



# **PATTERNS AND TRENDS**

**IN UK HIGHER EDUCATION**

**2016**



Universities UK

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

*Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016* provides an interim update to the Universities UK Patterns series, before we publish our full Patterns and Trends publication in spring 2017. It includes updates of the main charts included in our 2015 publication, covering trends in student and staff numbers and finances of the UK higher education sector over the period 2005–06 to 2014–15.

UUK has modified the timing of the full Patterns and Trends publication to better align with the annual release of data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency. The full report, which will henceforth be published annually in spring each year, will be similar to our 2015 publication including a comprehensive commentary on patterns and trends in data on students, staff and finances of higher education providers over the past decade.

Key points from this interim update include:

- The sector as a whole has seen a significant shift in its main source of income from funding body grants in the early years of the period covered, to tuition fees and education contracts. In 2014–15, tuition fees and education contracts accounted for 46.9% of total income to the sector, and funding body grants accounted for 15.9%.
- Research income has grown over the decade, with significant increases in research income from EU sources between 2005–06 to 2014–15 (170%). EU sources were the fourth largest source of research income in 2014–15, accounting for 15.4% of total research income.
- The same period has also seen growth in the number of entrants to full-time first degree courses, while entrants to part-time and other undergraduate courses have decreased considerably.
- Campuses have become more international, with the proportion of non-EU students increasing from 9% in 2005–06 to 13.8% in 2014–15, and the proportion of EU students increasing from 4.4% to 5.5% over the same period. The number of UK domiciled students has decreased by 145,000 from 1,974,195 in 2005–06 to 1,829,195 in 2014–15.
- Graduates are less likely to be unemployed when compared to non-graduates, even in a recession. In 2015, non-graduates from all age groups had an unemployment rate of 6.4%, while it was 3.1% for graduates of all age groups and 2.3% for postgraduates.

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

### Table of contents

- P.1 Students at higher education providers by level and mode of study, 2014–15
- P.2 Entrants by mode and level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.3 Cross-border flows of student entrants by domicile and country of provider, 2013–14 to 2014–15
- P.4 Total number of students by level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.5 Total student numbers by country of provider, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.6 Students by level and mode of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.7 Students by domicile, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.8 Students by domicile and level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.9 Change in non-UK students by region of origin, 2005–06 and 2014–15
- P.10 Internationally mobile student numbers by host country, 2005 to 2014
- P.11 Students by age group and level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.12 Students by subject of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.13 Qualifications awarded by level, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.14 Destinations of leavers by level of qualification, 2014–15
- P.15 Unemployment rates in the UK by group, 2006 to 2015
- P.16 Staff by employment function, 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.17 Change in age profile of academic staff by mode of employment between 2005–06 and 2014–15
- P.18 Income by source (real terms), 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.19 Research income by source (real terms), 2005–06 to 2014–15
- P.20 Expenditure of higher education providers (real terms), 2005–06 to 2014–15



## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

### Notes on data

In 2014–15 there were 164 higher education providers – excluding further education colleges – in the UK in receipt of public funding via one of the UK funding councils. This report features aggregated data from all 164 plus the University of Buckingham. The analysis in this report does not cover other higher education providers, including alternative providers or further education colleges, unless explicitly stated. The report also excludes data for the University of Wales (central functions), which has staff but no students.

To ensure that figures for the number of students studying in each country reflect the actual number of students studying in that country, Open University students have been split out to their country of study. The majority of the data used in this report has been provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). All HESA\* figures quoted in the report which relate to student and staff numbers have been rounded to the nearest five in accordance with HESA data protection guidelines. All percentages have been calculated using the raw figures and rounded, therefore rounded figures may not sum precisely.

*\*Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited. Neither the Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited nor HESA Services Limited can accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived by third parties from data or other information supplied by HESA Services.*

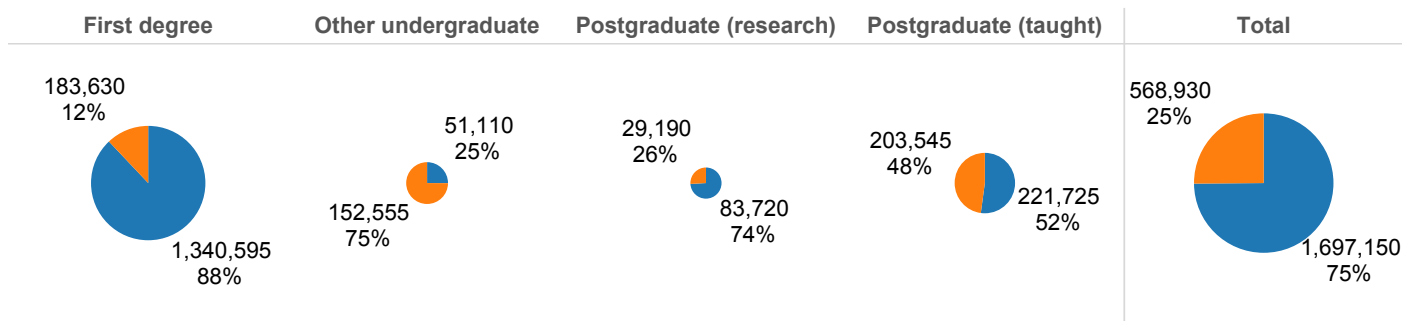
## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 1: Students at higher education providers by level and mode of study, 2014–15**

In 2014–15, there were 2.3 million students studying at UK higher education providers, three quarters of them full-time.

67% (1.5 million) of all students were studying for a first degree, 9% (203,670) for other undergraduate degrees, 19% (425,270) for postgraduate taught degrees and 5% (112,910) for a postgraduate research degree.



**Mode**  
■ Full-time  
■ Part-time

Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



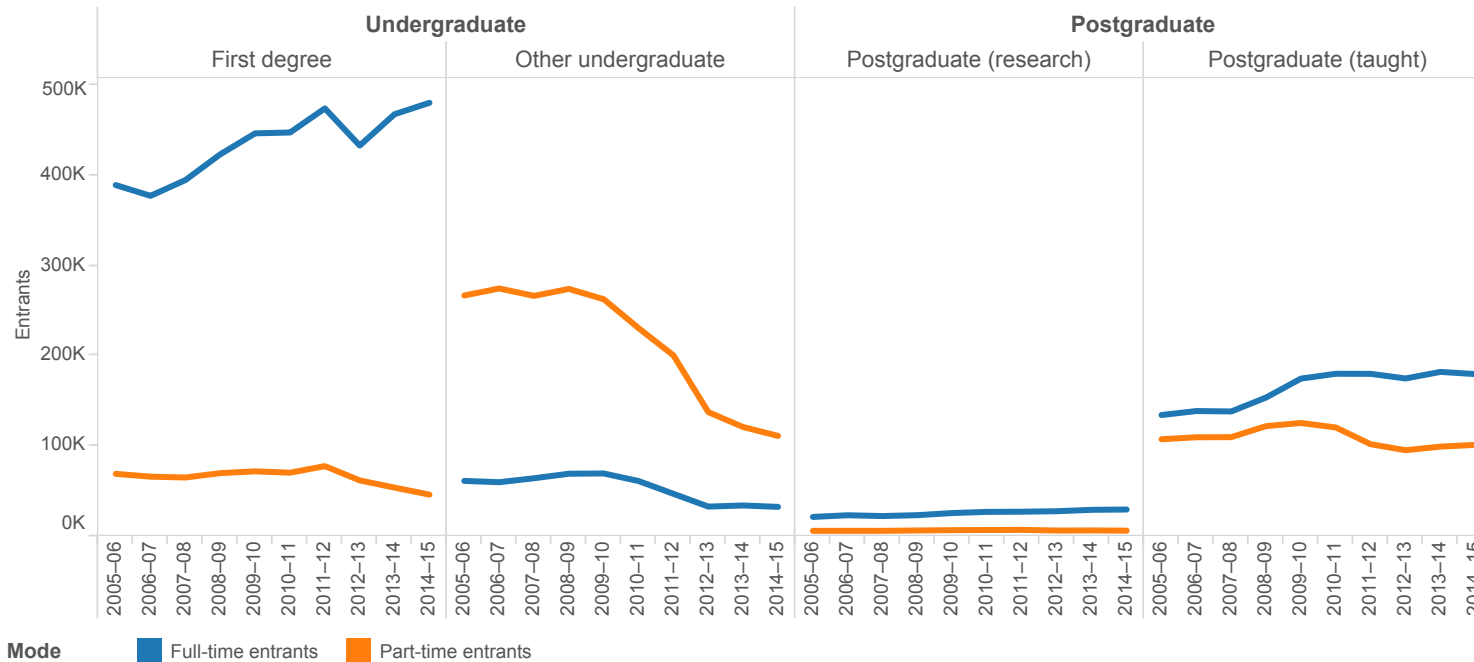
**Figure 2: Entrants by mode and level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

The number of full-time entrants increased between 2005–06 and 2014–15 for first degree (23.4%), postgraduate taught (33.7%) and postgraduate research (37.9%) courses, and decreased for entrants to other undergraduate courses\* (46.7%).

Between 2011–12 and 2012–13, the number of full-time first degree entrants decreased by 8.7% and from 2012–13 to 2014–15 it increased by 10.9%, following changes to the student funding system in England in 2012–13. There are 6,220 more full-time first degree students (1.3% increase) in 2014–15 than in 2011–12.

