.

The other three statements were asked of both starters and completers and there was little difference in the percentage reporting that they definitely or mostly agreed with the statements by whether they were a starter or completer. Just over a half of each cohort definitely or mostly agreed that “my employer’s attitude towards me is more positive because I have been taking a part-time course” and “my course has helped me take on more responsibilities in my current job”. Together they indicate that, at least for these students’

employer's value study by being more positive to the part-time students and also the students themselves are given more responsibilities reflecting their improved knowledge.

Roughly one-third of students definitely or mostly agreed that “to make good use of the skills and knowledge I have learned on my course, I will have to move elsewhere” Thus a large minority of students do not see their employers as facilitating their career development.

Figure 7.5 Percentage of students definitely or mostly agreeing with specified statements



Base: Employed students
Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

7.3 Conclusions and summary

Students were reaping the benefits of their course even before they had completed them. Nearly a half of students in their final year of study had changed jobs and/or their employer since starting their course, especially younger students, from low-income households studying for a First degree particularly in the Law or Business. However, some part-time students may have unrealistic expectations about the employment benefits of studying particularly in relation to getting a new job, being promoted, and getting a pay rise. While a minority of students in their final year of study had reaped these employment benefits as a result of their studies, much higher proportions of students in their first year of study expected these changes to occur as consequences of their studies. However, the majority of students had seen some positive outcomes from studying. Their productivity and job satisfaction improved, they utilised the skills learnt on their course, and were given more responsibilities at work reflecting their improved knowledge. There are unanticipated benefits too, particularly improvements in relations with colleagues at work.

Detailed findings

Employer and job changes

- Two-thirds of employed students had not changed jobs or employer since starting their current course.
- 20% of students had remained with their employer since starting their current course but had a different job. This figure rose to 24% for completers and fell to 16% for starters.
- 14 % of students had changed employer since starting their current course, and most of them also were doing a different sort of job. More than twice as many completers (21%) as starters (9%) had changed employers.
- The completers most likely to have changed employers since the start of their course were younger, those taking first degrees, studying the Law and Business and at the Open University.

Changes hours of work

- The vast majority of students (78%) had not changed their hours of work since starting their current course.

Changes at work arising as a direct result of their study

- This study confirms that there are many work-related benefits from participating in part-time study, apart from the more obvious change of job.
- Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of completers than starters experienced these particular benefits because they had been studying for a longer period of time.
- The majority of starters (68%) and completers (65%) felt that their ability to do their work had improved as a direct result of having undertaken their course while most completers (58%) and nearly a half of starters (47%) had derived more job satisfaction.
- Sizable minorities of completers had received a pay rise (24%) and promotion (20%) as a direct result of their studies.
- An unexpected consequence of studying for a sizable minority of both starters (29%) and completers (31%) was improved relationships with people at work.
- These changes at work were associated with other transformations at work associated with their studies. The majority of both starters and completers believed:
 - they had made, or expected to make, good use of the skills and knowledge they have learned on their course in their current job;
 - their employer's attitude towards them was more positive because of their part-time course; and
 - their course had helped them take on more responsibilities in their current job.

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APPENDIX TABLES

Table A1.1 Students characteristics by mode of interview

Characteristic	Phone (N=2078)	Online (N=1626)	All	
	%	%	%	N
Age at 31st August 2007¹				
Under 25 years	26	28	27	992
25 years or over	72	72	72	2653
Missing	2	1	2	59
Gender				
Female	59	62	60	2230
Male	41	38	40	1470
Missing	+	+	+	5
Family type				
Single with no children	33	35	33	1240
Lone parent	9	9	9	334
Couple with no children	22	23	23	837
Couple with children	35	33	34	1268
Missing	1	+	1	25
Ethnicity				
White	87	87	87	3227
Other	12	11	11	417
Missing	1	2	2	60
Current economic status²				
Full-time paid employment	73	74	73	2710
Part-time paid employment	17	17	17	626
Not in paid employment	11	9	10	368
Gross annual income³				
< £25,000	33	36	35	1279
≥£25,000 & <£50,000	32	35	33	1233
≥£50,000	18	18	18	668
Missing/refused	16	11	14	523
Social class of highest earner				
Managerial and professional	56	55	56	2038
Intermediate	23	22	23	831
Routine, manual and unemployed	9	9	9	314
Missing	12	15	13	479
Highest existing qualification				
Level 4/5	40	44	42	1554
Level 3	37	40	38	1416
Level 1/2/entry or none	21	16	19	704

	Missing	1	+	1	30
Partner/children/parent HE qual.					
	No HE qualifications	45	41	44	1613
	Hold HE qualifications	53	56	54	2005
	Missing/don't know	2	3	2	86
<hr/>					
All		100	100	100	3704

Base: All students

Notes: + indicates a percentage that is greater than zero, but less than 0.5

1 Age calculated using full date of birth. In 73 cases (68 weighted) where day of birth was missing it was set to 15. In 85 cases (73 weighted) where month of birth was missing it was set to 6 (or 7 where day of birth was 31). Where year of birth was missing age is missing.

2 Students were able to select multiple economic groups. This derived mutually grouping prioritizes economic status in the following order: full-time employee, part-time employee, other.

3 Individual income if single / widowed / divorced / missing marital status. Household income if married / cohabiting / civil partnership.

