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Higher Education

Northern Ireland domiciled higher education applicants:
An analysis of UCAS data - 2003/04 academic year





Department for
**Employment
and Learning**
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1. Introduction

This is the second research report produced by the Department for Employment and Learning which utilises data provided by Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to analyse the characteristics and choices of NI domiciled full-time undergraduate students accepted for higher education (HE) places in the UK¹. This report examines data from the 2003/04 academic year and, as well as considering students accepted for a HE place, it also examines those students who applied through UCAS for a place but were not accepted.

2. Context

In 1994/95, 40% of NI domiciled full-time first year undergraduate students enrolling on higher education courses in the UK migrated from NI for their HE experience. Nearly ten years later in 2003/04, the percentage had declined to 26%². Of those students that leave NI to undertake a HE course at a GB institution, a higher proportion do not return after their graduation. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Destinations of Leavers from HE survey 2003/04, which surveyed students six months after graduation, showed that of those NI domiciled students who graduated from full-time undergraduate courses at GB institutions and whose destination was known, just over one-third returned to NI after graduation. This is in contrast to those who graduated from a NI HE institution, where 91% remained in NI. Given the proportion of NI domiciled students who still go to GB to study and the impact this has on numbers returning home after graduation, this paper compares the characteristics and locational choices of these students with those who studied in NI.

¹ The first report analysing the characteristics and choices of students in the 2002/03 academic year can be found at http://www.delni.gov.uk/docs/pdf/UCASreport2002_03.pdf

² Source: Further Education Statistical Record (FESR) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

3. Executive Summary

The key points arising from the analysis of the 2003/04 UCAS data in respect of NI domiciled applicants are:

Characteristics of NI domiciled applicants

- 68% of accepted applicants obtained a HE place at a NI institution and 32% at a GB institution (Para 4.1)
- 22% of all applicants were *not accepted* for a HE place (para 4.1)
- 87% of accepted applicants were aged under 21 while 80% of *not accepted* applicants were in this age group (para 4.2.1)
- 55% of accepted applicants were female. 61% of *not accepted* applicants were female (para 4.2.2)
- The average entrance tariff score^{3,4,5,6} of NI domiciled accepted applicants to UK institutions was 289, with those accepted at NI and GB institutions having average scores of 286 and 294 respectively (para 4.3.1)
- The average entrance tariff score of NI domiciled applicants *not accepted* for a HE place was 218 (para 4.3.1)
- Male accepted applicants held lower average entrance tariff scores than female accepted applicants (para 4.3.1)
- 60% of NI domiciled accepted applicants came from a grammar school background compared to 35% of *not accepted* applicants (para 4.3.3)
- Business studies and subjects allied to medicine had the highest number of enrolments of NI domiciled students at both NI and GB institutions (para 4.4.1)

- 27% of NI domiciled applicants to veterinary science and agriculture courses at NI institutions were *not accepted* for a place compared to 9% of those who applied to GB institutions (para 4.4.4)
- 21% of applicants accepted to GB institutions were from the lower SEC^{7,8,9,10} groups while 28% of those accepted to NI institutions and 32% of *not accepted* applicants were from this group (para 4.5.1)
- Those applicants *not accepted* for a HE place had consistently lower entrance tariff scores than those accepted across all 7-SEC groups (para 4.5.2)

Locational choices of NI domiciled accepted applicants

- Of those NI domiciled applicants whose firm choice was a NI institution in 2003/04, 96% were accepted at a NI institution (para 5.2)
- Of those NI domiciled applicants whose firm choice was a GB institution, 96% were accepted at a GB institution (para 5.2)
- The proportion of NI domiciled students who obtained their preferred choice of region, whether it be at a NI and GB institution, has remained unchanged since 2002/03 (para 5.3)
- Of those students that were accepted at a GB institution, just over 9% had a preference to study at a NI institution but accepted a place in GB (para 5.3)
- Accepted applicants who obtained their preferred choice of region tended to hold higher entrance tariff scores than those who obtained their reserve choice of region (para 5.6)
- Students from the lower SEC groups were less likely to leave NI to study HE (para 5.7)

³ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

⁴ For example, the A level tariff allocation is: A= 120, B=100, C=80, D=60, E=40.

⁵ The use of average entrance tariff score as a measurement conceals the actual distribution of tariff scores obtained by students in a region or at an institution.

⁶ Those students recorded as having zero tariff points are excluded from the calculation of average entrance tariff scores.

⁷ The Socio-Economic Classification (SEC) is the revised occupationally-based socio-economic classification adopted by government in 2001 which replaces the Social Class and Socio-economic Groups categorisations.

⁸ Those students declared as unknown in the SEC have been excluded from any analysis.

⁹ To assist with analysis, the SEC groups have been split, in some cases, into three categories: Upper, middle and lower. This approach can be assumed to involve some type of hierarchy, which cannot be assumed with the 7 category approach.

¹⁰ Lower SEC groups are, in this instance, defined as SEC groups 5, 6 and 7.

4. Characteristics of NI domiciled applicants to HE courses in NI and GB¹¹

The following section uses data supplied by UCAS to provide a descriptive analysis of the key characteristics of **NI domiciled students** who were accepted for **full-time undergraduate** courses at NI and GB institutions in 2003/04. It also compares the findings with a similar analysis carried out on the 2002/03 UCAS data and examines those applicants who applied through UCAS for a HE place in 2003/04¹² but were not accepted¹³.

When considering this analysis, it should be noted that not all students enrolled in higher education in the UK are included in UCAS data. For example, those students studying at HE level in NI FE colleges are not included in this analysis. Appendix 1 provides more details on this.

The following descriptors are used throughout this report:

Applicants: those **applying** for a HE place through the UCAS process.

Accepted applicants: those **applying and accepted** for a HE place through the UCAS process.

Not accepted applicants: those **applying** through the UCAS process for a HE place **but who either are not accepted or do not accept a place.**

4.1 Overview

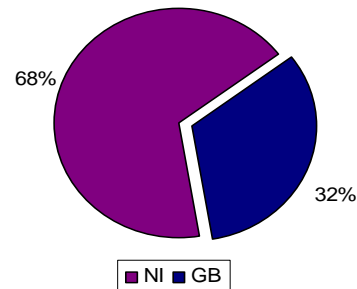
In the 2003/04 academic year, 12,429 NI domiciled students were accepted through UCAS to full-time undergraduate courses in UK institutions. This represents a 4% increase¹⁴ from the 2002/03 year when 11,954 were accepted for a place.

An analysis (*figure 1*) of accepted applicants in 2003/04 shows that:

- 8,422 (68%) were accepted to NI institutions; and
- 4,007 (32%) were accepted to GB institutions.

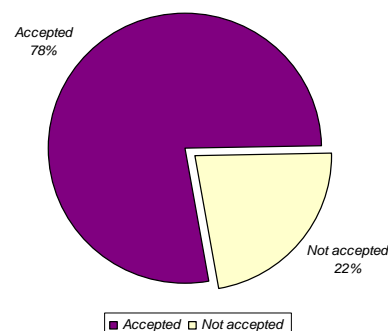
These proportions were the same in 2002/03.

Figure 1: Proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted to NI and GB institutions



In 2003/04, 3,607 NI domiciled students (22% of all applicants) applied through UCAS for a HE place but were *not* accepted (*figure 2*).

Figure 2: Proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted and not accepted for a HE place at a UK institution



¹¹ UCAS coverage relates to HE institutions in NI and GB and some FE institutions in GB.

¹² An analysis of applicants not accepted for a HE place was not undertaken in the 2002/03 research report.

¹³ The analysis cannot take into consideration students who were not accepted for a HE place through the UCAS process but who subsequently obtained a place outside of the process. In this analysis, these students are categorised as not accepted applicants.