Part-time entrants have decreased for all levels of study, most significantly for other undergraduate courses since 2008–09 and first degree courses since 2011–12. Entrants to postgraduate research courses increased slightly (3.5%) from 2005–06 to 2014–15.

\*includes undergraduate certificates, diplomas, institutional credits, foundation degrees, HNC/HND courses and others. More information see figure 4.

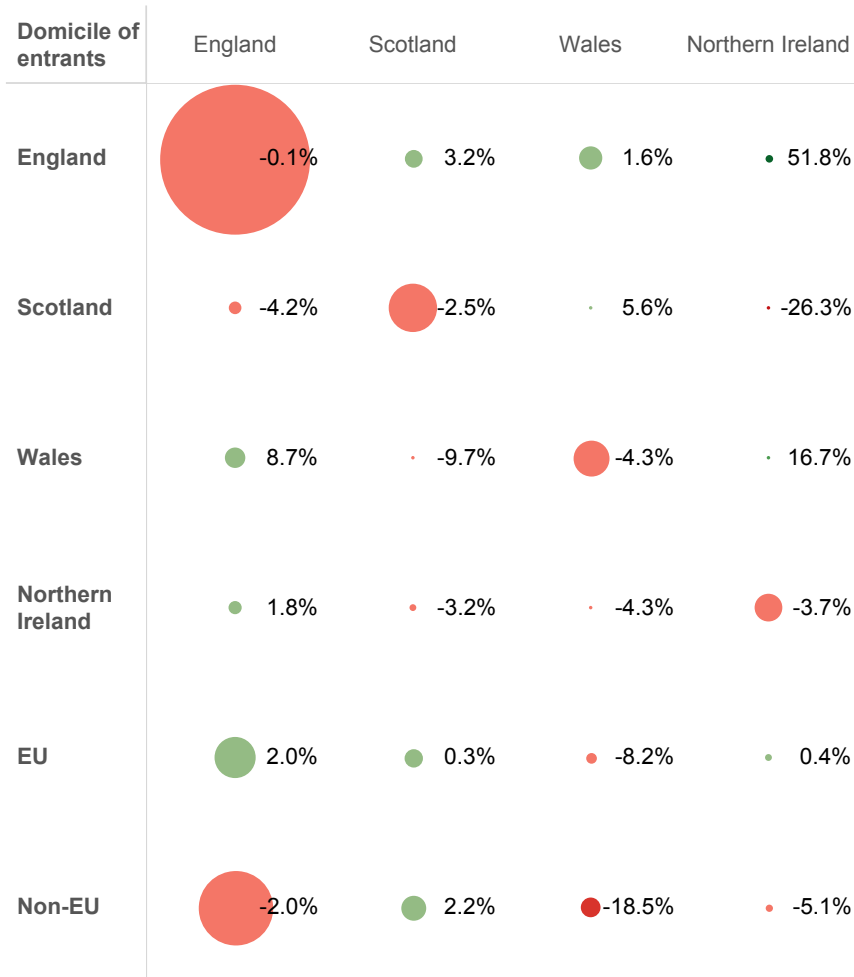


Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 3: Cross-border flows of student entrants by domicile and country of provider, 2013–14 to 2014–15**

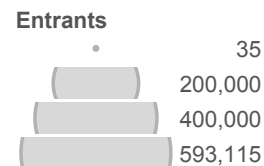


The size of the circles reflects the number of undergraduate and postgraduate entrants by domicile of student and location of provider in 2014–15. The colour of the circles shows the percentage change for each group compared to the previous year.

Between 2013–14 and 2014–15 there was a decrease in non-EU entrants to all provider countries other than Scotland, with an 18.5% decrease to Welsh providers.

Providers in all countries showed a small percentage decrease in home entrants, eg a 2.5% decrease of Scottish entrants to providers in Scotland.

There were small increases in EU entrants to English and Scottish providers, but an 8.2% decrease to Welsh providers.



## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

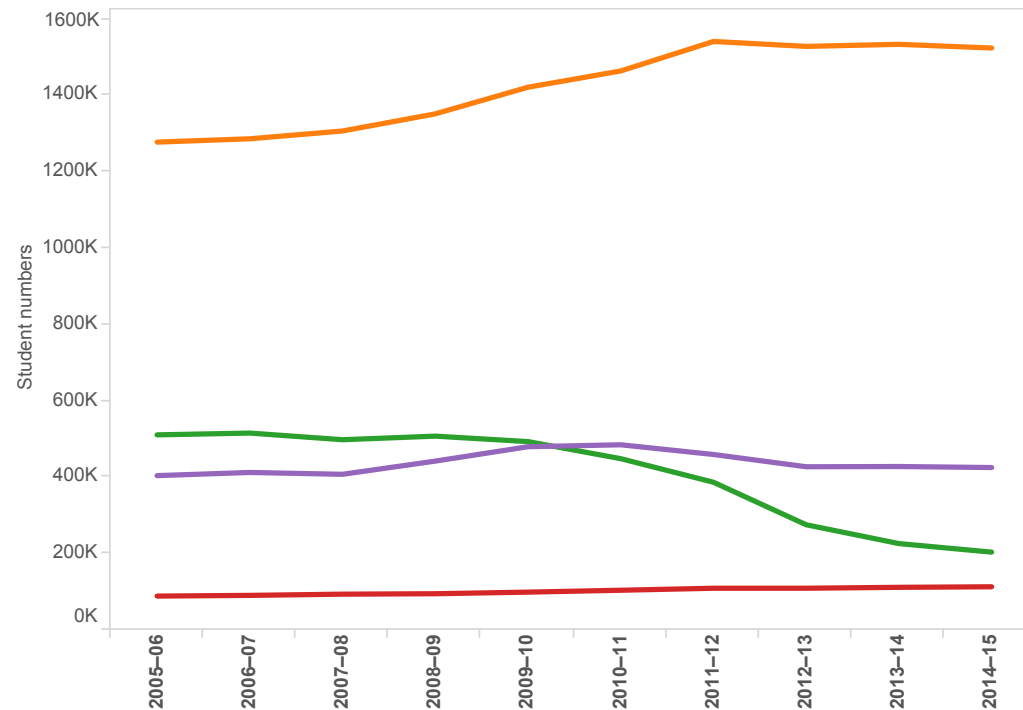


**Figure 4: Total number of students by level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

Student numbers across most levels of study increased between 2005–06 and 2014–15, with the exception of other undergraduate courses where numbers decreased by 60%, due to a number of reasons. Other undergraduate courses include undergraduate certificates, diplomas, institutional credits, foundation degrees and HNC/HND courses. Since 2008–09, the number of other undergraduate students studying part time has declined dramatically. Between 2005–06 and 2009–10 there was a switch by students from certificates and diplomas to foundation degrees. Between 2009–10 and 2013–14 the influence of a policy that all new nurses need to be degree educated by 2013 led to a decline of other undergraduate courses.

Between 2005–06 and 2014–15, postgraduate research student numbers increased by 28%, first degree numbers by 19% and postgraduate taught numbers by 5%. However, although the number of students studying first degree courses increased to 2011–12 it has since shown a slight downwards trend. Postgraduate taught numbers peaked in 2010–11, and after a 12% decline to 2012–13 have remained broadly stable.

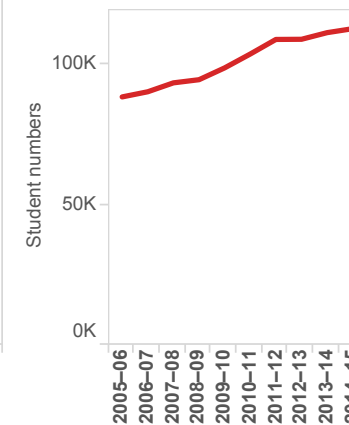
### All levels



### Level

- First degree
- Postgraduate (taught)
- Other undergraduate
- Postgraduate (research)

### Postgraduate research





## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



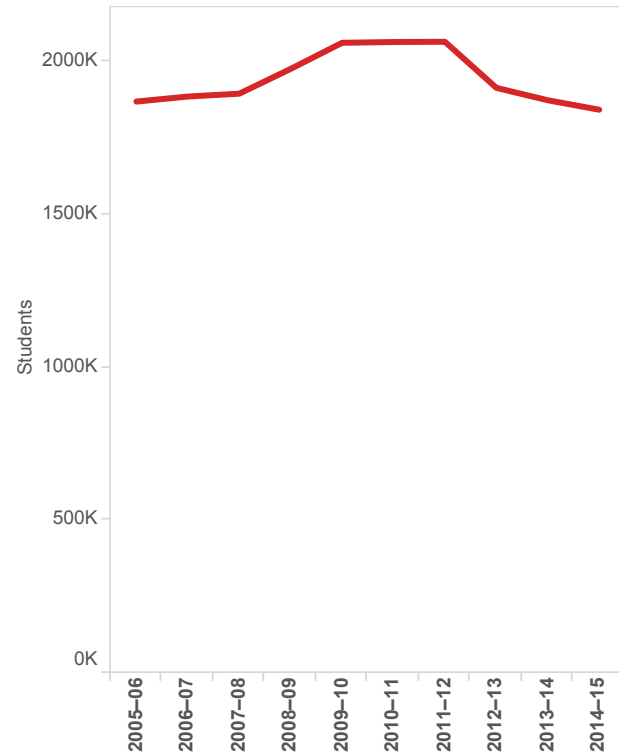
### Figures 5a and 5b: Total student numbers by country of provider, 2005–06 to 2014–15

The number of students at providers in Wales and Northern Ireland have remained largely stable between 2005–06 and 2014–15, and have grown by 4.7% (10,485 students) in Scotland and decreased by 1.4% (26,664 students) in England.