Source: Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Table A1.2 Course and institution characteristics by mode of interview

Characteristic	Phone (N=2078)	Online (N=1626)	All	
	%	%	%	N
First year starter or final year completer?				
Starter	49	53	51	1876
Completer	51	47	49	1828
Qualification aim¹				
First degree	64	81	71	2646
Foundation degree	25	14	20	748
Higher National (HNC/HND)	11	5	8	310
Subject				
Engineering/technology	20	16	16	682
Social science	29	24	24	980
Law	7	14	14	360
Business	22	28	28	901
Education	22	16	16	719
Multi-disciplinary	1	3	3	62
Studying at the Open University?				
OU student	19	20	20	725
Not OU student	81	80	80	2979
Intensity of study				
Less than 50 per cent FTE	12	7	10	369
50-59 per cent	23	24	23	857
60-74 per cent	5	6	5	201
75-99 per cent	4	7	5	197
100 per cent or more	19	11	15	554
Unknown	37	46	41	1502
Type of institution				
HEI	80	92	85	3149
FE college linked to HEI	18	7	13	483
FE college not linked to HEI	2	1	1	43
FE college unknown HEI link	1	0	0	15
Unknown	0	1	0	14
All	100	100	100	3704

Base: All students

Notes: ¹ Qualification currently studying for (N=3579) or very/quite likely to study for (N=125)

Source: : Futuretrack Part time, 2008

Table A1.3 Full multivariate specifications from Chapter 3

	(Table 3.1)		(Table 3.2)	(Table 3.3)	(Table 3.4)
	Whether decision to study was related to career aims	Whether choice of subject to study was related to career aims	Whether course was a great deal related to current occupation or employment	Whether students had a much clearer idea about their career since they started their course	Whether students had a clear idea about what they want to do in terms of career planning
Completer	-0.170 (0.117)	-0.166 (0.142)	-0.004 (0.077)	0.182** (0.073)	-0.020 (0.074)
Aged less than 25	1.149*** (0.216)	0.474** (0.222)	0.141 (0.117)	0.038 (0.108)	0.154 (0.112)
Female	0.206 (0.130)	0.287* (0.156)	0.220** (0.093)	-0.040 (0.089)	0.137 (0.090)
Family Type (Couple with children)					
Single, no children	-0.238 (0.176)	-0.458** (0.210)	-0.282** (0.124)	0.005 (0.115)	-0.184 (0.120)
Lone parent	0.222 (0.237)	0.223 (0.300)	0.118 (0.164)	-0.215 (0.146)	0.127 (0.143)
Couple, no children	-0.082 (0.145)	-0.276 (0.181)	-0.118 (0.102)	-0.013 (0.098)	0.050 (0.097)
Not White	0.100 (0.200)	-0.049 (0.224)	-0.401*** (0.137)	0.199 (0.124)	0.209* (0.125)
Economic status before started					

course (employed full-time)					
Employed part-time	-0.612***	-0.768***			
	(0.173)	(0.196)			
Not employed	-0.320	0.213			
	(0.405)	(0.358)			
Economic status at time of survey (employed full-time)					
Employed part-time				0.030	0.057
				(0.101)	(0.100)
Not employed				0.296**	-0.156
				(0.131)	(0.140)
Not employed full-time			-0.404***		
			(0.103)		
Household income (less than £25,000)					
£25,000 or more, but less than £50,000	-0.053	-0.265	-0.033		-0.031
	(0.174)	(0.205)	(0.114)		(0.109)
More than £50,000	-0.196	-0.154	0.094		0.024
	(0.204)	(0.253)	(0.143)		(0.134)
More than £25,000				-0.223**	
				(0.104)	
Highest existing qualification (level 4 or 5)					
Level 3	0.114	0.367**	-0.030	0.201**	-0.236***

	(0.140)	(0.173)	(0.090)	(0.085)	(0.087)
Level 2 or below	-0.273*	-0.127	-0.175*	0.019	-0.065
	(0.147)	(0.178)	(0.106)	(0.101)	(0.100)
Whether partner, children or parent have HE qualification					
Do not have HE qualifications	0.216*	0.157	-0.057	-0.064	-0.188**
	(0.120)	(0.146)	(0.078)	(0.074)	(0.075)
Qualification aim (First Degree)					
Foundation Degree	0.409**	0.757***	0.680***	0.014	-0.029
	(0.180)	(0.257)	(0.106)	(0.099)	(0.099)
Higher National	0.037	0.120	0.230*	0.146	0.000
	(0.190)	(0.235)	(0.119)	(0.115)	(0.120)
Subject (Social Science)					
Engineering	0.593***	0.720***	0.079	-0.081	-0.289**
	(0.192)	(0.226)	(0.137)	(0.134)	(0.138)
Law	0.127	0.079	-1.246***	0.064	0.358***
	(0.196)	(0.219)	(0.158)	(0.141)	(0.138)
Business	0.101	0.238	-0.638***	-0.020	-0.132
	(0.165)	(0.200)	(0.121)	(0.119)	(0.120)
Education	0.863***	1.134***	0.557***	0.088	0.239**
	(0.185)	(0.251)	(0.121)	(0.113)	(0.112)
Studying at the Open University	-0.792***	-0.965***	-1.043***	-0.110	-0.049