¹⁴ The increase in the number of students using UCAS may be due to more students applying for HE courses or more courses requiring students to apply through UCAS for a place or a combination of both.

4.2 Demographic profile

4.2.1 Region of study and age

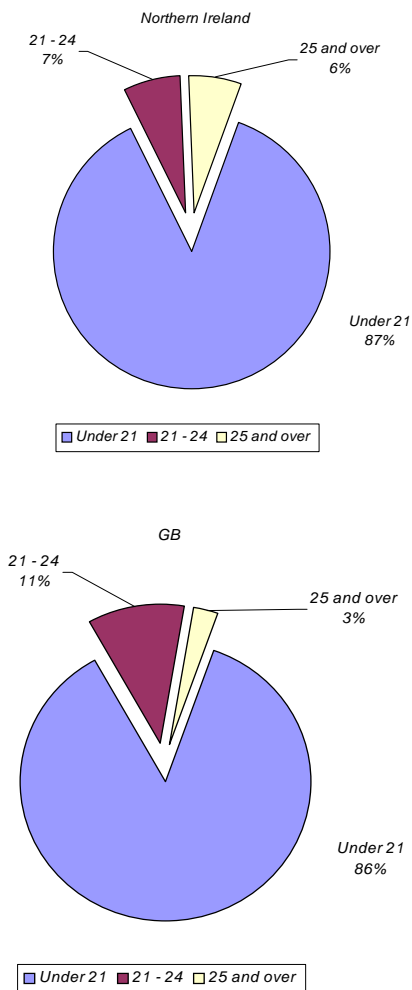
An analysis (*figure 3*) of the age of NI domiciled accepted applicants and region of study shows that:

- 87% of accepted applicants to UK institutions were aged under 21, with similar proportions accepted to GB (86%) and NI institutions (87%).

Of the NI domiciled applicants accepted to NI institutions in 2003/04, 6% were aged 25 and over, with only 3% of applicants accepted to GB institutions being aged 25 and over.

These proportions were broadly the same in 2002/03.

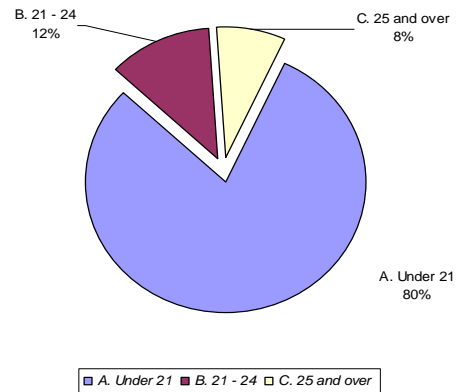
Figure 3: Proportion of NI domiciled accepted applicants to NI and GB institutions by age



In terms (*figure 4*) of the age of NI domiciled students *not accepted* for a HE place:

- 80% were aged under 21; and
- 8% were aged 25 and over.

Figure 4: Proportion of NI domiciled students not accepted for a HE place by age



4.2.2 Region of study and gender

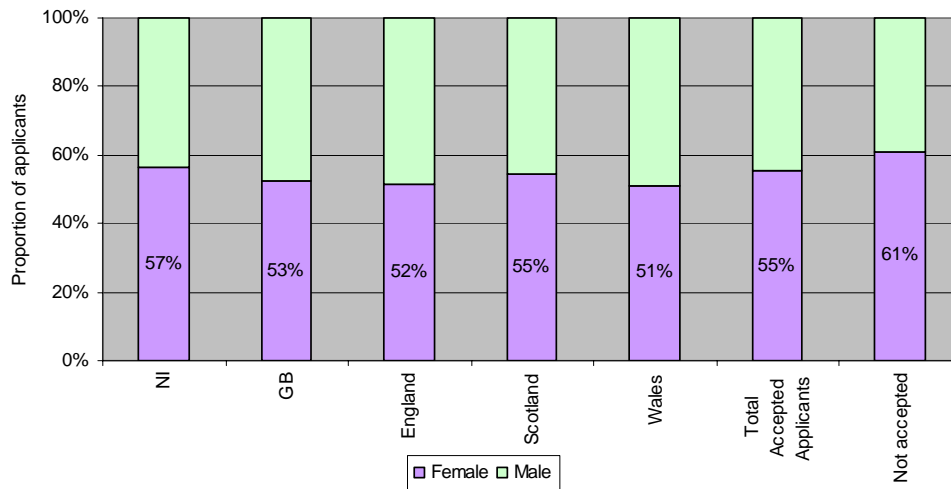
An analysis (*figure 5*) of the gender of NI domiciled accepted applicants and region of study shows that:

- females accounted for 55% of applicants accepted to UK institutions, with similar proportions of females accepted to NI (57%) and GB (53%) institutions.

These proportions were broadly the same in 2002/03.

With regards to *not accepted* applicants, females represented 61% of that category.

Figure 5: NI domiciled HE applicants by gender and region of study



4.3 Previous attainment

4.3.1 Region of study and average entrance tariff score^{15,16,17,18}

An analysis (figure 6) of the average entrance tariff score of NI domiciled applicants shows that:

- the average entrance tariff score of all NI domiciled accepted applicants at UK institutions was 289, with those at NI and GB institutions holding average scores of 286 and 294 respectively;
- the average entrance tariff score for males accepted at UK institutions was 281. The equivalent score for females was 295;
- males were accepted at institutions in NI and GB with average entrance tariff scores of 279 and 284 respectively; and
- females were accepted at institutions in NI and GB with average tariff scores of 292 and 302 respectively.

Students *not accepted* for a HE place (figure 6 and table 1), irrespective of gender, held the lowest average tariff scores by a significant margin.

A comparison (table 1) of the average entrance tariff scores of NI domiciled applicants in 2002/03 and 2003/04 shows that the average score held by both genders has increased for all NI domiciled accepted applicants irrespective of the region of study.

Table 1: Proportion of NI domiciled applicants by average entrance tariff score¹⁹, gender and region of study 2002/03 and 2003/04

	Gender	2002/03	2003/04
NI institutions	Female	286	292
	Male	271	279
Total NI institutions		280	286
GB institutions	Female	294	302
	Male	277	284
Total GB institutions		286	294
Total UK (excl. not accepted)		282	289
Not accepted	Female	N/k	223
	Male	N/k	209
Total not accepted		N/k	218
Total UK (incl. not accepted)		N/k	275

¹⁵ The UCAS tariff was first introduced for the 2002/03 student entry. The tariff establishes agreed equivalences between different types of qualifications and reports achievement for entry to higher education in a numerical format. This allows comparisons between applicants with different types and volumes of achievement.

¹⁶ For example, the A level tariff allocation is: A= 120, B=100, C=80, D=60, E=40.

¹⁷ The use of average entrance tariff score as a measurement conceals the actual distribution of tariff scores obtained by students in a region or at an institution.

¹⁸ Those students recorded as having zero tariff points are excluded from the calculation of average entrance tariff scores.

¹⁹ The Department does not hold the average entrance tariff score of those students not accepted for a place in 2002/03.