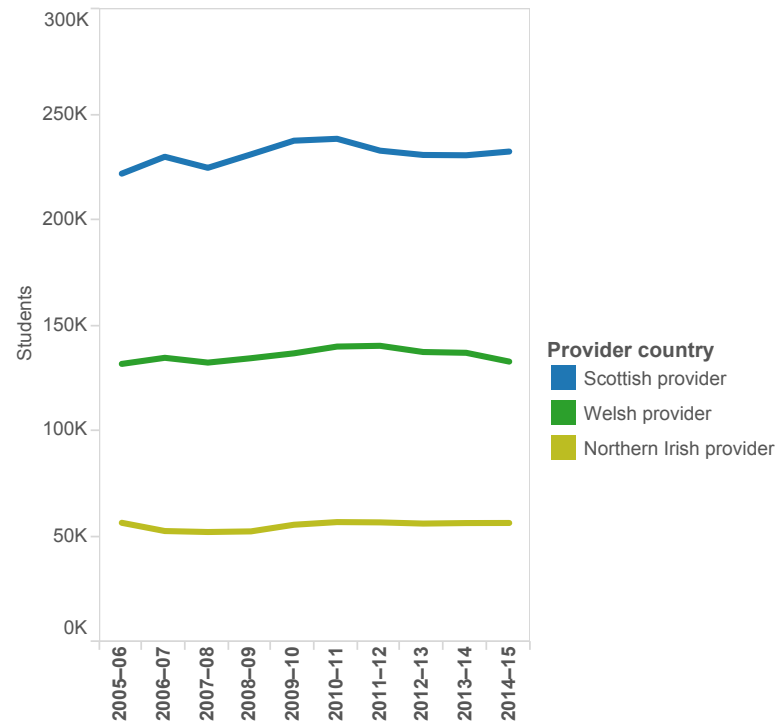
The decrease in student numbers at providers in England, following reforms of undergraduate student funding in 2012–13, mainly reflects reductions in part-time study and other undergraduate courses (see also p. 2 and p. 6). Over the same period, first degree numbers have been relatively stable.

Between 2013–14 and 2014–15 student numbers at providers in Scotland increased by 0.8% (1,765 students) and decreased by 3% (4,170 students) at providers in Wales. At English providers, there was a 1.6% decrease (30,925 students) over the same period.

#### 5a: English providers



#### 5b: Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish providers



Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



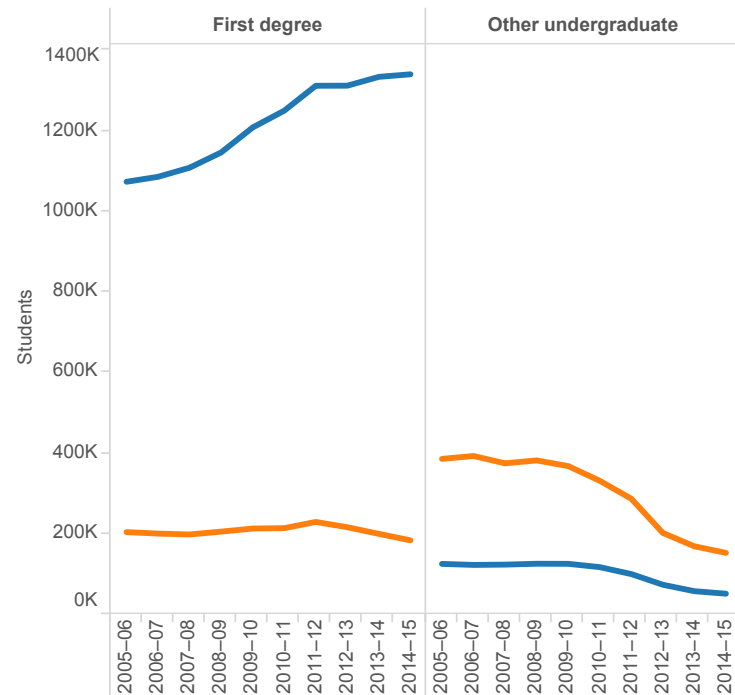
### Figures 6a and 6b: Students by level and mode of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15

**Figure 6a:** The number of students on full-time first degree courses has increased by 24.8% from 2005–06 to 2014–15, while students on all other modes and levels of undergraduate study have decreased. Since 2009–10, part-time study and students on full-time other undergraduate courses have both decreased by 59%.

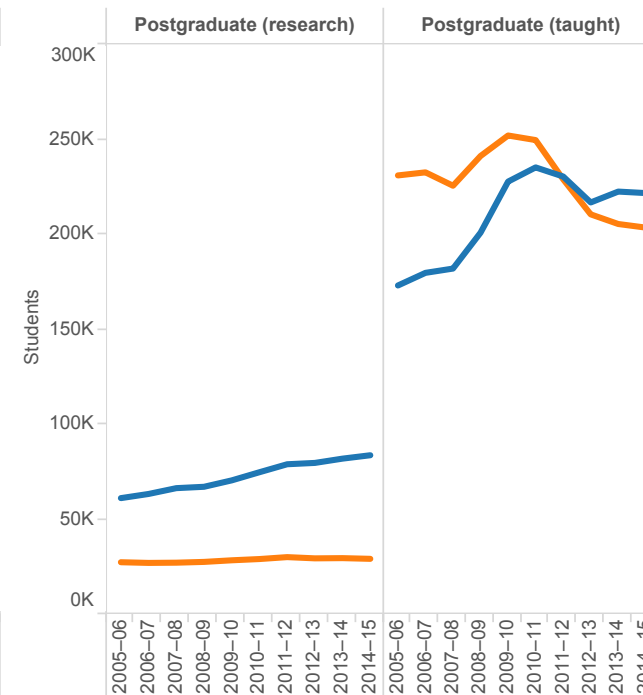
**Figure 6b:** The number of students studying full-time postgraduate research courses has increased steadily from 61,145 in 2005–06 to 83,720 in 2014–15.

Between 2005–06 and 2014–15 there was a 28.1% increase in full-time postgraduate taught entrants and a 11.9% decrease in part-time postgraduate taught entrants. For both modes of study student numbers are lower in 2014–15 following a peak in 2010–11.

**Figure 6a: Undergraduates**



**Figure 6b: Postgraduates**



**Mode**  
■ Full-time  
■ Part-time

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

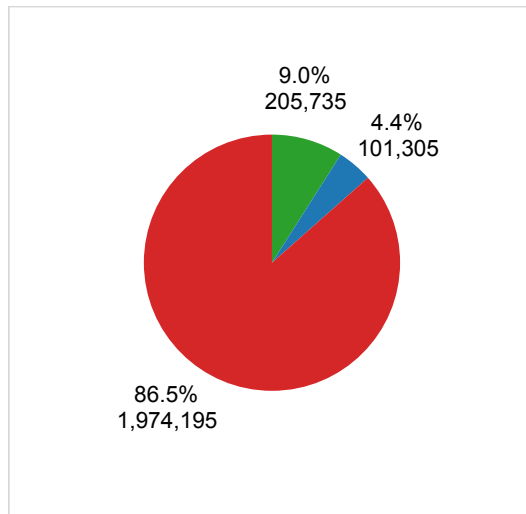


**Figure 7: Students by domicile, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

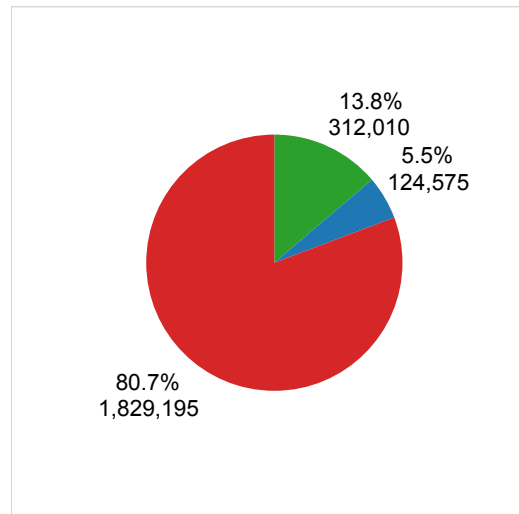
While the majority of students at UK higher education providers are from the UK, the proportion of students from EU countries has increased from 4.4% in 2005–06 to 5.5% in 2014–15. The proportion of non-EU students has increased from 9.0% to 13.8% over the same period.

The number of UK students decreased by 145,000 from 1,974,195 in 2005–06 to 1,829,195 in 2014–15, with the number of non-UK students increasing by 129,545 (23,270 EU students and 106,275 non-EU students) over the same period.

