

The shifting landscape of widening participation: current challenges, expectations and realities

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Presentation will cover

- Where the sector is in terms of
 - Access
 - Retention
 - Success
- Where this leaves the sector/challenges faced....

A reminder...

- Where we started
 - 1959 (pre Robbins) approx. 100,000 in HE (all years and level combined)
 - Elite <15% of eligible pop. (Trow)
- Today
 - Total 2014/15: 2, 266,075
 - 31.1% entered by 18; up 3% from 2014; up 27% from 2006
 - 41% entered by 19 in England and over 42% in Northern Ireland
 - Mass HE (15-40%) - Universal is >40%....

Access: significant variations

- **Geog variations:** lowest = SW (27.6 %) & NE (27.8); highest = London (38.6%)
- **Gender** differences : Men 26.2%; women 35.4%
- **Ethnic** differences: Chinese, 58%; Asian 41%; Black 37%; White 28%
- Wide variations when **equality dimensions** combined e.g.
 - Average for state school POLAR quintile 3 = 28%
 - Women + free school meals were 51 per cent more likely to enter than men + FSM
 - White men + FSM = 9% vs. Asian women not receiving FSM = 44%

UCAS End of Cycle Report 2015

Differences in entry: type of HEI

- Differences remain largest for higher tariff providers
 - 3.3% POLAR3, quintile 1
 - 20.7% POLAR3, quintile 5
- Medium tariff institutions
 - 5.7% P3Q1
 - 13.3% P3Q5
- Lower tariff institutions
 - 9.5 P3Q1
 - 13.1% P3Q5

Bias in admissions?

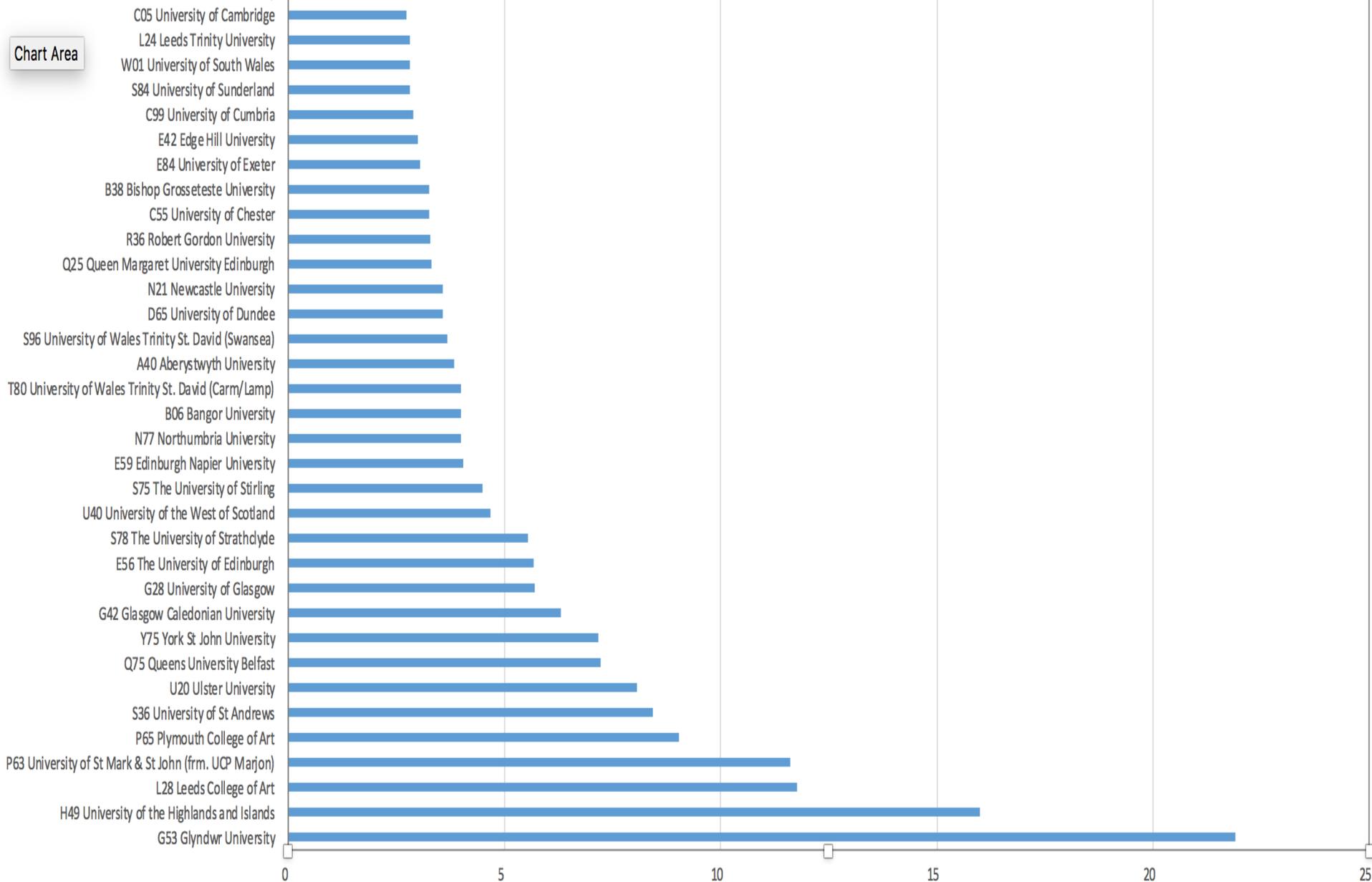
- UCAS: *“a difference simply means that the offer rate is higher or lower than it is for all applicants who are similar in terms of the subject applied for and a summary measure of their predicted grades”*.
- Is there a bias in admissions across the Russell Group?
- Significant pressure on the sector
 - Bolliver (2013, 2016) only 36% of BME applicants to Russell Group universities offered places compared to 55% of White applicants between 2010 and 2012
 - Noden et al (2014): Using statistical modelling and controlling for range of variables - Pakistani students would receive 7 additional rejections per 100 compared with white applicants (but found no evidence apparent biases are stronger in higher status than lower status institutions)
 - University College, Oxford announced it will increase the number of places by 10% to widen access to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