Figure 6: Proportion of NI domiciled applicants by gender and region of study

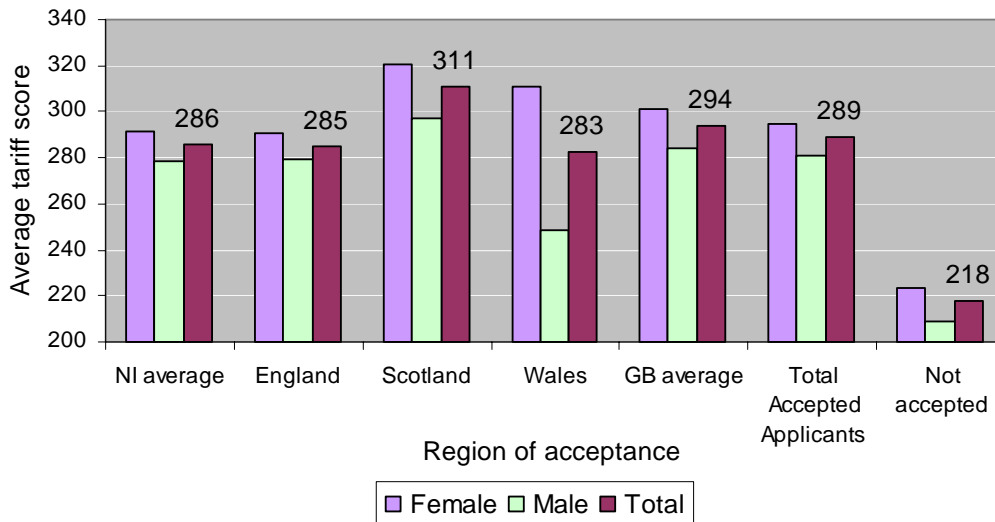
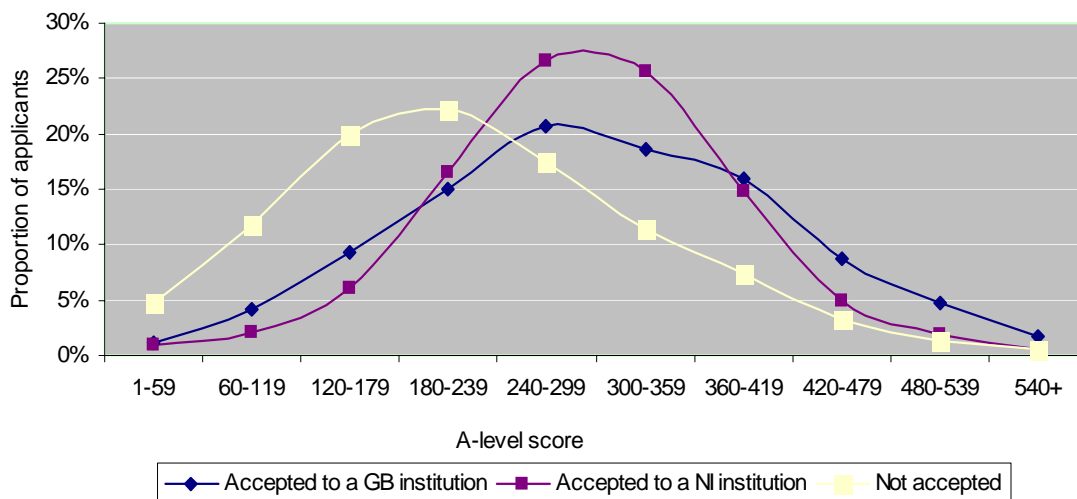


Figure 7: NI domiciled HE applicants by entrance tariff score



4.3.2 Region of study and entrance tariff score: frequency analysis

An analysis (*figure 7*) of the entrance tariff scores of NI domiciled applicants by region of study shows that:

- a greater proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to GB institutions held either “lower”²⁰ or “higher”²¹ tariff scores compared to those accepted to NI institutions who held “mid range” scores;
- 15% of NI domiciled students accepted to GB institutions held “lower” range tariff scores compared with 9% of those accepted to a NI institution; and
- 31% of NI domiciled students accepted to GB institutions held “higher” range tariff scores compared with 22% of those accepted to a NI institution.
- 36% of NI domiciled applicants that were not accepted to a UK institution through UCAS held “lower” range tariff points.

²⁰ “Lower” range tariff scores, in this instance, are defined as 1 to 179 tariff points.

²¹ “Higher” range tariff scores, in this instance, are 360 or more tariff points.

4.3.3 Region of study, previous educational establishment^{22, 23} attended and average entrance tariff score

An analysis (*table 2*) of the educational establishment attended by NI domiciled applicants, prior to them applying for a HE place, shows that;

- the majority (60%) of accepted applicants' previous educational establishment was a grammar school, with a slightly higher proportion accepted to GB than to NI institutions coming from this sector;
- just under one quarter of students' previous educational establishment was an FE/HE institution²⁴; and
- just over one third of applicants *not accepted* for a place had previously attended a grammar school, while 43% had previously attended a FE/HE institution.

Table 2: Previous educational establishment attended by NI domiciled students

Previous educational establishment attended	NI	GB	All applicants	Not accepted
Grammar	59%	62%	60%	35%
Other schools/establishments	19%	13%	17%	21%
Further/Higher Education	22%	25%	23%	43%
All establishments	100%	100%	100%	100%

An analysis (*table 3*) of the previous educational establishment attended and the average tariff score held by applicants shows that;

- those applicants whose previous educational establishment was a grammar school held the highest average tariff scores, followed by those who had previously attended a FE/HE institution.

²² The classification of previous educational establishment attended is based on the English categorisation system.

²³ Other schools/establishments includes: comprehensive, grant maintained, independent, 6th form colleges and other establishments.

²⁴ The vast majority of these students previously attended further education colleges.

Table 3: Previous educational establishment attended by NI domiciled students by average entrance tariff score²⁵

Previous educational establishment attended	NI	GB	All accepted applicants	Not accepted
Grammar	310	332	317	267
Other schools/establishments	217	196	210	161
Further/Higher Education	267	244	261	195
All establishments	288	298	291	218

4.4 HE subject choices

4.4.1 Region of study, subject area and enrolments

An analysis of the region of study and subject studied of accepted applicants shows (*figure 8*) that:

- business and administrative studies and subjects allied to medicine had the highest number of enrolments (excluding combined subject areas) at both NI and GB institutions in 2003/04; and
- technologies and veterinary sciences, agriculture & related studies had the lowest number of enrolments.

The pattern of enrolments by subject area in 2003/04 was broadly the same in 2002/03.

4.4.2 Region of study, subject area and enrolment differences

There are some notable differences between the proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted to NI institutions and the proportion of NI domiciled applicants accepted to GB institutions.

The chart at *figure 9* shows the percentage point difference between the proportion of NI domiciled students accepted to NI institutions and the proportion accepted to GB institutions in 2003/04 by subject area. To the left of the chart are those subject areas which were more heavily represented in NI than GB, while to the right of the chart are the subject areas which were more heavily represented in GB than in NI.

²⁵ Average entrance tariff scores differ from previous tables because those students whose previous educational establishment was unknown have been excluded.

Figure 8: NI domiciled HE students accepted to NI and GB institutions by subject area