**2005–06**



**2014–15**



**Domicile**

- Non-EU
- Other EU
- UK

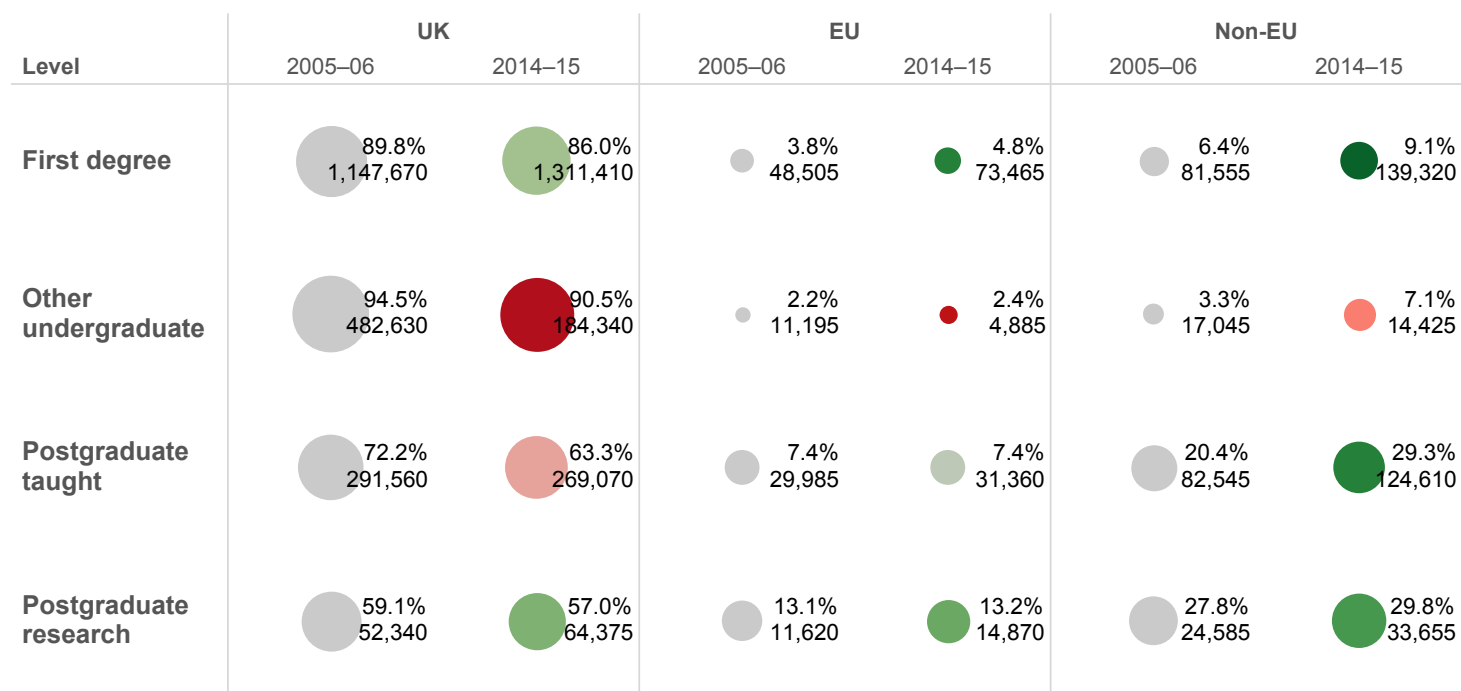
## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 8: Students by domicile and level of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

The size of a circle reflects the number of students in each level of study, while the percentage change from 2005–06 to 2014–15 is represented by the colour of the circle in the 2014–15 column. The labels for each circle show the proportion of students from each domicile within each level of study (eg in 2014–15 86% of first degree students are from the UK).

Between 2005–06 and 2014–15, the number of other undergraduate students from all domiciles and postgraduate taught students from the UK have decreased. Students across all other levels of study and domiciles have increased, with the largest increase shown by non-EU students on first degree courses (71%).



Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

**Figure 9: Change in non-UK students by region of origin, 2005–06 and 2014–15**

This chart shows the proportion of non-UK students at UK higher education providers, as shown by the **size of each circle**, by region of origin. In 2014–15, 28.5% of students were from the EU, followed by 20.5% from China, 19.3% from Asia (excluding China and India), 8% from Africa, 6.5% from the Middle East and 6.3% from North America. Smaller proportions are from European countries outside the EU (4.6%), India (4.2%), South America (1.4%) and Australasia (0.6%).

**Percentage figures in the chart** show the change in student numbers from each region between 2005–06 and 2014–15. Student numbers from all regions increased over the period, with significant increases in students from the Middle East (121.3%), European countries outside the EU (94.4%) and China (90.7%). However, these increases mask variation in year-on-year change over the period, including periods of decline for some regions.



Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 10: Internationally mobile student numbers by host country, 2005 to 2014**

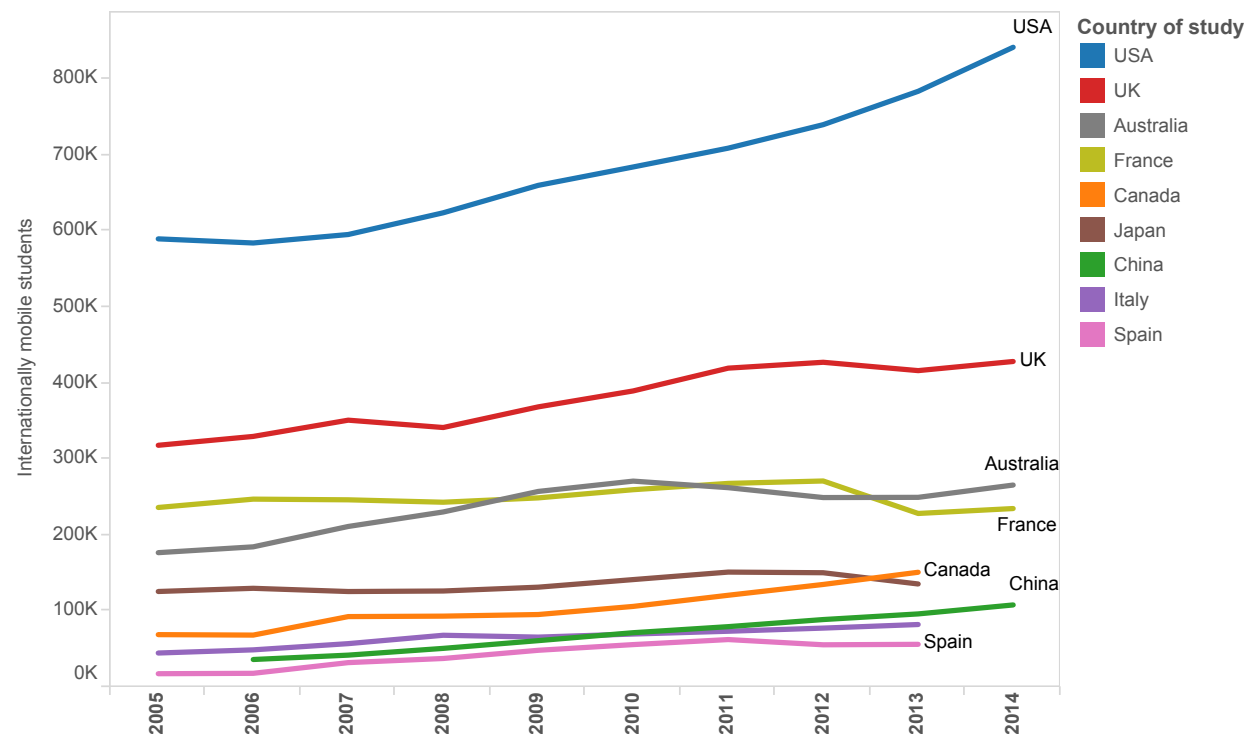
This chart shows internationally mobile student numbers from all countries by their destination country.

The UK is the second most popular destination for internationally mobile students (428,724 students), followed by Australia (266,048) and France (253,123). The most popular destination is the United States (842,384).

Canada was the fifth most popular country for international students in 2013 (figures only available until 2013), with numbers increasing by 119% since 2005.

Numbers of global international students studying in the UK increased by 35% between 2005 to 2014. Over the same period numbers studying in the US increased by 43%, by 50% for those studying in Australia and decreased by 1% for those studying in France.

Foreign student numbers studying in China have increased by almost 200% from 36,000 in 2006 to more than 108,000 in 2014.



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics Education database.  
Data from 2004, 2005 and 2014 is not available for all countries.

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



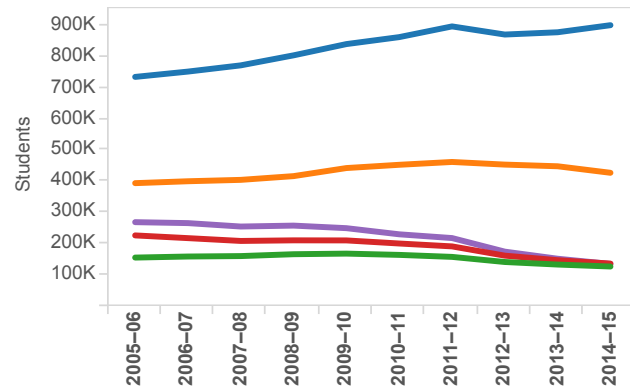
**Figure 11: Students by age group and level of study 2005–06 to 2014–15**

More than half of all undergraduate students in 2014–15 were aged 20 and under, and a quarter were 21–24 years old. A third of postgraduate students in 2014–15 were in the 21–24-year-old age group.