But...is there bias?

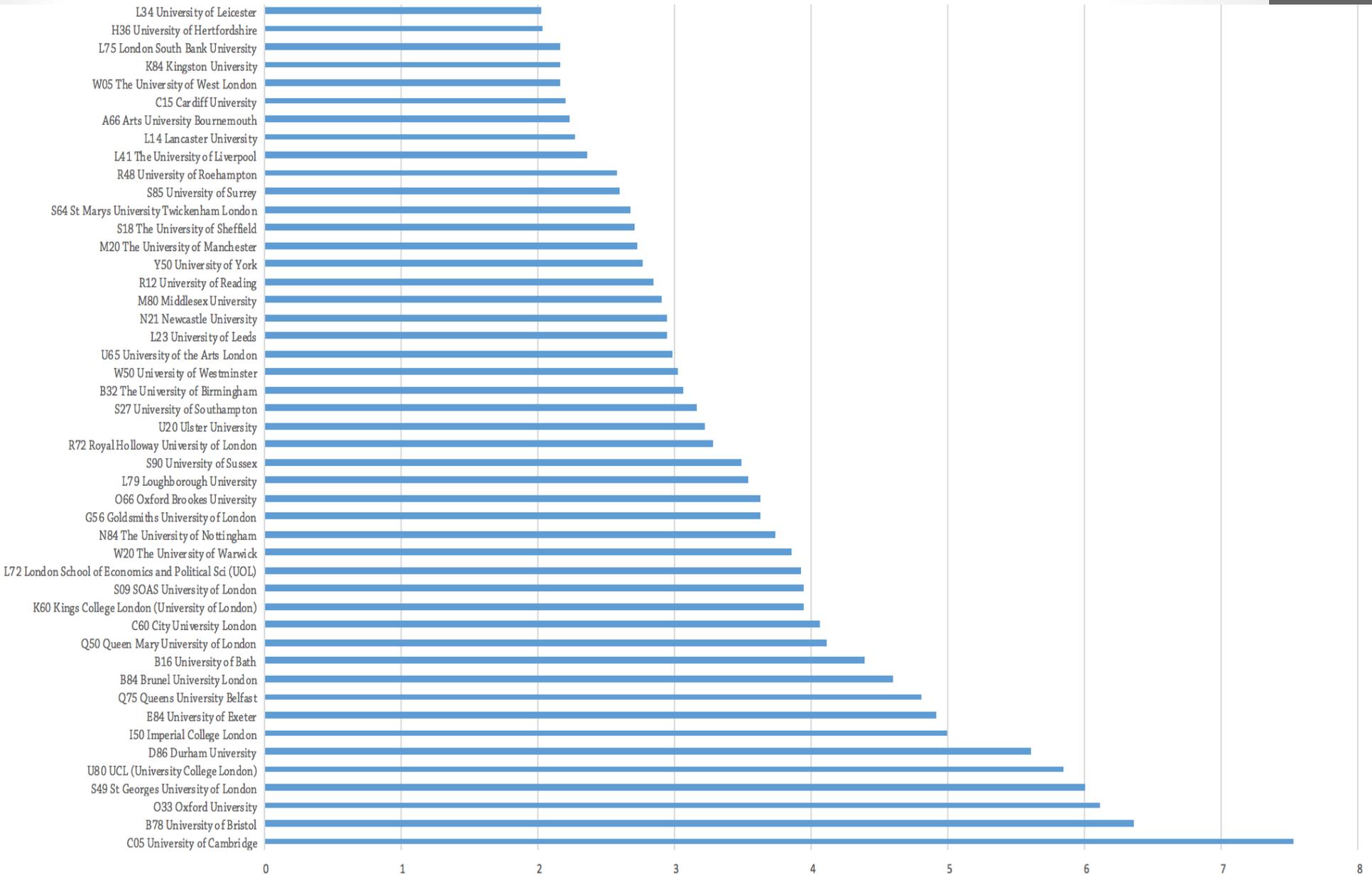
- First UCAS release where applicant data broken down by socio-economic background (POLAR and SIMD), sex, and ethnicity for 130 HEIs
- Analysis by David Morris; WonkHE