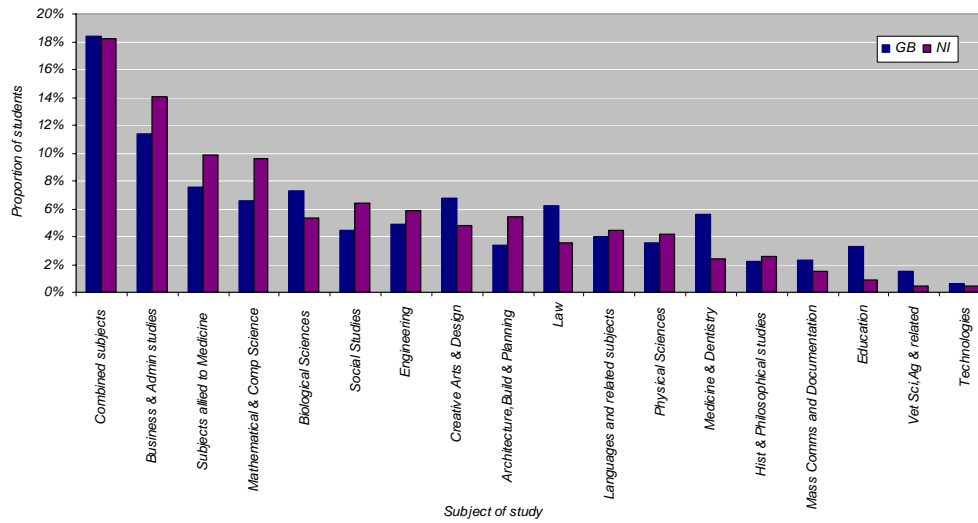
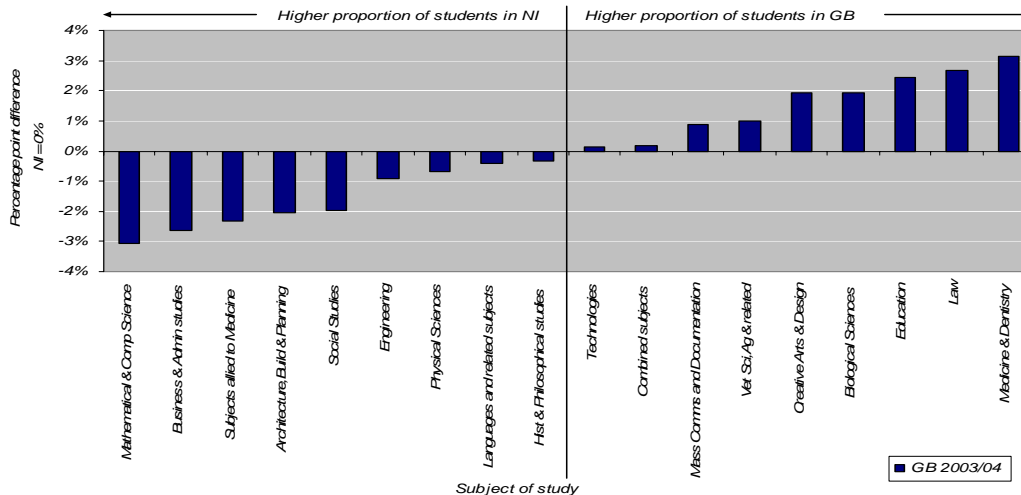


Figure 9: Difference in the proportion of students accepted to GB institutions compared with the proportion accepted to NI institutions – by subject area



4.4.3 Region of study, subject area and average entrance tariff score

Maintaining the subject areas in the same order as figure 9, an analysis (figure 10) of the average entrance tariff scores of NI domiciled accepted applicants shows that:

- in the subject areas which were more heavily represented in NI (i.e. those to the left of the chart), only in two subject areas, business and administration studies and subjects allied to medicine, were the average entrance tariff scores of students accepted to NI institutions higher than for those accepted to GB institutions.
- in the subject areas which were more heavily represented in GB (i.e. those to the right of the chart), only in the veterinary science & agriculture related subjects was the average entrance tariff score of students accepted to NI institutions significantly lower than those accepted to GB institutions.

Figure 10: Average entrance tariff score of NI domiciled accepted applicants by subject area and region

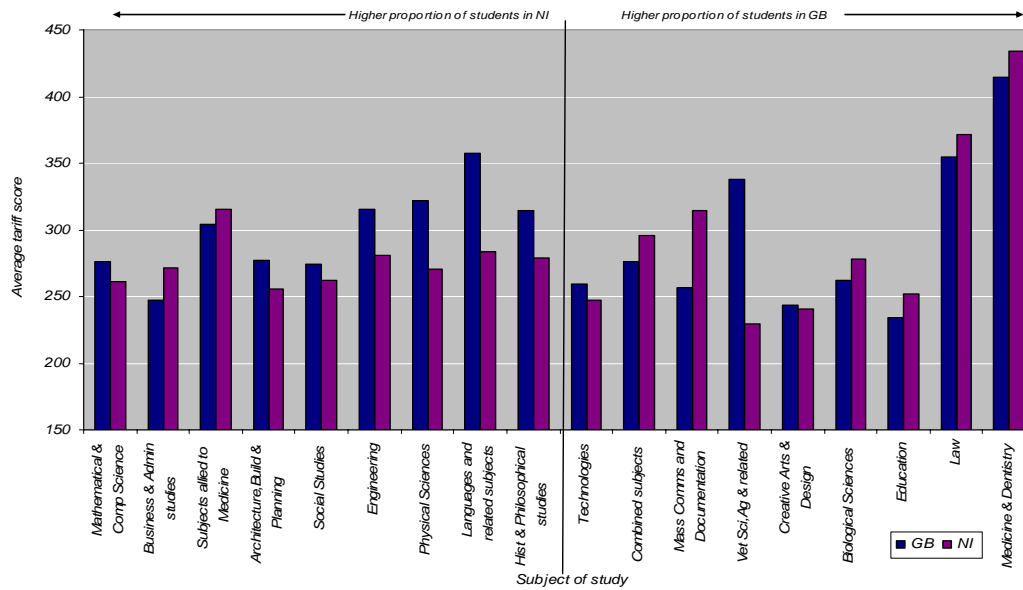
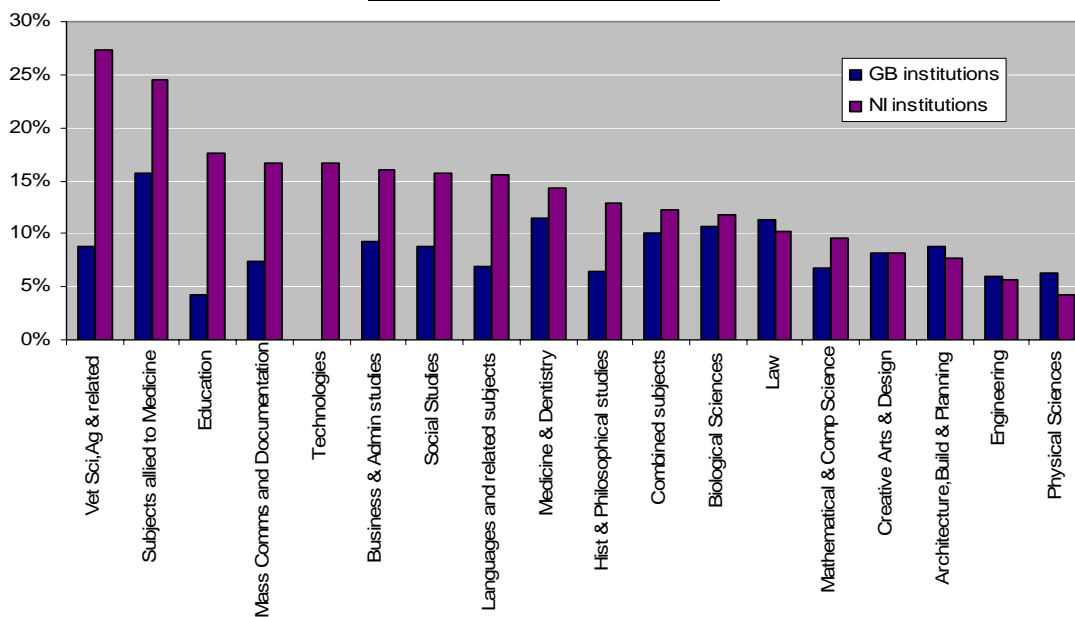


Figure 11 - Not accepted NI domiciled applicants as a percentage of all NI domiciled applicants by firm subject choice and region of study



4.4.4 Region of study and subject area of applicants not accepted for a HE place

An analysis (figure 11) of the firm subject choice²⁶ of not accepted applicants shows that:

- 27% of those NI domiciled applicants who applied for veterinary science and agriculture courses at NI institutions

were not accepted for a place compared to 9% of those who applied to GB institutions;

- 25% of those who applied for subjects allied to medicine courses at NI institutions were not accepted for a place compared to 16% of those who applied to GB institutions;

²⁶ The firm subject choice could be considered to be a good representation of the preferred subject of study.