	(0.143)	(0.164)	(0.119)	(0.111)	(0.111)
Studying at an FE college	-0.329**	-0.174	-0.125	-0.080	-0.156
	(0.168)	(0.220)	(0.105)	(0.100)	(0.102)
Constant	1.970***	2.494***	0.544***	-0.778***	-0.650***
	(0.254)	(0.306)	(0.183)	(0.171)	(0.174)
Observations	3704	3704	3413	3696	3685

All reported coefficients are estimated using logistic regression models

Standard errors in parentheses

*** indicates significant at 1% level,

** indicates significant at 5% level

* indicates significant at 10% level

Table A1.4 Full multivariate specifications from Chapter 4

	(Table 4.1)	(Table 4.2)	(Table 4.3)	(Table 4.4)	(Table 4.5)
	Whether starters had sought careers information, advice and/or guidance before starting their course	Whether students agreed that students need more help and advice in choosing which course to study	Whether students had any contact with their university or college careers service in the current academic year	Whether students had no contact with their university or college careers service in the current academic year because they already had the experience and knowledge to decide on their career options	Whether students had no contact with their university or college careers service in the current academic year because they were unaware of the service
Completer		0.261*** (0.098)	0.353*** (0.074)	0.371*** (0.086)	0.055 (0.102)
Aged less than 25	0.258** (0.128)	-0.183 (0.137)	0.009 (0.101)	0.264** (0.118)	0.354*** (0.136)
Female	-0.020 (0.121)	-0.147 (0.113)	-0.196** (0.085)	-0.125 (0.100)	0.276** (0.122)
Family Type (Couple with children)					
Single, no children		0.036 (0.151)	0.116 (0.115)	0.069 (0.131)	-0.233 (0.156)
Lone parent		-0.016 (0.190)	-0.186 (0.150)	0.331** (0.167)	-0.178 (0.197)

Couple, no children		0.164	0.060	0.163	-0.263*
		(0.137)	(0.102)	(0.116)	(0.143)
Family Type (Couple)					
Single	-0.421***				
	(0.137)				
Not White	0.372**	0.582***	0.499***	-0.186	0.015
	(0.164)	(0.135)	(0.112)	(0.146)	(0.174)
Economic status before started course (employed full-time)					
Employed part-time	0.071	0.316**			
	(0.143)	(0.138)			
Not employed	0.214	0.169			
	(0.166)	(0.150)			
Economic status at time of survey (employed full-time)					
Employed part-time					-0.162
					(0.147)
Not employed					0.192
					(0.181)
Not employed full-time			0.219**	-0.326***	
			(0.087)	(0.105)	
Household income (less than					

£25,000)					
£25,000 or more, but less than £50,000	-0.648*** (0.150)	-0.397*** (0.138)	-0.212** (0.107)	0.218* (0.122)	-0.003 (0.143)
More than £50,000	-0.807*** (0.192)	-0.607*** (0.180)	-0.071 (0.135)	0.466*** (0.157)	-0.376* (0.192)
Highest existing qualification (level 4 or 5)					
Level 3	0.028 (0.123)	0.019 (0.113)		-0.217** (0.100)	0.166 (0.119)
Level 2 or below	0.051 (0.143)	0.069 (0.135)		-0.563*** (0.119)	0.164 (0.144)
Level 3 or below			0.203*** (0.078)		
Whether partner, children or parent have HE qualification					
Do not have HE qualifications	-0.112 (0.106)	-0.067 (0.098)	-0.063 (0.075)	-0.271*** (0.086)	0.051 (0.103)
Qualification aim (First Degree)					
Foundation Degree	-0.049 (0.132)	-0.144 (0.140)	-0.043 (0.104)		0.035 (0.139)
Higher National	-0.309 (0.200)	-0.832*** (0.234)	-0.160 (0.157)		-0.141 (0.205)
Foundation Degree or Higher				0.339***	

National				(0.107)	
Subject (Social Science)					
Engineering	0.428**	0.385**	-0.362***	0.147	0.171
	(0.184)	(0.158)	(0.126)	(0.141)	(0.177)
Business	0.015	-0.239	0.020	0.195	0.040
	(0.201)	(0.197)	(0.133)	(0.162)	(0.196)
Education	0.214	0.478***	-0.063	-0.070	0.047
	(0.152)	(0.138)	(0.106)	(0.123)	(0.150)
Studying at the Open University	-0.275*	0.271**	0.248***	0.253**	-0.095
	(0.143)	(0.123)	(0.096)	(0.119)	(0.144)
Studying at an FE college	0.161	0.029	0.083	-0.217*	-0.022
	(0.134)	(0.156)	(0.114)	(0.125)	(0.151)
Constant	-0.478**	-1.899***	-0.947***	0.115	-1.529***
	(0.217)	(0.213)	(0.164)	(0.192)	(0.232)
Observations	1876	3683	3685	2502	2502

All reported coefficients are estimated using logistic regression models

Standard errors in parentheses

*** indicates significant at 1% level,

** indicates significant at 5% level

* indicates significant at 10% level

Table A1.5a Full multivariate specifications from Chapter 5 (part one)

