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COLLEGE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
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Equal Opportunities; an analysis of undergraduate student performance for cohorts entering the College between 2005 and 2011

Introduction and methodology

1.   This paper draws together information on student population, achievement and progression, mainly gathered from data used for the annual review of undergraduate programmes. It seeks to examine trends relating to ethnicity, gender, disability and age; factors which are, or will be, implicated in equal opportunities legislation. Data are also examined relating to students' domicile (or, more accurately, their fee-region- UK, Other EU and Overseas) since Equal Opportunities could equally well be applicable to students coming from overseas.

2.   Data was used covering seven entry cohorts, 2005 to 2011. Comparison with national data is almost impossible since there is no freely available data relating gender, ethnicity and disability to student progression and achievement.

3.   Unlike previous reports (CBEEC/07/49, CBEEC/08/60, CBEEC/09/68 and CBEEC/10/64), this reports draws on headcount data at College level. Hence there are no departmental data available but it also avoids double counting students as was the case in previous reports.

Undergraduate student population and benchmark data

4.   Proof of a fair admissions policy at RHUL is, largely, beyond the scope of this paper since most relevant information on applicants (*eg* declared ethnicity) is only provided by UCAS for successful candidates. One can instead monitor the student intake over time although if there is a consistent bias against one particular sort of applicant, this would not be picked up by such an analysis.

5.   The percentage of non-white UG entrants remained stable at just above 30% for a number of years. Following a perceptible fall (of nearly 5%) in this value in 2010 the number has increased again in 2011 however still remains just below 30% (See Appendix, Fig. 1).

6.   Despite an increase in the number of overseas students in the past 10-15 years, UK entrants still comprise over 70 % of a typical UG cohort. In the last 7 years the percentage of UK entrants has remained fairly consistent at just above or below 75% (See Appendix, Fig. 2).

7.   The proportion of 'mature' entrants (aged 22 or over upon initial enrolment, as defined by HESA) has remained remarkably steady over the past 7 cohorts at *ca* 7% (see Appendix, Fig. 3).

Analysis of student achievement related to ethnic origin and gender

8. It has been noted in previous analyses that there is a clear and consistent achievement gap between white and non-white students with regard to final classification, with the former up to twice as likely to be awarded a 1st class degree and more than twice as many of the latter failing to gain at least a 2(i). The same trend can also be seen for students who completed in 2012 however there has been a noticeable increase in the number of students being awarded a 1st class degree both for white and non-white students in the last 3 years (See Appendix, Fig. 4).

9. It has also been noted previously that male students are more likely to be awarded a 1st class degree than female students however this trend appears to have shifted over the past 3 years and females have been awarded more 1st class degrees than males. In addition the number of females being awarded a 1st class degree has consistently increased over the past 5 years. Females students are still more likely to be awarded a 2(i) compared to male students and male students are still more likely to be awarded a degree lower than a 2(i) compared to female students (See Appendix, Fig. 5).

Analysis of student progression related to ethnic origin, gender, age on entry and declared disability

10. In terms of student progression, typically 84-88 % of 1st year students progress to stage two at the first attempt and 92-94 % in total, after 1 or 2 attempts (note that, for the sake of clarity, all progression data excludes students yet to attempt a stage at all- it is assumed that they will progress or withdraw in similar proportions to the other students). Since the 1st year is where most students fail to progress, first-year progression at the 1st attempt will be the measure used for comparisons in this paper.

11. When looking at 1st year progression white students are *ca* 10-13% more likely to progress at the first attempt compared to non-white students. The performance gap in 2005 was the lowest seen in the last 7 years (7%) while students who entered in 2010 showed the highest performance gap (15%). Following this increase in 2010 the gap for students who entered in 2011 has decreased back down to a more standard level (12%) (See Appendix, Fig. 6).

12. There are some differences in 1st year progression between male and female students at the first attempt although they are much smaller than those noted between white and non-white students (*ca* 5-8%). The percentage of both male and female students progressing from the 1st year at the first attempt has remained extremely constant over the past 7 years (See Appendix, Fig. 7).

13. The progression rate seen for disabled students in the last 7 years is only slightly lower than is seen for non-disabled students. This trend was reversed in 2009 when there were 3% more disabled students progressing to the 2nd year at the first attempt then non-disabled students (See Appendix, Fig. 8).

14. 1st year progression rates of mature students continue to be lower than those seen for non-mature students. The differences between mature and non-mature students have fluctuated significantly year on year and the past 7 years have seen it range from 6-14% (See Appendix, Fig. 9).

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