



Universities UK
International

GONE INTERNATIONAL

RISING ASPIRATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND



go international
STANDOUT

INTRODUCTION

Gone International: rising aspirations found that 18,510 UK-domiciled full-time first degree graduates from across the UK that responded to the 2016–17 DLHE (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education) survey had experienced at least one period abroad as part of their undergraduate first degree. This equates to 7.8% of the population.¹ The report also found that 860 UK graduates of Northern Irish institutions spent time abroad, representing 13.2% of the graduating population who responded to the DLHE survey. This report looks at students at Northern Irish institutions: i) who went abroad ii) where they went and what they did, and iii) their graduate outcomes.

KEY FINDINGS

- 860 graduates (13.2%) of the 2016–17 graduating cohort had at least one period abroad as part of their undergraduate first degree.
- Language graduates had a mobility rate of 39.5%, and this rose to 98.5% if linguistics students were excluded.
- The group with the highest mobility rate was ‘medicine and dentistry’, followed by ‘languages’, ‘agriculture and related subjects’, and ‘education’.

- 60.1% of mobility activities were in Europe, with 23.0% in North America.
- During 2015–16, Erasmus+ mobilities accounted for half (49.9%) of all mobility activities.
- Most mobility was for work (60.4%), followed by study (39.6%).
- 66.9% of instances were long-term mobilities of 14 weeks or longer. 13.3% were medium-term mobilities (5–13 weeks), while a fifth (19.8%) were short-term mobilities of less than four weeks.
- Mobile graduates were more likely to obtain first-class honours or an upper second-class degree (92.3%) than non-mobile graduates (78.4%).
- Six months after graduating only 2.8% of mobile graduates were unemployed, compared to 4.0% of non-mobile graduates.

The most striking finding in this report is that mobile students for Northern Irish institutions were more likely to undertake mobility for the purpose of work (60.4% of mobilities) than the UK cohort (21.5% of mobilities).

NOTE ON THE FINDINGS

Although mobility data capture has improved in recent years, there might be some instances of mobility not captured by universities within the student record. Therefore, the results produced here, although broadly comprehensive, are based on incomplete populations. The report does not attempt to identify causal links between students going abroad and particular outcomes. Instead, it provides a snapshot of the profiles of first degree, UK-domiciled mobile students who graduated in 2016–17 and their outcomes. The analysis in this report is a step taken by UUKi to provide mobility data for the UK nations. However, the populations of students undertaking mobility are low and there UUKi encourage readers not to draw hard conclusions from these statistics. This report should be viewed in the wider context of the UK-wide *Gone International: rising aspirations* report

Note

¹ Analysis is limited to UK-domiciled, full-time, undergraduate, first degree completers of the DLHE survey. Not all graduates respond to the DLHE survey. This means that there are some disparities in the sample size by nation. In 2016–17, 80% of the full-time, UK-domiciled, graduating cohort replied to the DLHE survey, and for

Northern Ireland the response rate was 81%. For full methodology and limitations to this research, please see the full report:

WHO GOES ABROAD?

In total, 860 graduates from Northern Irish institutions responding to the 2016–17 DLHE survey were reported as having at least one period abroad of one week or longer as part of their full-time, undergraduate first degree. This represents 13.2% of relevant respondents to the DLHE survey.

WHAT DO MOBILE STUDENTS STUDY?²

By subject group, graduates of 'languages' had a mobility rate of 39.5%. The 'languages' subject group includes linguistics, classics and related subjects, for which mobility rates are typically lower.³ When 'linguistics' graduates were removed from the overall 'languages' cohort, the mobility rate for this group rose to 98.5%.

The group with the highest mobility rate was 'medicine and dentistry', followed by 'languages' 'agriculture and related subjects', and 'education'. The lowest mobility rates were for 'architecture, building and planning', 'creative arts and design' and 'biological sciences' for which mobility participation rates were less than 5.0%.