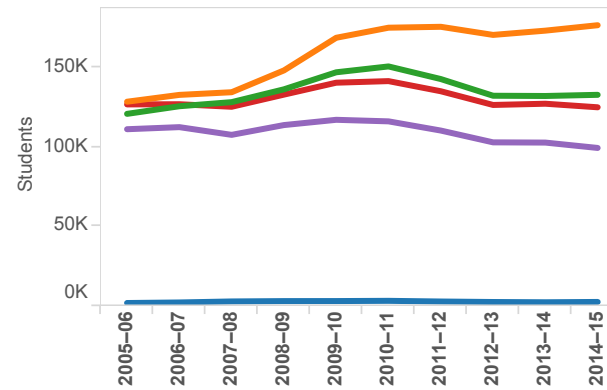
After a 2.9% dip in the number of undergraduate students aged 20 and under between 2011–12 and 2012–13, there has been an increase of 3.4% to 2014–15. All other age groups at the undergraduate level have decreased since 2011–12.

Between 2005–06 and 2014–15 there was an increase in postgraduate student numbers in the three youngest age groups and a decrease in the two oldest groups. Across all age groups, postgraduate student numbers peaked around 2009–10, and have declined since, other than the 21 to 24-year-old age group where numbers have increased since 2012–13.

**Undergraduates, 2005–06 to 2014–15**



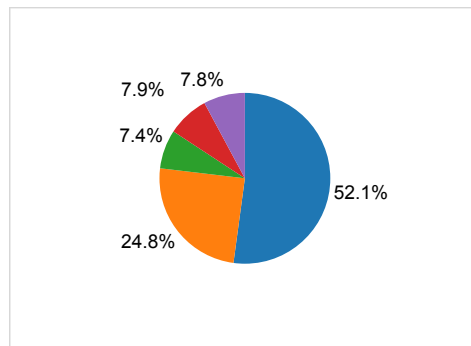
**Postgraduates, 2005–06 to 2014–15**



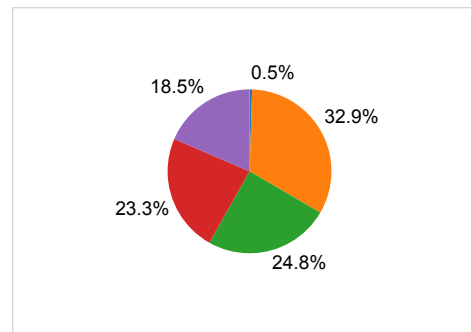
**Age group**

- 20 and under
- 21–24 years
- 25–29 years
- 30–39 years
- 40 years and over

**Undergraduate students, 2014–15**



**Postgraduate students, 2014–15**



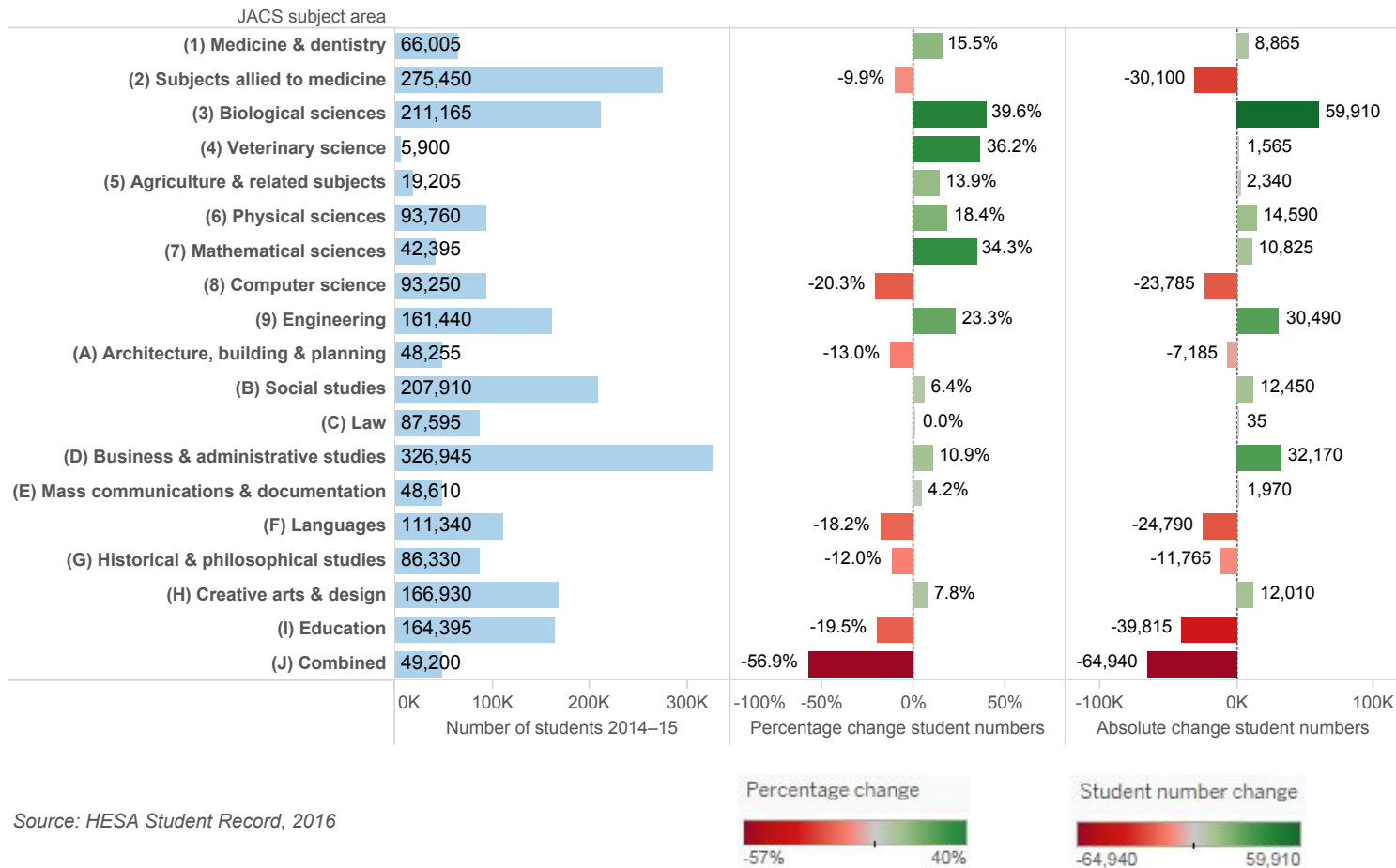
## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 12: Students by subject of study, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

The first column of this chart shows the number of students in each subject area, the second column shows the percentage change between 2005–06 and 2014–15 and the third column shows the change in absolute numbers over the same period.

Over the last decade, proportional increases in student numbers were seen in natural science subjects such as biological sciences (39.6%), mathematical sciences (34.3%), engineering (23.3%) and physical sciences (18.4%), while decreases were seen in subjects such as languages (18.2%), historical and philosophical sciences (12%), education (19.5%), subjects allied to medicine (9.9%), architecture (13%) and computer sciences (20.3%). The largest increases in absolute student numbers over the period were seen in biological sciences (59,910), business and administrative studies (32,170) and engineering (30,490). The largest decreases in student numbers were in combined subjects (64,940), education (39,820) and subjects allied to medicine (30,100).



Source: HESA Student Record, 2016



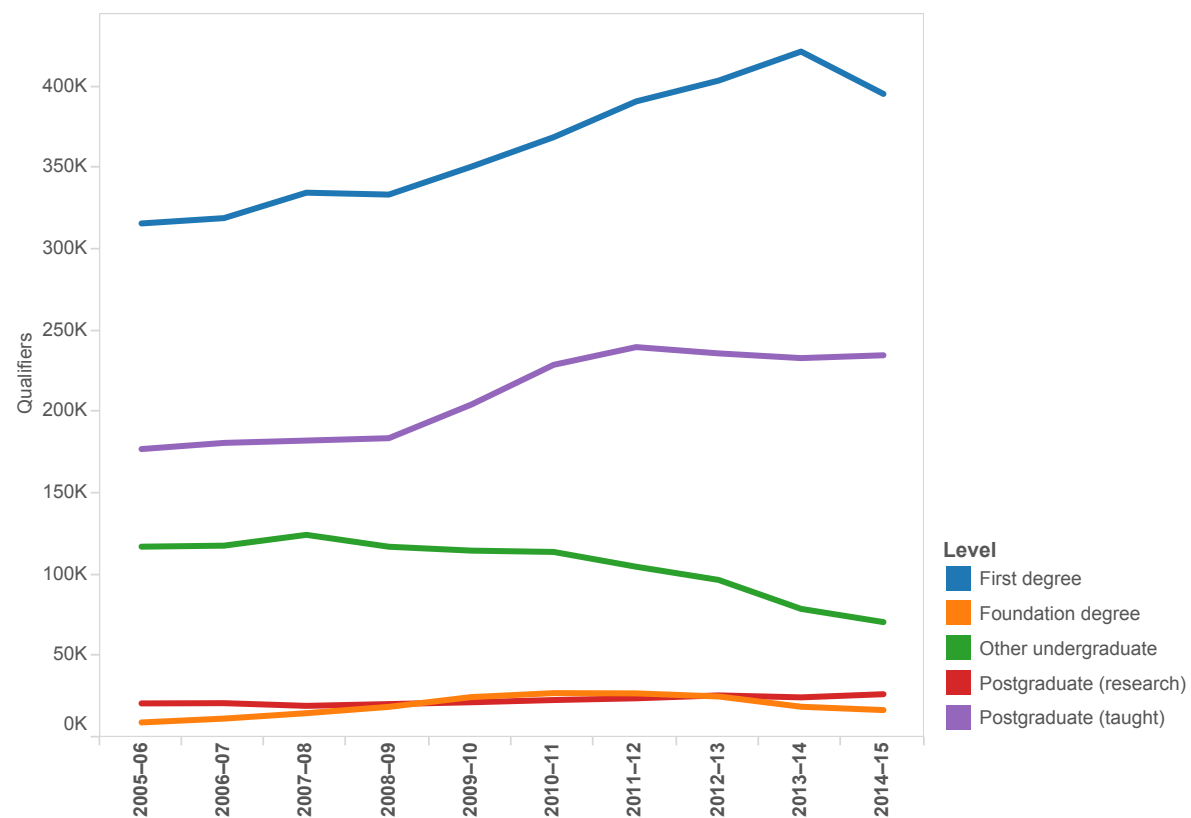
## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 13: Qualifications awarded by level, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

In 2005–06, 640,850 qualifications were awarded in total compared to 745,005 awards in 2014–15, an increase of 16%. The number of qualifications awarded peaked in 2012–13 (787,900).