	(Table 5.1)	(Table 5.3)	(Table 5.4)	(Table 5.5)
	Whether students sought information about financial support before starting their course	Whether students received fee support from their employers	Whether students pay some of their own tuition or course fees	Whether students received a fee waiver of financial assistance for tuition or course fees
Completer	-0.213*** (0.074)	-0.019 (0.084)	0.269*** (0.076)	-0.413*** (0.095)
Aged less than 25	-0.165 (0.103)	-0.125 (0.121)	-0.381*** (0.106)	-0.077 (0.123)
Female	0.130 (0.086)	0.214** (0.097)	-0.402*** (0.087)	0.301*** (0.111)
Family Type (Couple with children)				
Single, no children	-0.114 (0.116)	-0.248* (0.134)	0.267** (0.117)	
Lone parent	-0.014 (0.146)	0.124 (0.182)	-0.573*** (0.161)	
Couple, no children	0.127 (0.103)	-0.180 (0.111)	0.261*** (0.100)	
Family Type (Has children)				
No Children				-0.307*** (0.108)

Not White	0.233**	-0.791***	0.229*	0.282**
	(0.115)	(0.150)	(0.118)	(0.136)
Economic status before started course (employed full-time)				
Employed part-time	0.395***			
	(0.106)			
Not employed	0.783***			
	(0.117)			
Economic status at time of survey (employed full-time)				
Employed part-time		-1.152***	0.437***	0.413***
		(0.123)	(0.104)	(0.114)
Not employed		-5.446***	-0.251*	1.068***
		(0.864)	(0.139)	(0.142)
Household income (less than £25,000)				
£25,000 or more, but less than £50,000	-0.385***	0.802***	0.339***	-1.366***
	(0.105)	(0.123)	(0.110)	(0.119)
More than £50,000	-0.885***	0.969***	0.439***	-1.999***
	(0.137)	(0.154)	(0.136)	(0.179)
Highest existing qualification (level 4 or 5)				
Level 3		-0.442***	0.070	0.438***
		(0.096)	(0.087)	(0.109)
Level 2 or below		-0.250**	-0.052	0.450***

		(0.118)	(0.106)	(0.130)
Level 3 or below	0.172**			
	(0.078)			
Whether partner, children or parent have HE qualification				
Do not have HE qualifications	0.185**	0.026	-0.120	0.064
	(0.075)	(0.084)	(0.076)	(0.093)
Qualification aim (First Degree)				
Foundation Degree	-0.350***	0.260**	-0.495***	-0.006
	(0.104)	(0.113)	(0.109)	(0.127)
Higher National	-0.662***	0.777***	-0.364**	-0.514**
	(0.171)	(0.175)	(0.167)	(0.218)
Subject (Social Science)				
Engineering	-0.521***	1.236***	-0.687***	-0.359**
	(0.128)	(0.143)	(0.127)	(0.173)
Business	0.529***	-1.305***	1.150***	-0.093
	(0.133)	(0.181)	(0.142)	(0.176)
Education	-0.282***	0.193	0.098	-0.023
	(0.107)	(0.118)	(0.107)	(0.136)
Studying at the Open University	0.418***	-1.536***	0.828***	0.322**
	(0.096)	(0.135)	(0.105)	(0.128)
Studying at an FE college	0.062	-0.271**	-0.217*	0.461***
	(0.114)	(0.124)	(0.122)	(0.134)

Intensity of Study (less than 50%)				
50-59%		0.429***	-0.130	0.285*
		(0.159)	(0.136)	(0.173)
60-74%		0.440**	-0.048	0.088
		(0.212)	(0.192)	(0.237)
75-99%		0.643***	-0.203	0.250
		(0.216)	(0.191)	(0.235)
More than 100%		0.685***	-0.115	-0.166
		(0.167)	(0.146)	(0.187)
Not reported		0.681***	-0.295**	-0.246
		(0.145)	(0.127)	(0.164)
Constant	-0.406**	-0.703***	-0.456**	-1.020***
	(0.162)	(0.228)	(0.198)	(0.236)
Observations	3672	3600	3597	3597

The reported coefficients are estimated using logistic regression models

Standard errors in parentheses

*** indicates significant at 1% level,

** indicates significant at 5% level

* indicates significant at 10% level

Table A1.5b Full multivariate specifications from Chapter 5 (part two)

	(Table 5.8)		(Table 5.11)
	Total course related expenditure in the 2007/08 academic year	Whether students received a government fee grant	Whether students received a government course grant
Completer	93.242** (37.616)	-0.240** (0.114)	0.091 (0.097)
Aged less than 25	104.722** (47.856)	-0.083 (0.148)	0.423*** (0.129)
Female	43.621 (42.407)	0.172 (0.134)	0.027 (0.114)
Family Type (Couple with children)			
Single, no children	-86.319 (56.059)	0.038 (0.172)	-0.084 (0.152)
Lone parent	114.331 (72.989)	0.142 (0.191)	0.457*** (0.170)
Couple, no children	-14.314 (49.902)	-0.468** (0.185)	-0.173 (0.148)
Not White	181.546*** (56.752)	0.157 (0.164)	-0.278* (0.151)
Economic status at time of survey (employed full-time)			
Employed part-time	101.960** (50.792)	0.371*** (0.135)	0.661*** (0.117)