GENDER

The female mobility rate of the 2016–17 cohort was 14.2% (525 students) while the male mobility rate was 11.8% (340 students). It is worth noting that across the UK language graduates, who make up a large percentage of the mobile population, are more likely to be female.

Note

² This section uses two subject definitions: 1. Subject group: the JACS (Joint Academic Coding System) subject group as defined by HESA, for example, 'languages' 2. Detailed subject: the specific subject studied by the student as defined by HESA, for example, 'French studies'. For more information see: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/support/documentation/jacs/jacs3-detailed>

Table 1: All Subject Groups by Mobility Rates

Subject of study (group)	Had a period of mobility	No period of mobility	Total	Mobility rate
Medicine and dentistry	130	80	210	62.1%
Languages	100	155	255	39.5%
Agriculture and related subjects	35	85	120	30.6%
Education	80	220	300	27.0%
Business and administrative studies	155	745	905	17.4%
Law	35	225	265	14.1%
Engineering and technology	45	415	460	10.1%
Mass communications and documentation	15	120	130	10.1%
Social studies	60	575	640	9.7%
Historical and philosophical studies	20	210	230	8.9%
Physical sciences	15	195	210	8.2%
Mathematical sciences	5	70	75	7.4%
Computer science	40	595	640	6.6%
Subjects allied to medicine	65	970	1,035	6.2%
Biological sciences	25	470	495	4.9%
Creative arts and design	20	350	370	4.8%
Architecture, building and planning	5	210	215	1.9%
Veterinary science	..	..	..	..
Combined	..	..	..	..
Total	860	5,690	6,550	13.20%

³ For the purposes of this report, linguistics graduates include: Q1 Linguistics; Q2 Comparative literary studies; Q3 English studies; Q4 Ancient language studies; Q5 Celtic studies; Q6 Latin studies; Q7 Classical Greek studies Q8 Classical studies; and Q9 Others in classics, linguistics and related subjects

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION⁴

The analysis found that students from less-advantaged backgrounds (SEC groups 4–8) were less likely to spend a period of their degree overseas than students from more advantaged backgrounds (SEC groups 1–3). 15.0% of students from more advantaged backgrounds were mobile, compared to 12.4% of students from less advantaged backgrounds.

Table 2: Mobility Rates by Socio-economic Classification

Socio-economic Classification	Had a period of mobility	No period of mobility	Total	Mobility rate
More advantaged (SEC 1 to 3)	480	2,710	3,190	15.0%
Less advantaged (SEC 4 to 8)	260	1,830	2,085	12.4%
Not classified	120	1,000	1,120	10.6%
Unknown	5	150	160	4.4%
Total	860	5,690	6,550	13.2%

UK-wide, Language students are disproportionately in SEC groups 1 to 3 (75.3% compared to 65.5% in other subjects). For Northern Ireland, when looking solely at graduates of non-language subjects, there is also a gap in mobility rates by SEC: 13.7% of students from more advantaged backgrounds were mobile, compared to 11.6% of students from less advantaged backgrounds.

Table 3: Mobility Rates by Socio-economic Classification – excluding Language students

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION	Had a period of mobility	No period of mobility	Total	Mobility rate
More advantaged (SEC 1 to 3)	420	2,635	3,050	13.7%
Less advantaged (SEC 4 to 8)	235	1,780	2,010	11.6%
Not classified	105	975	1,080	9.5%
Unknown	5	150	160	4.1%
Total	760	5,535	6,300	12.1%

Note

⁴ For the purposes of this report, students from 'more-advantaged backgrounds' refers to students whose parents, guardians or their own occupations (if they were over the age of 21 at the start of

their course) fall within socio-economic classification (SEC) groups 1–3. Students from 'less-advantaged backgrounds' fall within the SEC groups 4–8. For more information see: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16051/a/sec>

WHERE DO THEY GO, AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

WHERE DO MOBILE STUDENTS STUDY?⁵

Across the three academic years, 60.1% of all mobility instances from Northern Irish institutions took place in the Europe, followed by North America with 23.0%. Ireland was the most frequent destination country, (21.0%), followed by the United States (15.8%) and Spain (10.0%). Almost half (46.8%) of mobility from Northern Ireland is to these three countries. The most frequent non-EU destinations were the United States, Australia (3.2%), China (2.4%) and New Zealand (2.3%).