In 2014–15, 53% of awards were for first degrees, 10% for other undergraduate degrees, 2% for foundation degrees, 32% for postgraduate taught degrees and 4% for postgraduate research degrees. These proportions have increased by up to 4% each since 2005–06, except for other undergraduate degrees, where the proportion decreased from 18% in 2005–06.



Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

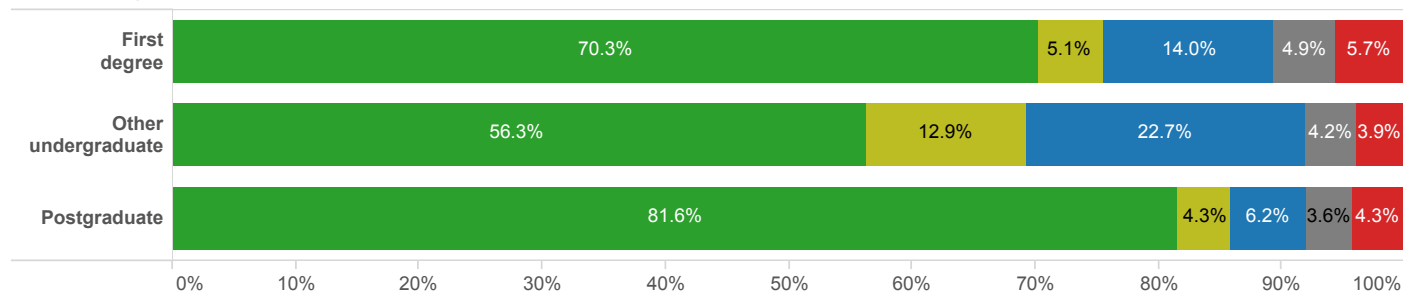


**Figure 14: Destinations of leavers by level of qualification 2014–15**

Figure 14 shows the activity of leavers, six months after graduation by level of study.

Six months after graduation, 92% of postgraduates and other undergraduates, and 89% of first degree students are working or pursuing further study.

### Percentages of destination of leavers within levels of qualification



#### Activity

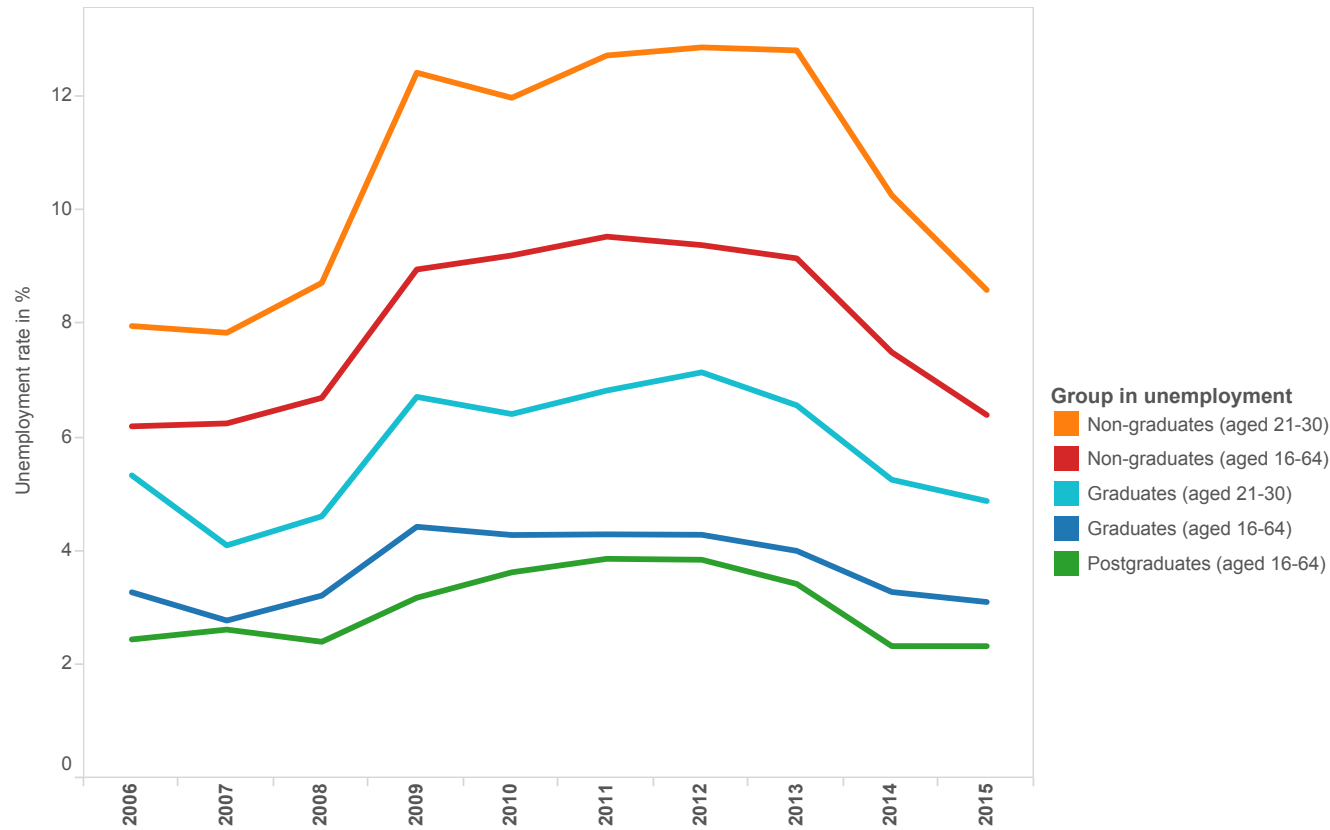
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Other
- Study
- Work and study
- Work

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 15: Unemployment rates in the UK by group, 2006 to 2015**

Graduates are less likely to be unemployed compared to non-graduates, even throughout a recession. In 2015, young non-graduates in the 21–30 year old and 16–64 year old age groups had unemployment rates of 8.6% and 6.4% respectively. This compared with 4.9% for younger graduates (21–30 years) and 2.3% for graduates in the 16–64 year old group. Postgraduates had the lowest unemployment rate with 2.3%.



Source: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, now BEIS) Graduate labour market statistics 2015, published 26 April 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

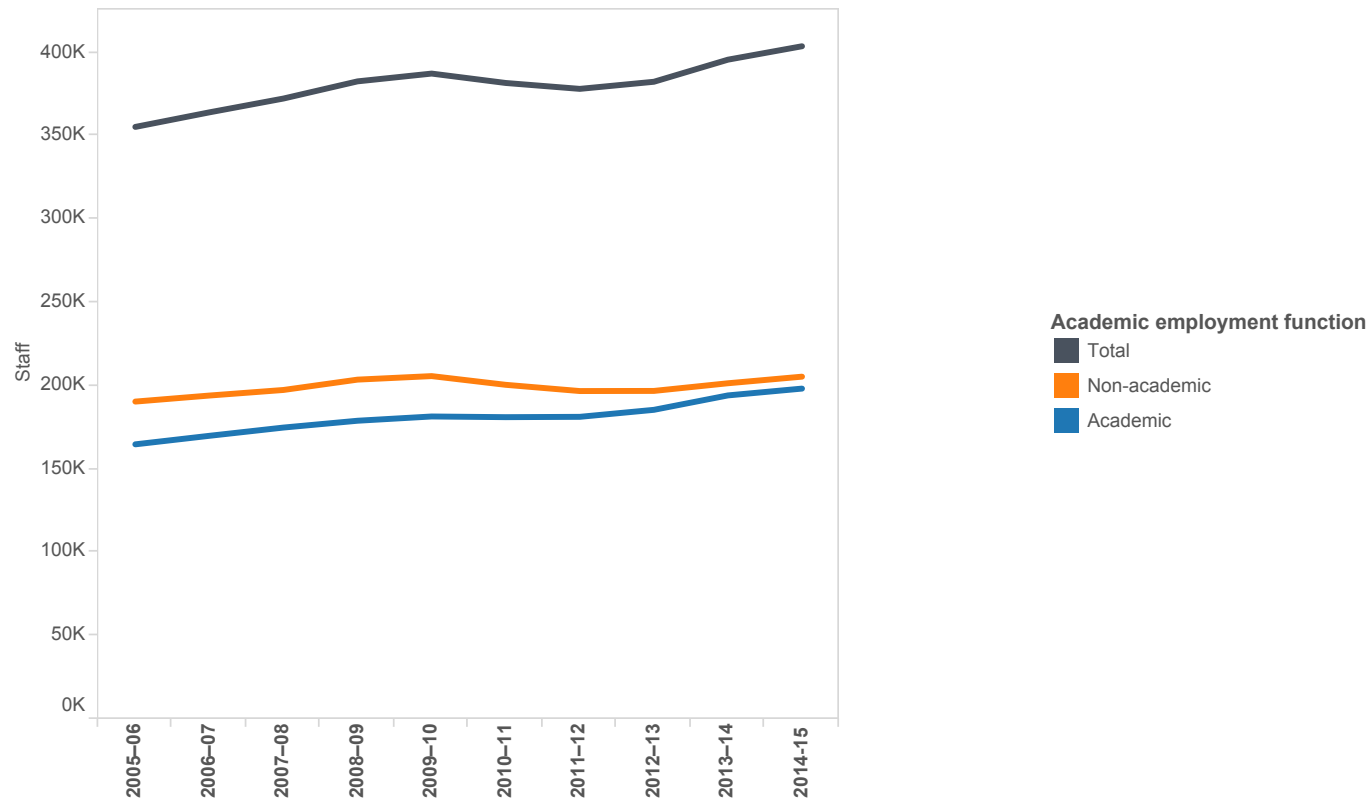


**Figure 16: Staff by employment function, 2005–06 to 2014–15**

In 2014–15, there were 403,835 staff employed by higher education providers, an increase of 13.6% (48,420) since 2005–06.