Not employed	239.670***	0.583***	0.809***
	(68.246)	(0.172)	(0.146)
Household income (less than £25,000)			
£25,000 or more, but less than £50,000	-66.446	-1.174***	-0.789***
	(51.415)	(0.158)	(0.136)
More than £50,000	-181.198***	-1.936***	-1.178***
	(65.252)	(0.255)	(0.195)
Highest existing qualification (level 4 or 5)			
Level 3	43.567	0.668***	0.601***
	(41.810)	(0.133)	(0.113)
Level 2 or below	-22.628	0.483***	0.497***
	(52.223)	(0.160)	(0.136)
Whether partner, children or parent have HE qualification			
Do not have HE qualifications	-87.517**	0.003	0.259***
	(36.661)	(0.111)	(0.095)
Qualification aim (First Degree)			
Foundation Degree	2.942	-0.151	-0.265**
	(55.309)	(0.153)	(0.133)
Higher National	-189.053**	-1.463***	-1.197***
	(83.515)	(0.378)	(0.266)
Subject (Social Science)			
Engineering	134.647**	-0.300	-0.210

	(63.946)	(0.214)	(0.173)
Business	180.326***	0.124	-0.024
	(63.109)	(0.207)	(0.178)
Education	-4.652	0.147	-0.215
	(51.451)	(0.167)	(0.146)
Studying at the Open University	-438.926***	0.646***	0.435***
	(54.587)	(0.145)	(0.130)
Studying at an FE college	43.251	0.401**	0.196
	(62.082)	(0.165)	(0.145)
Intensity of Study (less than 50%)			
50-59%	-9.190	0.430**	0.173
	(77.056)	(0.203)	(0.181)
60-74%	-154.443	-0.029	0.240
	(98.214)	(0.286)	(0.250)
75-99%	-160.295*	0.271	0.380
	(96.094)	(0.277)	(0.241)
More than 100%	65.115	-0.378*	-0.060
	(85.203)	(0.229)	(0.195)
Not reported	-173.186**	-0.319	0.100
	(73.597)	(0.201)	(0.171)
Constant	656.293***	-1.969***	-2.120***
	(104.331)	(0.303)	(0.261)

Observations	1803	3486	3591
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The reported coefficients in the first column are estimated using ordinary least squares regression models

The reported coefficients in the last two four columns are estimated using logistic regression models

Standard errors in parentheses

*** indicates significant at 1% level,

** indicates significant at 5% level

* indicates significant at 10% level

Table A1.6 Full multivariate specifications from Chapter 6

	(Table 6.1)	(Table 6.2)	(Table 6.4)
	Whether course is a requirement of the job	Whether students got no non-fee support from employers	Whether students rated their employers as very or quite supportive
Completer	-0.092 (0.087)	0.058 (0.083)	-0.332*** (0.094)
Aged less than 25	0.507*** (0.113)	-0.000 (0.110)	-0.000 (0.134)
Female	-0.219** (0.103)	0.025 (0.096)	-0.079 (0.110)
Family Type (Couple with children)			
Single, no children			0.359** (0.151)
Lone parent			0.111 (0.187)
Couple, no children			0.165 (0.127)
Family Type (Couple)			
Single	0.280** (0.117)	-0.227** (0.113)	
Not White	0.467*** (0.139)	0.269** (0.134)	-0.352** (0.140)

Economic status at time of survey (employed full-time)			
Employed part-time	-0.418***	0.873***	
	(0.124)	(0.108)	
Not employed	0.628**	1.767***	
	(0.320)	(0.452)	
Not employed full-time			-0.427***
			(0.115)
Household income (less than £25,000)			
£25,000 or more, but less than £50,000	0.173	-0.350***	0.313**
	(0.126)	(0.122)	(0.136)
More than £50,000	0.287*	-0.685***	0.636***
	(0.161)	(0.155)	(0.175)
Highest existing qualification (level 4 or 5)			
Level 3	-0.203**	0.057	0.099
	(0.102)	(0.095)	(0.108)
Level 2 or below	-0.032	-0.014	0.084
	(0.123)	(0.117)	(0.133)
Whether partner, children or parent have HE qualification			
Do not have HE qualifications	-0.144	0.103	0.049
	(0.088)	(0.083)	(0.094)
Qualification aim (First Degree)			
Foundation Degree	0.359***	-0.555***	0.480***

	(0.114)	(0.112)	(0.134)
Higher National	0.443***	-0.537***	0.586**
	(0.163)	(0.185)	(0.232)
Subject (Social Science)			
Engineering	-0.014	-0.754***	0.574***
	(0.143)	(0.149)	(0.169)
Law	-1.474***	0.927***	-0.619***
	(0.218)	(0.160)	(0.163)
Business	-0.994***	0.101	0.107
	(0.132)	(0.119)	(0.135)
Education	0.009	0.716***	-0.115
	(0.130)	(0.126)	(0.141)
Studying at the Open University	-1.035***	1.613***	-0.660***
	(0.144)	(0.122)	(0.122)
Studying at an FE college	0.025	0.450***	-0.280*
	(0.121)	(0.123)	(0.144)
Constant	-0.886***	-0.597***	1.116***
	(0.188)	(0.184)	(0.210)
Observations	3369	3108	3067