- 18% of those applicants who applied for education courses at NI institutions were *not accepted* for a place compared to 4% of those who applied to GB institutions; and
- 17% of those applicants who applied for technology courses at NI institutions were *not accepted* for a place, whilst those who applied to courses in the same subject area at GB institutions were all accepted.

4.5 SEC^{27,28} background

4.5.1 Region of study and Socio-Economic Classification (SEC)

An analysis (table 5, figure 12) of the SEC²⁹ of accepted applicants and region of study in 2003/04 shows that:

- while 26% of NI domiciled accepted applicants to UK institutions were from the lower SEC groups, 28% of those accepted at NI institutions and 21% accepted to GB institutions were from these groups.

This compares favourably with the proportion of students from the lower SEC groups in 2002/03 when 24% of all NI domiciled accepted applicants were from the lower SEC groups, with 26% and 19% accepted to NI and GB institutions respectively.

However, 32% of *not accepted applicants* were from the lower SEC groups.

Table 4 and the graph at figure 12 provide more detail on the SEC group of NI domiciled applicants by region of study.

4.5.2 Region of study, SEC and average entrance tariff score

An analysis (figure 13) of SEC, average entrance tariff score and region of study shows that:

- the average entrance tariff score of NI domiciled accepted applicants from the upper two SEC groups was higher for those accepted to GB than NI institutions, while in the remaining SEC groups the average tariff score was broadly the same or higher for those accepted to NI institutions; and
- those NI domiciled applicants *not accepted* for a HE place had consistently lower entrance tariff scores than those accepted across all 7 SEC groups.

²⁷ The Socio-Economic Classification (SEC) is the revised occupationally-based socio-economic classification adopted by government in 2001 which replaces the Social Class and Socio-economic Groups categorisations.

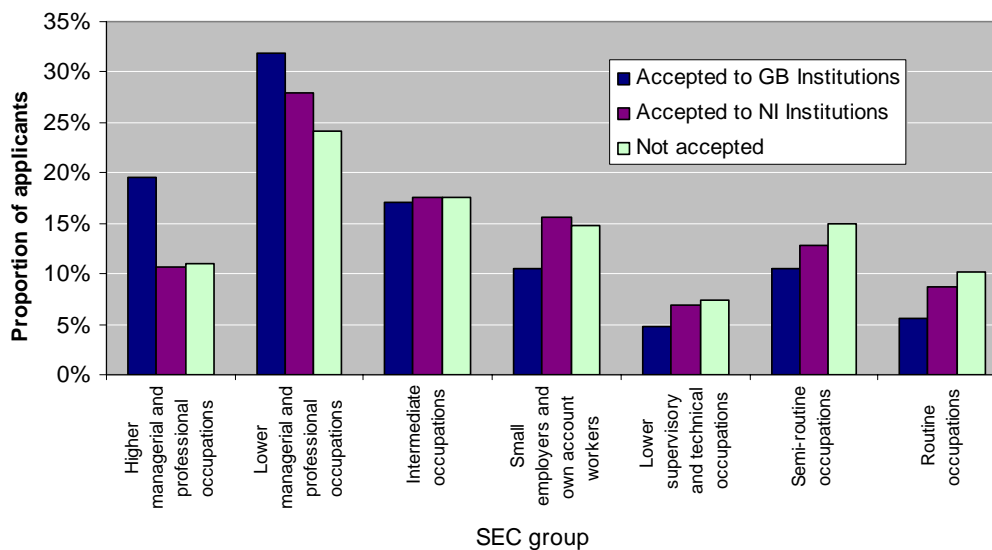
²⁸ Those students declared as unknown in the SEC have been excluded from any analysis.

²⁹ To assist with analysis, the SEC groups have been split, in some cases, into three categories: Upper, middle and lower. This approach can be assumed to involve some type of hierarchy, which cannot be assumed with the 7 category approach.

Table 4: Number/proportion of NI domiciled applicants to NI and GB institutions by SEC

SEC		Region of study		Total accepted students	Not accepted	Not accepted as %age of all applicants by SEC group
		NI	GB			
Higher managerial and professional occupations	Nos. %age	762 11%	661 20%	1,423 14%	318 11%	18%
Lower managerial and professional occupations	Nos. %age	1,994 28%	1,074 32%	3,068 29%	704 24%	19%
Upper SEC Group	Nos. %age	2,756 39%	1,735 51%	4,491 43%	1,022 35%	19%
Intermediate occupations	Nos. %age	1,257 18%	579 17%	1,836 17%	509 18%	22%
Small employers and own account workers	Nos. %age	1,114 16%	357 11%	1,471 14%	432 15%	23%
Middle SEC Group	Nos. %age	2,371 33%	936 28%	3,307 31%	941 32%	22%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	Nos. %age	494 7%	161 5%	655 6%	213 7%	25%
Semi-routine occupations	Nos. %age	913 13%	353 10%	1,266 12%	434 15%	26%
Routine occupations	Nos. %age	623 9%	188 6%	811 8%	298 10%	27%
Lower SEC Group	Nos. %age	2,030 28%	702 21%	2,732 26%	945 32%	26%
GRAND TOTAL	Nos. %age	7,157 100%	3,373 100%	10,530 100%	2,908 100%	22%

Figure 12: NI domiciled HE applicants to NI and GB institutions by SEC



An analysis (*figure 14*) of the entrance tariff scores of NI domiciled accepted applicants and SEC shows that a larger proportionate share of applicants from the lower and middle SEC groups held 299 or less tariff points.

Conversely, a larger proportionate share of applicants from the upper SEC group held 300 or more points.

Figure 15 provides a similar analysis for those UCAS applicants *not accepted* for a HE place. It shows that those from the upper SEC groups who were not accepted for a place were better qualified than those not accepted from the middle and lower SEC groups.

Figure 13: Average entrance tariff score of NI domiciled applicants by SEC and region of study

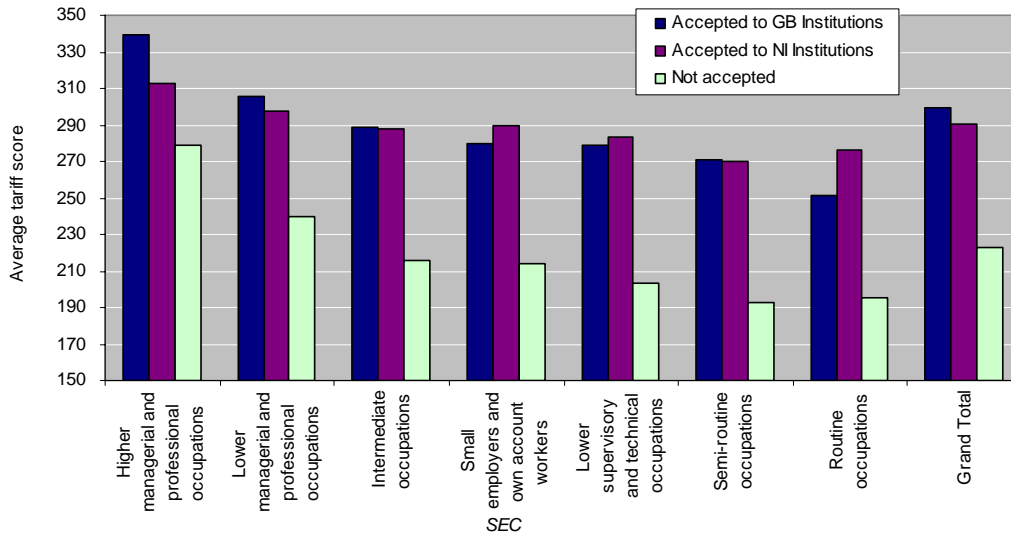


Figure 14: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by SEC and entrance tariff score