The gap between the number of academic and non-academic staff is at its smallest point for the past ten years, with 198,335 employed on academic contracts and 205,500 on non-academic contracts.

In 2014–15, EU nationals accounted for 16% of academic staff (31,635) and non-EU nationals accounted for 11.8% (23,360). For non-academic roles EU nationals accounted for 5.5% of staff (11,380) and non-nationals 3.8% (7,760).



Source: HESA Staff Record, 2016

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

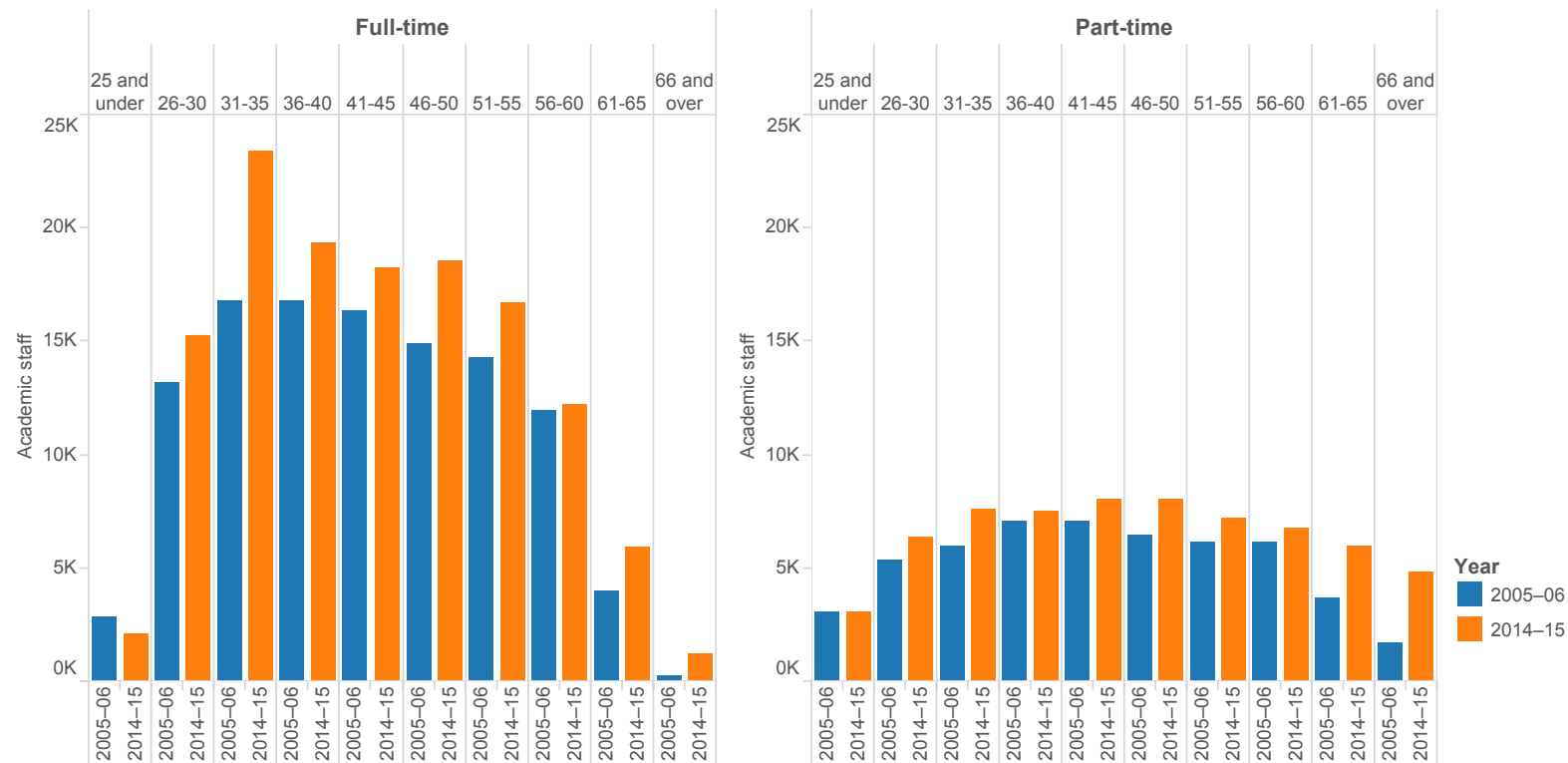


**Figure 17: Change in age profile of academic staff by mode of employment between 2005–06 and 2014–15**

The number of academic staff in all age groups (except 25 and under) has grown from 2005–06 to 2014–15, with significant increases in those aged 66 and over (from a low base), 61–65 year olds (48% for full-time staff and 62% for part-time staff) and 31–35 year olds (39% for full-time staff and 27% for part-time staff).

The largest age group by far in 2014–15 are 31–35 year olds working full-time, who accounted for 17.6% of all full-time academic staff in 2014–15 compared to 15.1% in 2005–06.

The proportion of academic staff working part-time has remained relatively stable accounting for 32.3% of all staff in in 2005–06 and 33.0% in 2014–15.



Source: HESA Staff Record, 2016

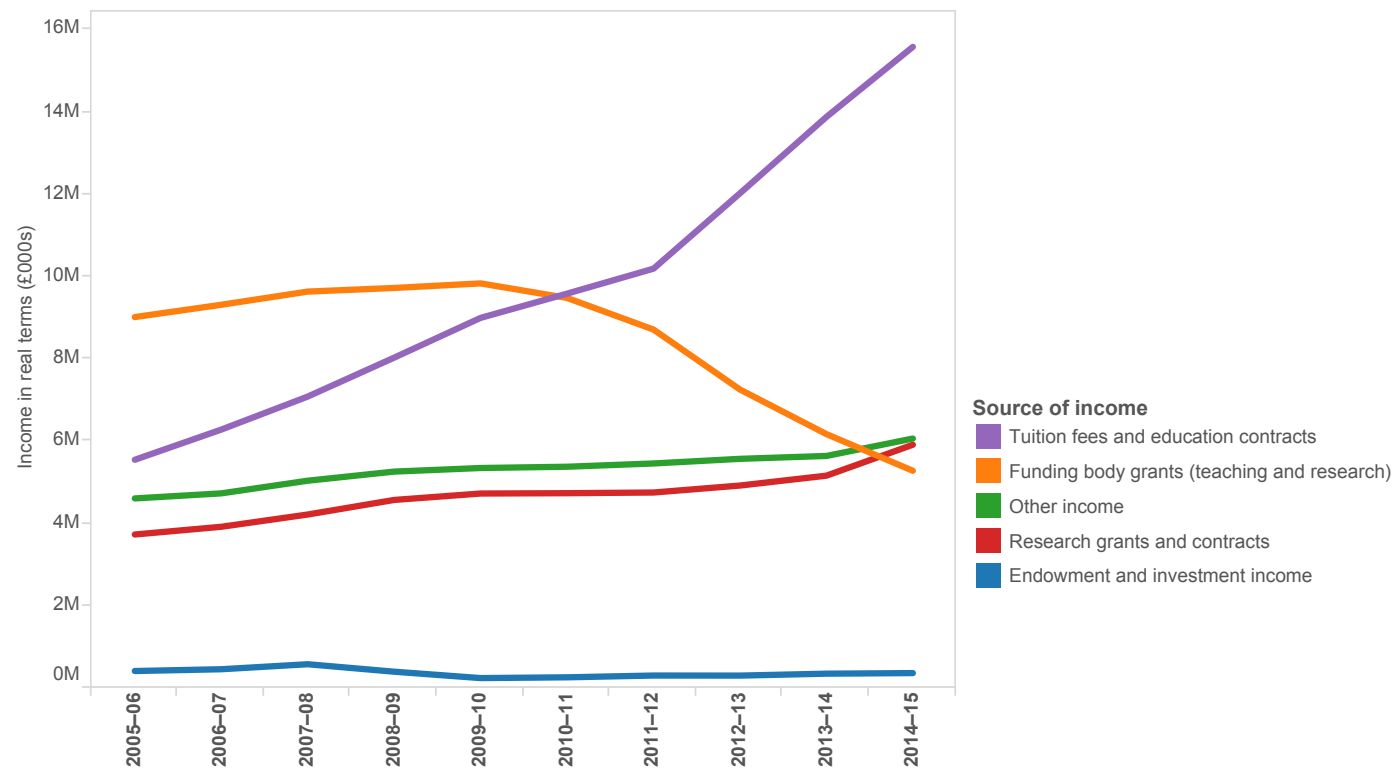
## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 18: Income by source (real terms), 2005–06 to 2014–15**

In 2014–15, the largest source of income was tuition fees and education contracts, which accounted for 46.9% of total income compared to 23.8% in 2005–06. Funding body grants made up 38.7% in 2005–06, decreasing to 15.9% in 2014–15, following reforms to undergraduate funding in academic year 2012–13.