All reported coefficients are estimated using logistic regression models

Standard errors in parentheses

*** indicates significant at 1% level,

** indicates significant at 5% level

* indicates significant at 10% level

Table A1.7 Full multivariate specifications from Chapter 7

	(Table 7.1)	(Table 7.2)
	Whether completers had changed employers since they started their course	Whether completers had changed employers and jobs since they started their course
Aged less than 25	0.428** (0.209)	0.491* (0.251)
Female	0.296* (0.167)	0.237 (0.207)
Family Type (Couple with children)		
Single, no children	0.126 (0.226)	0.009 (0.294)
Lone parent	0.009 (0.353)	-0.336 (0.479)
Couple, no children	0.300 (0.185)	0.676*** (0.234)
Not White	0.297 (0.218)	0.181 (0.268)
Economic status before started course (employed full-time)		
Employed part-time	0.289 (0.198)	0.394 (0.241)
Household income (less than £25,000)		
£25,000 or more, but less than	-0.212	-0.466*

£50,000	(0.208)	(0.260)
More than £50,000	-0.202	-0.722**
	(0.254)	(0.323)
Highest existing qualification (level 4 or 5)		
Level 3	0.141	0.256
	(0.163)	(0.205)
Level 2 or below	0.367*	0.332
	(0.191)	(0.241)
Whether partner, children or parent have HE qualification		
Do not have HE qualifications	-0.036	0.101
	(0.142)	(0.178)
Qualification aim (First Degree)		
Foundation Degree		-0.357
		(0.292)
Higher National		-0.926**
		(0.468)
Foundation Degree or Higher National	-0.460**	
	(0.232)	
Subject (Social Science)		
Engineering	0.464*	0.312
	(0.238)	(0.300)
Law	0.999***	0.897***
	(0.253)	(0.311)

Business	0.705*** (0.211)	0.756*** (0.257)
Education	0.338 (0.241)	0.122 (0.307)
Studying at the Open University	1.124*** (0.183)	1.160*** (0.222)
Studying at an FE college	-0.372 (0.290)	0.037 (0.345)
Constant	-2.406*** (0.310)	-3.000*** (0.388)
Observations	1464	1460

All reported coefficients are estimated using logistic regression models

Standard errors in parentheses

*** indicates significant at 1% level,

** indicates significant at 5% level

* indicates significant at 10% level

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

Introduction

The 'Futuretrack: Part time students' research project was commissioned by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) and the then Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). The research aims to track the development of people studying part-time at universities in the UK, and to highlight the careers advice and support needs of this particular group of learners.

The research is being conducted by Professor Claire Callender of Birkbeck, University of London, in partnership with the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) and IFF Research Ltd. IFF Research is conducting the fieldwork for the research.

Phase 1 of the research involved online and telephone surveys of part-time learners in either their first or final year of a course of HE study, across a total of 29 Universities. This technical report details the methodology employed and the outcomes of Phase 1, conducted in 2008.

For the second phase of the research, both cohorts of students will be followed up in 2011, three years after the initial survey. The inclusion of first year and final year students means that the three year project will yield information about student views over the duration of their course *and* information about how student experiences shape their career choices and progression in the three years after completion. As first degree courses, for instance, take on average five years for students to complete on a part-time basis, a model in which only first year students were followed up would need to be undertaken over a period of up to eight years for progress over a three year post-course period to be evaluated, and therefore the two cohort approach was preferred.

Outline methodology

The original methodological proposals for Phase 1 of the survey were based on sampling a number of part-time students from a number of HEIs. These individuals were to be invited - by email - to participate in a structured online survey. A second follow-up element was planned for cases in which students could not be reached through the online survey; these students were to be asked to complete a paper questionnaire, distributed either direct by post, or by hand within universities.

The original proposals were predicated on obtaining 3,000 complete responses from part-time students in their first year of study in an HEI, and an equal number from part-time students in their final year of HE study. The objective was to obtain 3,600 online interviews, from an initial email invitation covering c.11,000 students (assumed response rate of 33%), and a further 2,400 paper-based questionnaire returns from distribution to c.20,000 students (assumed response rate of 12%).

As the design of the survey evolved, however, it became clear that the 2nd phase of fieldwork would be better conducted by telephone.

This decision was made on a number of bases:

1. the lower than expected overall response rate to the online survey, and therefore the need to generate a larger sample of interviews in the second stage. It was anticipated that a telephone survey would be associated with a higher response rate than a postal survey. This was important in order for us to be confident of a robust sample size at the follow up survey further down the line (in three years).

2. the overall length and complexity of the questionnaire script meant that a self-completion, paper questionnaire version would have been very difficult for students to complete. Moving to a computer-assisted telephone survey version meant that students could be automatically routed through relevant questions, based on the characteristics of their study and their answers to earlier questions.
3. a mediated approach also increases the likelihood of collecting complete and more richly detailed interview responses, through the interviewer prompting and encouraging response.
4. the level of response and profile of respondents can be more easily monitored, and non-respondents more easily followed up.
5. using a telephone approach for the 2nd phase ensured that only eligible students submitted responses – this would have been more difficult to control in a situation where self-completion questionnaires were distributed in colleges.
6. at the data processing stage, telephone-based data collection also meant that responses could be accessed more immediately and could be more smoothly integrated with the online survey responses.