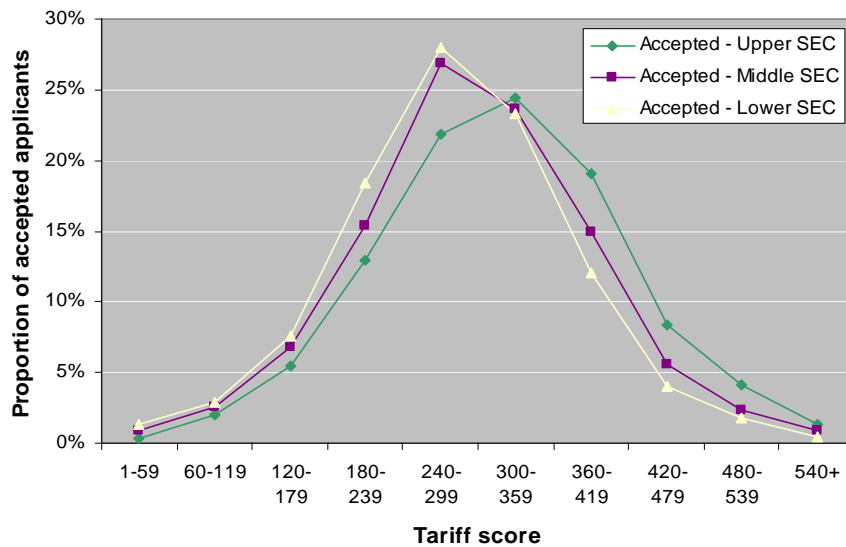
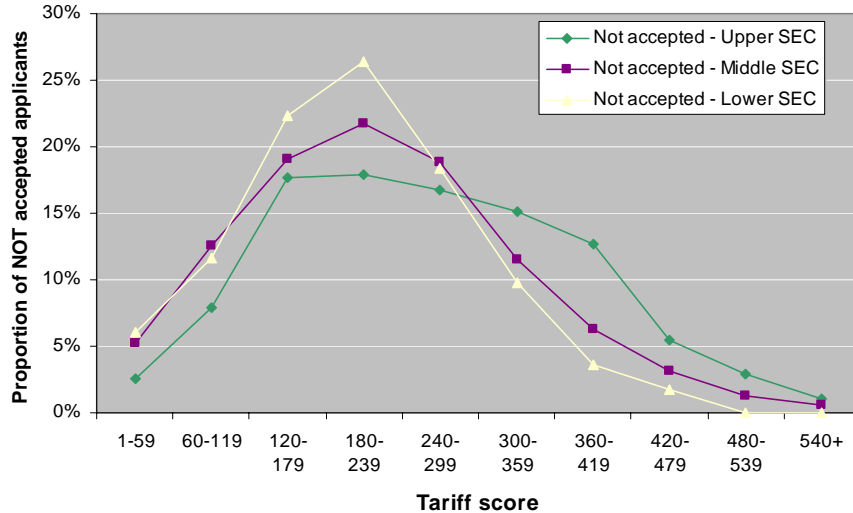


Figure 15: NI domiciled HE not accepted applicants by SEC and entrance tariff score



5. Locational choices of NI domiciled accepted applicants

5.1 Introduction

Using data about accepted applicants' firm, insurance and clearing choices, as revealed on their UCAS form, this section considers applicants' choices and examines whether students were accepted for a HE place in their "preferred region" or "reserve region". These terms are used throughout the rest of this paper and are defined as:

Accepted preferred region – a student successful in attaining a HE place in their 1st (firm) choice region of study (whether that be in NI or GB)

Accepted reserve region – a student whose accepted region of study was different from their 1st (firm) choice region of study

The terms preferred or reserve should not be interpreted as necessarily meaning that a student did or did not wish to study in a particular region as there are influences and factors that affect students' decisions which could not be incorporated into the analysis.

The methodology adopted for assigning whether a student obtained their preferred or reserve choice of region is set out in Appendix 2, with Appendix 4 providing a brief overview of the UCAS application process.

The limitations associated with the methodology adopted for categorising students in this way are set out in Appendix 3 and the analysis undertaken in this section should be viewed in the context of these limitations.

Analysis of regional preference³⁰

5.2 Applicant choices and region of study

In the 2003/04 academic year, there were 12,429 NI domiciled accepted applicants to HE courses in the UK, of which:

- 76% had their firm choice accepted;
- 13% had their insurance choice accepted; and
- 11% found a place through clearing

These proportions were broadly the same in 2002/03.

Table 5: Applicants accepted choices by region of study (2003/04)

	GB	%age	NI	%age	Grand Total	%age
Firm	3,038	76%	6,467	77%	9,505	76%
Insurance	396	10%	1,189	14%	1,585	13%
Clearing	573	14%	766	9%	1,339	11%
Grand Total	4,007	100%	8,422	100%	12,429	100%

Excludes 3,607 students who were not accepted through the UCAS process

Table 6 examines the extent to which there is a match between an applicants' firm (i.e. preferred) choice of region and the region where they were subsequently accepted. It shows that:

- of the 8,317 accepted applicants whose firm choice was NI in 2003/04, **96%** were accepted at a NI institution; and
- of the 3,536 accepted applicants whose firm choice was a GB institution in 2003/04, **96%** were accepted at a GB institution.

These proportions were broadly the same in 2002/03.

Table 6: Region of firm choice by region of accepted choice

		Firm choice of region		
		NI	GB	Grand Total
Accepted region	NI	7,974	136	8,110
	% age	96%	4%	68%
	GB	343	3,400	3,743
	% age	4%	96%	32%
Total	8,317	3,536	11,853	
% age	100%	100%	100%	

Excludes 3,607 students who were not accepted to a higher education institution as well as 576 students who did not make a firm choice

5.3 Categorisation of applicants

On the basis of the categorisation used in paragraph 5.1, of the 12,429 NI domiciled applicants accepted to UK institutions³¹ in 2003/04 (figure 16):

³⁰ Regional preference is the term used to describe whether a student obtained their preferred or reserve choice of region in which to study.

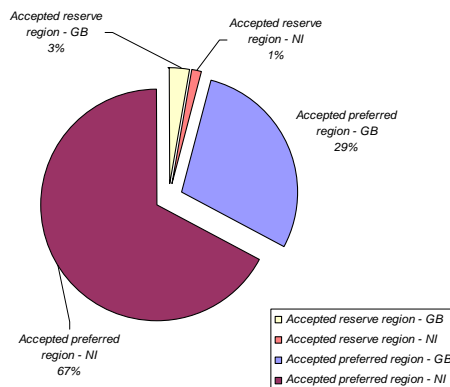
³¹ Proportions are based on the number of students whose preference could be determined.

- 96% obtained their preferred region (67% in NI and 29% in GB); and
- 4% obtained their reserve region (1% in NI and 3% in GB).

This analysis suggests that of those who obtained their reserve choice of region, 3% had a preference to study in NI but accepted a place at a GB institution instead. On the other hand, 1% of accepted applicants had a preference to study in GB but accepted a place at a NI institution.

These proportions were broadly the same in 2002/03.

Figure 16: Proportion of NI domiciled students by regional preference



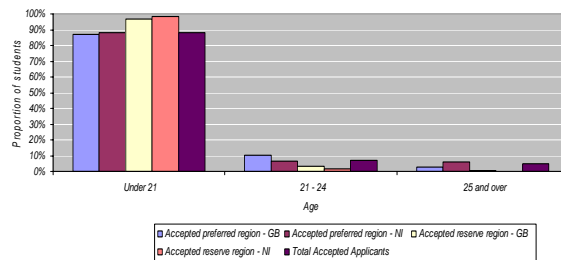
Of those accepted applicants who left NI in 2003/04, just over 9% were assessed to have taken up a place in their reserve choice of region.