Research grants and contracts have increased gradually over the decade. The sharp increase in income between 2013–14 to 2014–15 (15%) is due to the recognition of Research and Development Expenditure Credits (RDEC) by a number of universities. This reflects a one-off financial benefit to the sector for 2014–15 only.



Source: HESA Finance Record, 2016

Note: Real terms figures are based on 2014–15 prices. The GDP deflator is from September 2016.

## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016

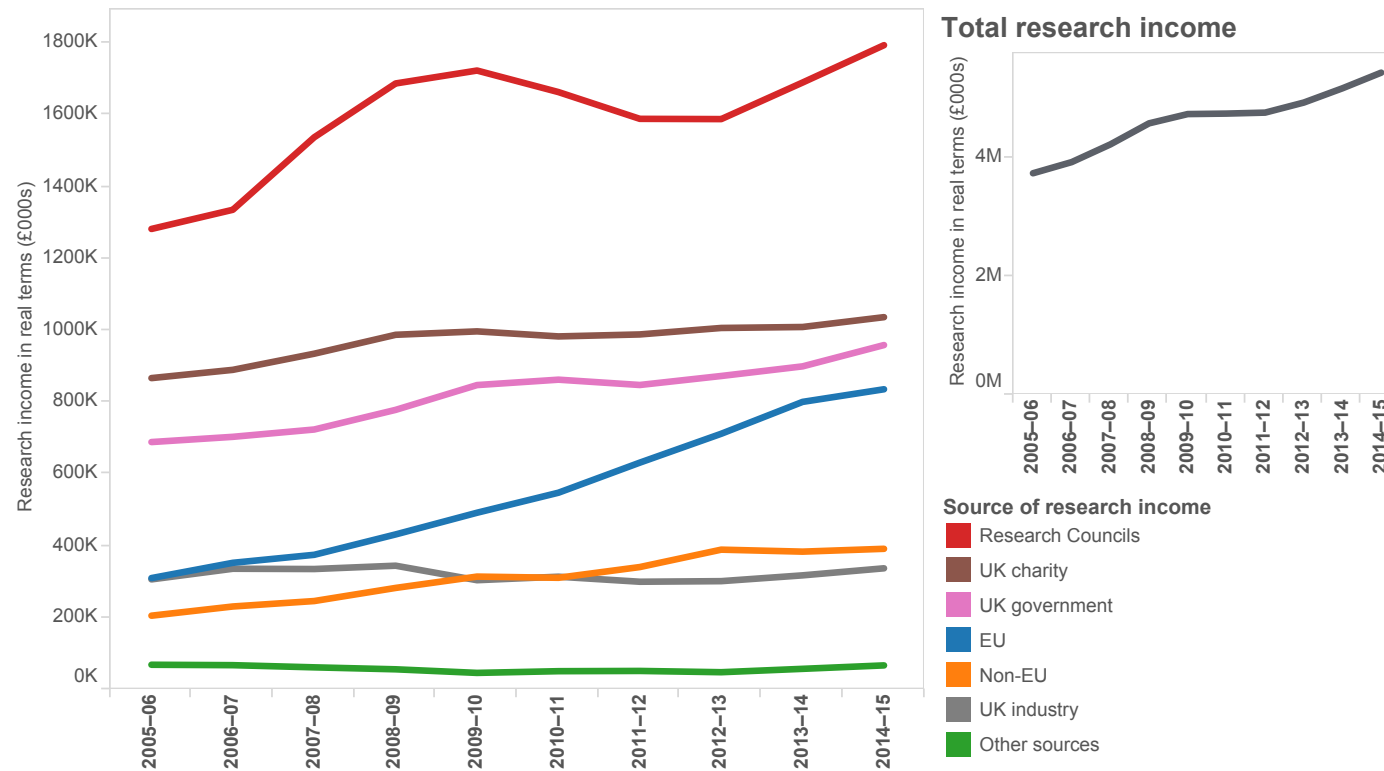


**Figure 19: Research income by source (real terms), 2005–06 to 2014–15**

Overall research income increased by 45% in real terms between 2005–06 and 2014–15. This includes Research and Development Expenditure Credits (RDEC) in 2014–15, which represents a one-off financial benefit to the sector for this year only.

Research income from EU sources showed the largest growth over the period (170%) from £310 million in 2005–06 (2014–15 prices) to £836 million in 2014–15. This source accounted for 15.4% of total research income to the sector in 2014–15.

Research Councils accounted for the highest proportion of total research funding in 2014–15 (33.1%), followed by UK charities (19.1%), UK government (17.7%), and non-EU sources (7.2%). Non-EU sources have grown only slightly (0.6%) in the past three years to 2014–15.



Source: HESA Finance Record, 2016.

Note: Real terms figures are based on 2014–15 prices. The GDP deflator is from September 2016.

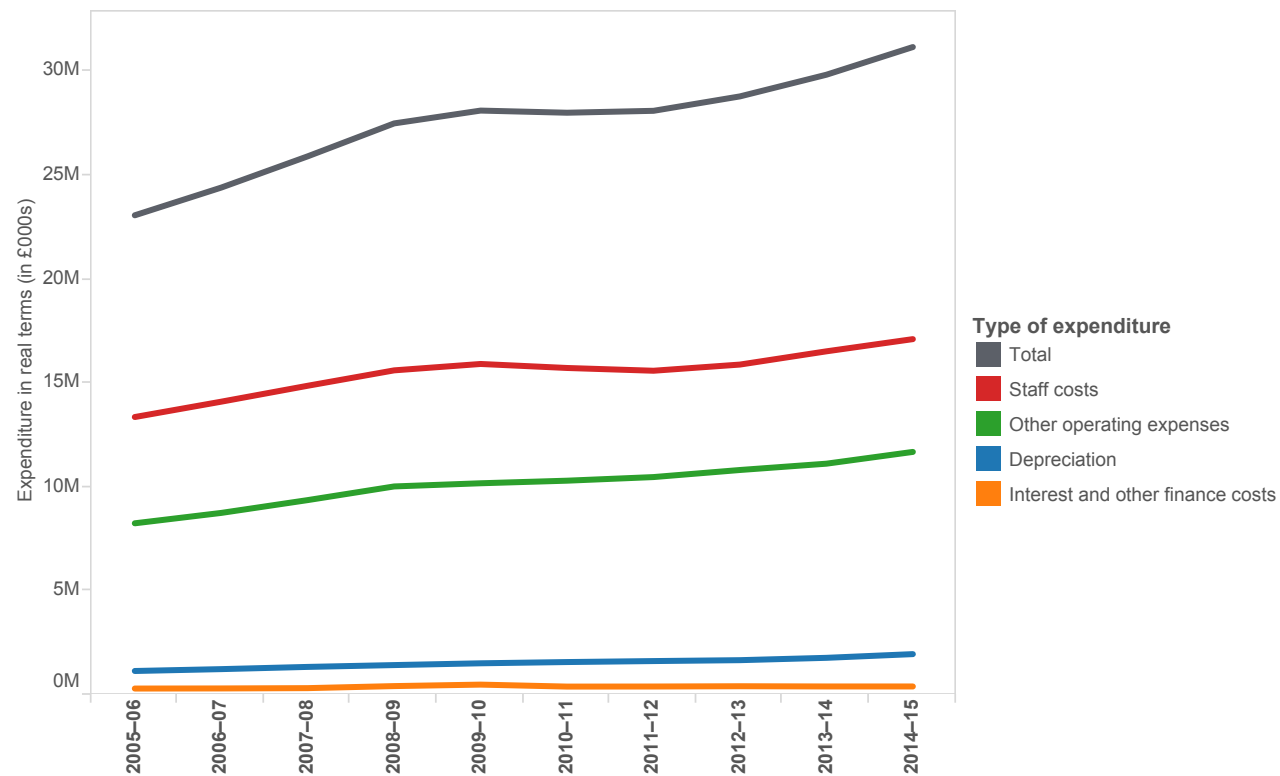
## Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2016



**Figure 20: Expenditure of higher education providers (real terms), 2005–06 to 2014–15**

With the growth in student numbers over the last decade, there has been a corresponding growth in university expenditure which has increased by 35% in real terms between 2005–06 and 2014–15. Slightly more than half of all expenditure in 2014–15 was related to staff costs (55%), which has grown by 28% in real terms from 2005–06 to 2014–15.

The next largest area in 2014–15 was other operating expenses (38%), which grew by 42% in real terms over the last decade, reflecting increased investment in university estates over the period.



Source: HESA Student Record, 2016

Note: Real terms figures are based on 2014–15 prices. The GDP deflator is from September 2016.