Table 4: Instances of Mobility by Region of Destination, 2014–15 to 2016–17

Region	Instances of Mobility	%
European Union	565	58.40%
North America	220	23.00%
Australasia	60	6.10%
Asia	60	6.00%
Africa	35	3.80%
Other Europe	15	1.70%
Middle East	..	..
South America	..	..
Not known	..	..
Total	965	100.00%

Table 5: Top 10 Destinations by Instances of Mobility, 2014–15 to 2016–17

Location	N	%
Ireland	200	21.0%
United States	150	15.8%
Spain	95	10.0%
France	50	5.2%
Germany	30	3.3%
Australia	30	3.2%
Netherlands	30	2.9%
Romania	25	2.7%
China	25	2.4%
New Zealand	20	2.3%
Total	965	100.0%

Note

⁵ This section considers 'instances' of mobility, rather than the number of students who had a period of mobility. For example, if a student had two separate periods of mobility in France, this would be recorded as two instances. As with the other mobility data, instances are only counted where the period abroad lasted at least

one week. Overall, in the academic years 2014–15, 2015–16 and 2016–17, the graduate cohort had 22,800 separate instances of mobility (2,100 in 2014–15, 16,210 in 2015–16 and 4,490 in 2016–17). As these numbers suggest, the majority of students who go abroad do so in their second year.

WHAT MOBILITY SCHEMES ARE USED?

The majority of mobility placements for these students took place during the penultimate years of their studies (71.1%). During that year (2015–16), Erasmus+ accounted for half of (49.9%) of all instances of mobility.

Table 6: Instances of Mobility by Scheme, 2015–16 Only⁶

Scheme	N	%
ERASMUS+	415	49.9%
Provider	265	32.2%
Sandwich placement	95	11.2%
Other scheme	55	6.7%
Total	825	100.0%

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MOBILITY?⁷

Across the three academic years, the majority of reported mobility instances were undertaken for the purpose of work (60.4%), followed by study (39.6%).

Table 7: Instances of Mobility by Type, 2014–15 To 2016-17

Type	N	%
Study only	380	39.6%
Volunteering only	..	..
Work only	580	60.4%
Total	965	100.0%

Note

⁶HESA collects data on the following mobility schemes: Provider – university-led schemes such as bilateral partnerships that are established, administered and delivered by the UK university. Sandwich placements which meet the criteria set out by funding councils, not including Erasmus+. Erasmus+, the European Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. Other schemes, such as British Council Teaching Assistants, Generation UK China, Study China, Camp America and IAESTE. For more

HOW LONG ARE STUDENT MOBILITIES?

Across the three academic years, (66.9%) of instances were long-term mobilities of 14 weeks or longer. 13.3% were medium-term mobilities (5–13 weeks), while a fifth (19.8%) were short-term mobilities of less than four weeks.

Table 8: Instances of Mobility by Duration, 2014–15 To 2016-17

Duration	N	%
Short term (1 to 4 weeks)	190	19.8%
Medium term (5 to 13 weeks)	130	13.3%
Long term (14 weeks plus)	645	66.9%
Total	965	100.0%

information, see: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16051/a/mobscheme>

⁷ HESA collects data on the following mobility types: Study abroad, Work abroad, used in situations where a student was doing paid work such as an internship, Volunteering, where the student undertook voluntary or other unpaid work. For more information, see: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16051/a/mobtype>

WHAT DO THEY DO NEXT?