5.4 Regional preference and age

NI domiciled accepted applicants aged under 21 accounted for 88% of all NI domiciled accepted applicants, but they accounted for 97% and 99% of NI domiciled applicants who accepted their reserve choice of region in GB and NI respectively (*figure 17*). In other words, those accepted applicants aged under 21 accounted for a proportionately higher share of students who took a place in their reserve region than those who took a place in their preferred region.

Those aged 21 to 24 accounted for a proportionately higher share of those whose preferred region was GB and those aged 25 and over accounted for a proportionately higher share of those whose preferred region was NI.

Figure 17: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by regional preference and age

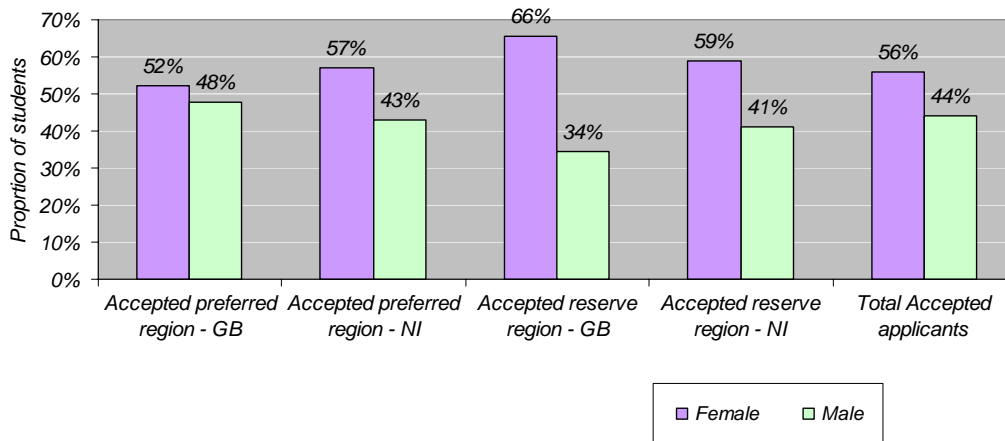


5.5 Regional preference and gender

56% of NI domiciled accepted applicants were female. However, females accounted for a proportionately greater share of those that obtained their preferred choice of region in NI (57%).

Whereas males accounted for 44% of all NI domiciled applicants, they accounted for a proportionately lower share of those that obtained their reserve choice of region in NI (41%) and their reserve choice of region in GB (34%) (*figure 18*).

Figure 18: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by gender and regional preference



5.6 Regional preference, average entrance tariff score and gender

In terms of average entrance tariff scores, those NI domiciled applicants accepted to GB institutions on the basis of their preferred choice were the best qualified, irrespective of gender (figure 19).

Conversely, those accepted applicants who obtained their reserve choice of region in GB (i.e. their preference was to stay in NI) had the lowest average entrance tariff score by some margin.

Overall, female accepted applicants possessed higher average entrance tariff scores than males, across all preferences.

5.7 Regional preference and Socio-Economic Classification (SEC)

An analysis of the SEC groups (figure 20) shows that 26% of all NI domiciled accepted applicants were from the lower SEC group. However, this group accounted for 28% of those applicants accepted for a place in NI on the basis of their preferred choice of region (i.e. their revealed preference was to study at a NI institution). Conversely, a lower proportionate share of NI domiciled accepted applicants from the lower SEC group accepted a place in GB irrespective of whether it was on the basis of their preferred (21%) or reserve (23%) choice of region. A lower proportionate share also accepted a place in NI on the basis of their reserve (19%) choice.

The chart at figure 21 breaks the analysis down further and presents data at the SEC 7-classification level.

Figure 19: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by gender, average entrance tariff score and regional preference

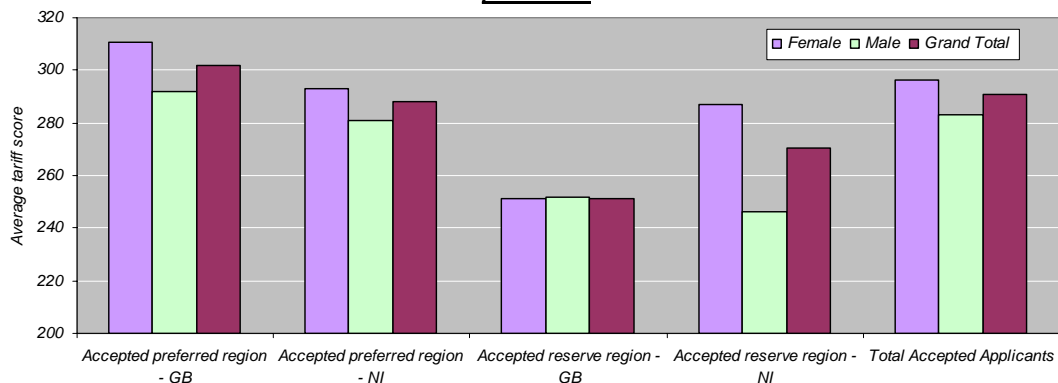


Figure 20: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by grouped SEC and regional preference

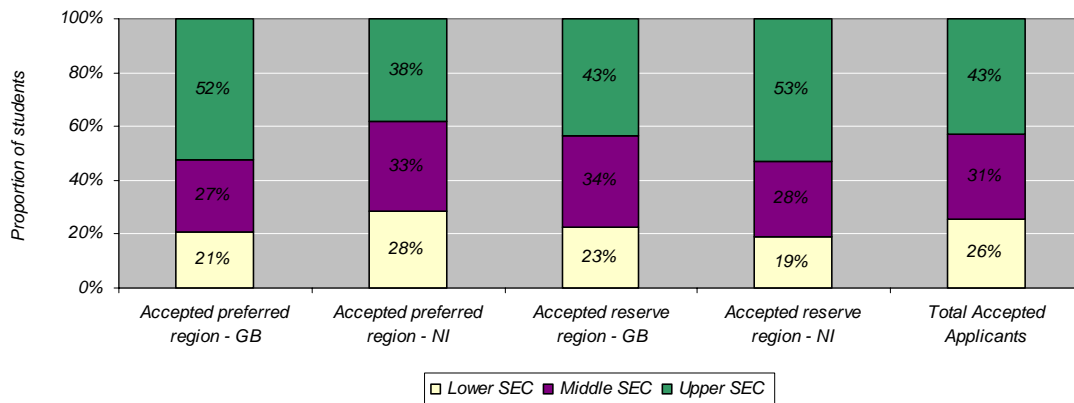


Figure 21: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by SEC and regional preference