The questionnaires used for the online and telephone phases were not 100% identical. There were some relatively minor changes to question wording and format to ensure that the questionnaire was suitable for use in a mediated interview. More importantly, the overall length of the interviews completed over the initial stages of the telephone fieldwork and the number of students starting but failing to complete an interview indicated that the overall questionnaire length needed to be cut. As a result, some questions were removed or shortened from the questionnaire for the remainder of the telephone survey fieldwork.

Sampling

The population of students that the survey was designed to represent was as follows:

- 1) Classified as home students – domiciled in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland
- 2) Studying part-time, including those studying on block release or studying during the evenings only. Those studying full-time for less than 24 weeks in the academic year were also eligible for inclusion.
- 3) Studying towards one of the following types of qualification:
 - First undergraduate degree
 - Foundation degree
 - HNC
 - HND
- 4) Studying towards a qualification in one of the following subject areas (JACS Subject Code in brackets):
 - Engineering (H)
 - Technologies (J)
 - Social Studies(L)
 - Law (M)
 - Business and Administrative Studies (N)
 - Education (X)

The HESA database of students holds information on the course type, course subject and mode of study for all students in Higher Education across all HEIs. This information allowed us to design a strategy for selecting a shortlist of universities on which resources could be

focused, and a sample of students that would be representative of the whole population of part-time students (fitting the criteria above). In order to identify the shortlist of universities, 2004/2005 data on the number of first year, eligible part-time students was obtained for all UK higher education institutions, and used to select 35 institutions with a high proportion of eligible part-time students in the overall student population. The Open University was pre-selected, because it constitutes more than 40% of the eligible student body.

Each of these 35 HEIs were then approached with a request to provide details of eligible first year and final year students. Students from 29 of these HEIs were included in the survey; 17 institutions supplied student names and email addresses to IFF Research, whilst the remaining 12 were willing to send email survey invitations to eligible students but not pass on personalised data to IFF. This latter group of institutions was asked to provide anonymised lists of student contacts including a HUSID number so that if the student completed an interview and gave permission for their data to be matched with HESA records, there would be a common identifier, which could be used for this matching.

The remaining six HEIs were not willing to be involved in the research. This was largely as a result of the unwillingness of the universities to share information on students, and concerns about the staff resource and technological requirements of managing the email invitation to students in-house. One of the HEIs mentioned specifically that they would not be willing to take part as they were concerned over students being over-surveyed.

A total of 11,300 student records with email were received by IFF Research. The other students contacted by HEIs directly numbered 8,100.

Online survey

The online survey was piloted between 14th and 30th April 2008. The pilot sample was made up of part-time students in either their first or final year at Birkbeck College who were studying for an undergraduate first degree, a foundation degree or a HNC/HND. A total of around 380 students were sent an invitation to participate in the pilot. A total of 18 students completed the questionnaire.

Subsequent to the online pilot, the research team also interviewed six respondents who had completed the questionnaire (and given their permission for us to contact them by telephone to talk about their experience of it). The discussions covered general impressions of the survey, whether any technical or visual improvements could be made, as well as the relevance and understanding of specific wording and questions. Respondents who accessed the survey but did not complete it were emailed to ask for feedback as to why they chose not to finish the questionnaire. Whilst a low response was anticipated to this avenue of enquiry – by definition the students were not engaged in the survey – three students did return e-mails with feedback. As a result of this review, decisions were made to reduce the length of the survey and a number of revisions were made to the wording of questions.

Because of the concerns over the low overall response, the decision was taken to try to make the survey more appealing to respondents by reducing the overall time it would take, and by offering an incentive to participation (entry into a prize draw).

The main online survey was launched on 12th June 2008 with IFF Research sending out emails to students to invite them to participate. Over the initial weeks, a series of reminder emails were sent to those who had not yet responded, leading to a significant 'spike' in response in each case. There were two HEIs for which the 'bounce back' or non-receipt rate was very high, indicating an overall compatibility issue with the mail server and the institution based email system. Successful attempts were made to reduce the impact of these technical issues, through contact with HEI IT departments.

Ten of the twelve mail outs being handled by HEIs rather than IFF Research were completed by the first week of July, with the other two having to be delayed because of resourcing issues on the part of the HEIs. All these initial mailings were followed up with a reminder around two weeks later. Four of the HEIs sent a second reminder in an attempt to boost response further.

The online survey remained open until 4th October 2008, by which time a total of **1,545** completed responses had been obtained. This represents 8% of the total student sample sent an email invitation to the online survey (c.19,400). This was a lower response rate than originally anticipated, resulting from the high proportion of emails either not received or ignored by potential respondents. Where individuals did receive and open the email, two thirds (62%) did go on to complete the survey.

Key factors contributing to the disappointing response rate included the number of emails being blocked by mail servers, especially where the email accounts were institution-specific, rather than personal accounts. The number of invalid email addresses within the sample may also have been important. There is little that could be done about this, even where the email sample was passed on by the universities to IFF Research. We manually looked at all e-mails addresses when compiling and formatting the sample lists to pick up obvious spelling or similar errors (e.g. @hitmail instead of @hotmail). Those coming back as undeliverable were reviewed, and a handful of identifiable issues were “corrected”, but there is no central list against which one can validate e-mail addresses (unlike postal addresses). In addition, many of the email addresses supplied for students were institution-based rather than personal accounts – it is unclear how much these types of student account are used by part-time students, especially out of ‘term time’; this may have contributed to survey invitations not being picked up.