CLASSIFICATION OF FIRST DEGREE⁸

Mobile graduates from Northern Irish institutions were more likely to obtain a first-class honours or upper second-class degree (92.3%) than non-mobile graduates from Northern Irish institutions (78.4%). Proportions of students with first-class honours were 35.3% for mobile students and 23.7% for non-mobile students. Mobile students are also more likely to have higher degree classifications when 'language' graduates are excluded from the population.

Table 9: Classification of First Degree, All Degree Subjects

Mobility marker	First class	Upper second class	Lower second class	Third class /Pass	Total
Had a period of mobility	35.3%	57.0%	7.0%	0.7%	730
No period of mobility	23.7%	54.8%	19.7%	1.8%	5,610
Total	25.0%	55.0%	18.3%	1.7%	6,340

Table 10: Classification of First Degree, Non-Language Students Only

Mobility marker	First class	Upper second class	Lower second class	Third class/Pass	Total
Had a period of mobility	37.8%	54.9%	6.7%	0.7%	630
No period of mobility	23.8%	54.6%	19.8%	1.9%	5,455
Total	25.2%	54.6%	18.4%	1.7%	6,085

Note

⁸ Some first-degree level qualifications are not subject to classification. These unclassified degrees are not included in percentage calculations for class of degree.

ACTIVITY

Graduate outcomes data from the DLHE survey revealed that a smaller percentage of mobile graduates were unemployed six months after completing their studies, compared to non-mobile graduates. 2.8% of mobile graduates were unemployed, compared to 4.0% of non-mobile graduates⁹

Table 11: Activity, All Degree Subjects

Mobility marker	Work only	Work and further study	Study only	Unemployed	Other activities
Had a period of mobility	74.2%	6.1%	12.2%	2.8%	4.6%
No period of mobility	72.1%	5.7%	14.4%	4.0%	3.8%
Total	72.4%	5.8%	14.1%	3.8%	3.9%

Note: Had a period of mobility (860), No period of mobility (5,690).

⁹ 'Other' activities might include taking time out to travel. Graduates who selected 'due to start work' have also been included in the 'other' activities group.

CONCLUSION

Gone International: Rising Aspirations finds that students who go abroad get better degrees and better jobs

Conclusions for the UK

Mobile students across the UK are more likely to gain a first-class degree, less likely to be unemployed and, if in work, more likely to be in a graduate job. Just six months after graduating, mobile students earned higher average salaries:

- Mobile graduates were more likely to obtain first-class honours or an upper second-class degree (91.6%) than non-mobile graduates (80%).
- Six months after graduating only 3.1% of mobile graduates were unemployed, compared to 4.2% of non-mobile graduates.
- Mobile graduates who were working in full-time, paid employment had an average salary of £23,482, compared to an average salary of £22,256 for non-graduates (a difference of 5.5%) six months after graduating.
- Of all working, mobile graduates in the 2016–17 cohort, 78.3% secured a 'graduate-level' job within six months of graduating, compared to 73.2% of non-mobile graduates.

This year's report shows that more students are going abroad than ever before, and there has been an increase in reported participation by students from less advantaged backgrounds. However, a participation gap remains with more advantaged groups still the most likely to go abroad during while enrolled on a UK degree programme.

Conclusions for Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the data shows that 13.2% of the 2016–17 graduating cohort – 860 students – had at least one period abroad as part of their undergraduate first degree. Language graduates had a mobility rate of 98.5%. The group with the highest mobility rate was 'medicine and dentistry', followed by 'agriculture and related subjects', and 'education'. 60.1% of mobility activities were in Europe, with 23.0% in North America. During 2015–16, Erasmus+ mobilities accounted for half (49.9%) of all mobility activities. Most mobility was for work (60.4%), followed by study (39.6%).

The analysis also found that mobile graduates experienced broadly more positive outcomes upon graduation than those students who did not go abroad. Mobile students were more likely to obtain first-class honours or an upper second-class degree (92.4%) than non-mobile graduates (78.5%) and just six months after graduating only 2.8% of mobile graduates were unemployed, compared to 4.0% of non-mobile graduates.

Note

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