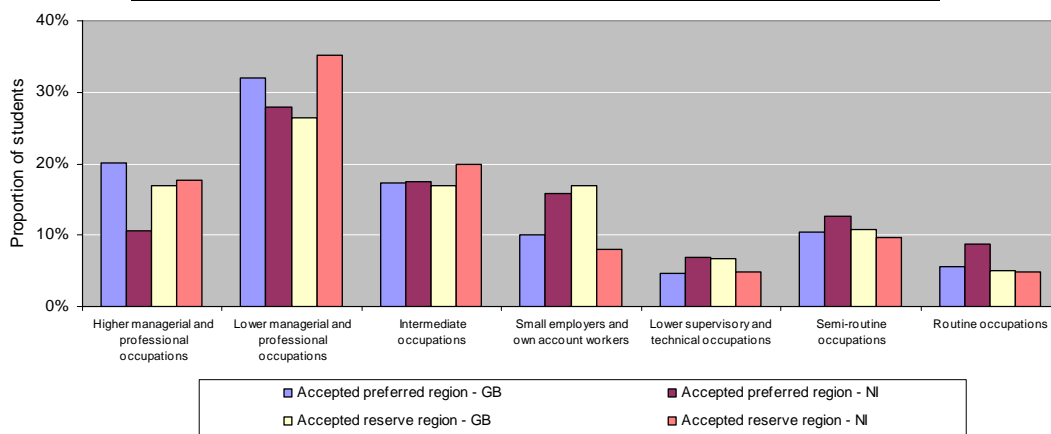
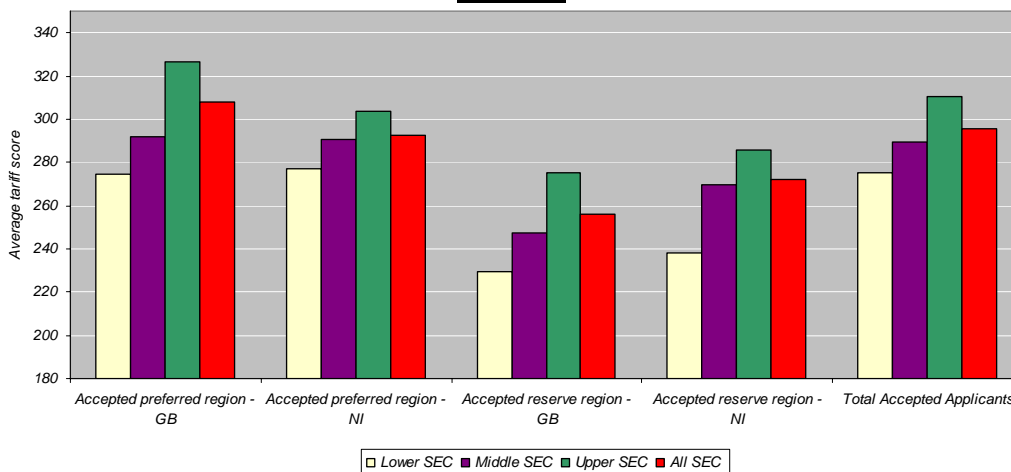


Figure 22: NI domiciled HE accepted applicants by SEC, average entrance tariff score and regional preference



5.8 Regional preference, average entrance tariff score and SEC

An analysis of the SEC of NI domiciled accepted applicants by average entrance tariff score shows that (Figure 22) those from the lower SEC groups tend to possess lower average tariff scores than those from the middle and upper SEC

groups and this holds for all regional preference groups.

The average entrance tariff score of those NI domiciled students whose preference was to study in NI but instead accepted a place in GB was lower than any other preference group.

UCAS data coverage 2003/04

UCAS data relates to students who were;

- new entrants;
- enrolling on an undergraduate course;
- applying for a full-time course;
- applying for a HE course at UK Higher Education institutions³²; and
- those using UCAS to enrol on a HE course (According to data from HESA³³, these accounted for approximately 84% of NI domiciled students at HE institutions in the UK in 2003/04).

UCAS data does not include students who were:

- full-time undergraduate students who have progressed beyond first year
- part-time undergraduate students;
- postgraduate students;
- undertaking a HE course at an NI FE college;
- undertaking a HE course at institution outside of the UK including the Republic of Ireland; and
- part of the 16%³⁴ of students who bypass the UCAS process and enrol directly on a HE course at a UK HE institution

³² HE courses at NI FE colleges are not part of the UCAS process.

³³ Higher Education Statistics Agency.

³⁴ An analysis of the 16% of students not using the UCAS process to enrol shows that a large number of these students were required by an institute to enrol on courses directly. Of those students not using UCAS and not enrolling directly at the institution's request, an analysis shows that no common student characteristics could be found.

Appendix 2

Methodology³⁵ adopted for determining whether a student was accepted for their preferred or reserve choice of region

For this analysis, a firm choice is assumed to be the best representation of where a student wants to study. Where a student is accepted on the basis of their insurance choice, it is assumed that this is their second choice, having not satisfied the requirements of their firm choice option. Comparing the firm and insurance choices of students with their accepted choice, it can be determined whether a student accepted their preferred or reserve choice of region in which to study.

Accepted choice	Firm choice	Insurance choice	Preference of region of study
NI	NI	NI	Accepted preferred Region - NI
NI	NI	GB	Accepted preferred Region - NI
NI	NI	No insurance choice	Accepted preferred Region - NI
GB	GB	GB	Accepted preferred Region - GB
GB	GB	NI	Accepted preferred Region - GB
GB	GB	No insurance choice	Accepted preferred Region - GB
NI	GB	NI	Accepted reserve Region - NI
GB	NI	GB	Accepted reserve Region - GB
GB	NI	No insurance choice	Accepted reserve Region - GB
NI	GB	No insurance choice	Accepted reserve Region - NI
NI	No firm choice	No insurance choice	Not known
GB	No firm choice	No insurance choice	Not known
NI	GB	GB	Accepted reserve Region - NI
GB	NI	NI	Accepted reserve Region - GB

Accepted preferred region - a student successful in attaining a HE place in their 1st choice region of study (in either NI or GB).

Accepted reserve region - a student whose accepted region of study was different from their preferred region of study.

³⁵ This matrix is intended to provide an overview of the approach adopted for determining a student's preferred and reserved choice. A more detailed methodology was adopted in the actual analysis.

Limitations of methodology adopted for classifying student choices based on regional preference.

There are a number of limitations associated with the methodology adopted.

1. In some cases student choices were so unrelated/diverse that it was not possible to determine an applicant's preference. These applicants, which account for around 5% of students, have been excluded from the detailed analysis in section 4.
2. There is a limitation arising from the possibility that students might not secure any offers from HE institutions in the region they want to study. During the UCAS application process, a student can normally make up to six choices for university courses but subsequently can choose only one firm and one insurance offer. In the case where a student particularly wished to remain in NI to study, that student might, for example, make three applications to NI institutions and a further two to GB institutions. However, if only the GB institutions made offers, the student might have little choice but to pick those as their firm and insurance choices. If either of these offers is subsequently accepted, this analysis would categorise the applicant as obtaining their preferred region of study in

Appendix 3

GB, when in fact they would have preferred to have remained in NI.

3. It is also not possible to take into consideration influences upon students prior to them choosing where and what to study. Examples of these include finance, attitude to NI, peer pressure, family traditions, perception that it is easier to get accepted on a course in GB or that the perceived prestige of some HE institutions in GB is higher. By way of illustration, an applicant may wish to leave NI to study at a GB institution but may feel that they could not afford financially to do so and, as a result, may apply only to NI institutions. In this analysis, if that student was accepted on a course at a NI institution, they would be categorised as obtaining their preferred region of study, when in fact NI was their reserve region. Alternatively, a student who would prefer to stay in NI but felt that they are unlikely to attain the entrance tariff grades required by a NI institution, may only apply to GB institutions. If they were subsequently accepted at a GB institution, the analysis here would categorise them as obtaining their preferred region, when in fact they obtained their reserve region.

Unfortunately, the UCAS data cannot be used to determine the level of error that unrevealed or hidden preferences could introduce to the analysis. This places a limitation on the robustness of the results.

Appendix 4

Overview of UCAS application process

1. A student can normally make up to 6 choices for university courses.
2. These choices are submitted to UCAS in the academic year prior to study, which forwards them to the institutions concerned.
3. The institutions may then make offers.
4. From the offers received by a student, the student must choose a firm and if desired an insurance choice – the firm choice being their 1st choice and insurance choice being their 2nd choice
5. If no offers are made or if a student, for whatever reason, does not take up the firm or insurance choice, the student can apply via clearing. Clearing is the mechanism through which those places that have not been taken by firm and insurance choices are made available.