Table A2.1: Overall online outcomes

			TOTAL
	<i>Total IFF Sample</i>	<i>Total HEI sample</i>	
INITIAL SAMPLE	11,296	8,144	19,440
COMPLETED	958	587	1,545
Overall response rate	8.5%	7.2%	7.9%
% of sample opening	14%	11%	13%
Response as % of opened	60%	66%	62%
% who opened who screened out	22%	17%	21%
% who opened who stopped	17%	16%	17%
% of verified eligible who complete	78%	80%	79%

Table 1 shows the pattern of response to the online survey, split according to whether students were emailed by IFF Research or by the HEI. The table shows the proportion of students entering the survey that were ‘screened out’ because they did not meet the eligibility criteria

in terms of study mode, subject, course type or domicile, despite being eligible according to sample definitions.

Table 2 gives the online response broken down by first year ‘starters’ vs. final year ‘completers’. The online completed interviews were split relatively evenly between these two groups.

Table A2.2: Online outcomes by year

	<i>Starters</i>	<i>Completers</i>
INITIAL SAMPLE	11,441	8,069
COMPLETED	835	710
Overall response rate	7.3%	8.8%
% of sample opening	12%	14%
Response as % of opened	62%	62%
% who opened who screened out	22%	19%
% who opened who stopped	16%	18%
% of verified eligible who complete	80%	77%

Table 3 gives the number of complete online responses by HEI.

Table A2.3: Online outcomes by HEI

	Initial sample	Completed	Overall response rate	% of sample opening
IFF SAMPLE				
Liverpool Hope University	77	21	29%	42%
The University of Strathclyde	475	99	21%	30%
Anglia Ruskin University	341	70	21%	25%
The University of Wolverhampton	559	107	19%	25%
The University of Portsmouth	593	94	16%	25%
The University of Kent, Canterbury	366	50	14%	18%
University of the Arts, London	55	6	11%	18%
University of Derby	407	40	10%	13%
University of Abertay Dundee	52	5	10%	13%
De Montfort University	288	26	9%	12%
The University of Huddersfield	2,549	201	8%	16%
The University of Westminster	592	44	7%	16%
The University of Sunderland	850	59	7%	9%
London Metropolitan University	606	37	6%	14%
The University of Birmingham	804	34	4%	6%
UHI Millennium Institute	1538	39	3%	8%
The University of Plymouth	1,144	26	2%	5%
Total IFF Sample	11,296	958	8%	14%
HEI SAMPLE				
The University of Northumbria	370	51	14%	24%
University of Cumbria	205	27	13%	17%
The Open University	2,208	240	11%	18%
University of Bedfordshire	222	13	6%	10%
Southampton Solent University	283	16	6%	8%
University of Ulster	832	50	6%	8%
Manchester Metropolitan	504	30	6%	8%
The University of Teesside	1,689	100	6%	7%
Birkbeck College	401	16	4%	7%
Birmingham City University	252	10	4%	6%
University of Glamorgan	752	22	3%	4%
The University of Wales, Newport	426	12	3%	3%
Total HEI sample	8,144	587	7%	11%
TOTAL	19,440	1,545	8%	13%

Telephone phase

The telephone phase was launched on 13th August, by which time the majority of the online responses that were to be achieved had come in. Telephone interviewing was completed by the 4th October, when the online survey was also closed.

The suitability of the adjusted questionnaire script was monitored over the first few days of interviewing, and as a result, adjustments were made to improve the flow of the interview and reduce the overall length. Three open-ended, more qualitative questions were dropped from the survey at this stage, and a question asking for a detailed breakdown of student expenditure was simplified.

Contact was attempted with a sample of approximately 9,000 students during the telephone phase, representing those who had not taken part in an online interview and for whom a telephone number was available. The students of those HEIs not willing to supply contact details to IFF Research in the first instance could not be included, the exception being the Open University.

In the majority of cases, there was a definite outcome to the telephone contact, including cases where the number was unusable.

The total number of telephone interviews achieved was **2,504**.

Table A2.4: Overall telephone phase outcomes

	NUMBER	% of 7,350 definite outcome
Number(s) unobtainable	525	7%
Respondent not known	866	12%
Ineligible for interview	999	14%
Refused interview	1,714	23%
Interview abandoned	742	10%
Interviews achieved	2,504	34%
<i>All with definite outcome</i>	7,350	100%

Overview of outcomes from Phase 1

A total of **4,049** interviews were achieved across the online and telephone phases, 2,113 with first year 'starters' and 1,936 with final year 'completers'. This represents an overall response rate of 21% on the c19,500 starting sample. The response rate was higher for completers (at 24%) than for starters (18%).

During data analysis, a number of respondents in the sample supplied by the University of Huddersfield were found to be out of scope, as a result of the type of education course they had been undertaking. These students had been completing an undergraduate level 'Certificate in Education' that could not be fitted to the definitions of eligible course types (first degree, foundation degree, HNC or HND). Excluding these 345 records from the final dataset gave a total sample of **3,704** complete responses, representing 1,941 'starters' and 1,763 'completers'.