Ratio of likelihood to attend a university

White: Black



Ratio of likelihood to attend a university POLAR 4&5: POLAR 1&2 (exc. Scotland)



Gaps in offer rate: Black

Anglia Ruskin University

University of Bath

University of Bedfordshire

University of Birmingham

Birmingham City University

Bournemouth University

Brunel University

University of Central Lancashire

University of Chester

Coventry University

De Montfort University

Durham University

University of Greenwich

University of Hertfordshire

Imperial College London

University of Kent

King's College London

Kingston University

University of Leeds

University of Lincoln

Loughborough University

Manchester Metropolitan University

University of Manchester

Middlesex University

Nottingham Trent University

Newcastle University

Oxford Brookes University

Sheffield Hallam University

- Several of these institutions accept the highest aggregate numbers of black students:
 - Man Met
 - De Montfort
 - Birmingham
- Very little that these institutions have in common.



Gaps in offer rate: Asian

University of Aberdeen

Aston University

University of Birmingham

Birmingham City University

University of Chester

University of Dundee

University of Derby

Edinburgh Napier University

Edge Hill University

University of Huddersfield

King's College London

Kingston University

University of Leeds

Leeds Beckett University

Leeds Trinity University

University of Liverpool

University of Manchester

Manchester Metropolitan University

Nottingham Trent University

Oxford University

University of Reading

University of Sheffield

Sheffield Hallam University

University of Strathclyde

Teesside University

- Again, several of these institutions accept massive numbers of Asian students.
- Very little that these institutions have in common.

Gaps in offer rate: POLAR data

University of the Arts, London

University of Birmingham

Birmingham City University

University of Bristol

Arts University Bournemouth

Coventry University

Imperial College London

Manchester Metropolitan University

University of Nottingham

Queen Mary, University of London

University of York

- Predominantly Russell Group, but the big-city rather than provincial institutions.
- Arts institutions – trend across others but small sample sizes.
- A few post-92... This the beginning of a trend



Analysis: is there bias in admissions?

- There is a striking class, race and geographical divide within UK higher education.
- Possible explanations/excuses: personal statements, interviews, aptitude tests (in subjects like medicine and law), and portfolios of work (in the creative arts). (See Burke and McManus (2009) Art for All)
- Combination of subjects at A level?
 - Are black and Asian students less likely to take the 'required' subjects? Needs further research.
- Qualifications reform might present new challenges.

Retention and success: ECU

- **Age differences**
 - 22–25 yrs most likely to leave early/not complete
 - The older you are the more likely to get a 1st and a 3rd/pass ...unless you study part time
 - 50.1% of leavers aged 21 and under entered full-time work; 68.7% aged 26–35 and 59.4% aged 36 and over.
- **Disability**
 - DSA is vital to attainment and you are less likely to be in work PG
- **Gender**
 - More women get 1st/2:1s
 - Men more likely to be in professional full-time work

BME retention and success

- White entrants more likely to continue or qualify (91.8%) than BME students (87.9%)
- Ethnic degree attainment gap is 15.2 percentage points:
 - 75.6% of white qualifiers graduating in 2013/14 received first/2:1
 - 60.4% of Black and Minority ethnic (BME) qualifiers.
 - The ethnicity degree attainment gap was largest between white (73.5%) and black male qualifiers (46.3%), with a difference of 27.2 percentage points.
- Getting 1st/2:1 fundamental to PG employment
 - Top employers screen out those without
 - Top 100 recruit wholly from 10 HEIs

Summary

- No great surprise....
- White, middle class - higher tariff HEI; better degree, greater employment prospects
- BME, poorer - lowest tariff HEIs, lower degree, lower employment prospects
- BUT data shows great diversity across the sector; not straightforward

Challenges?

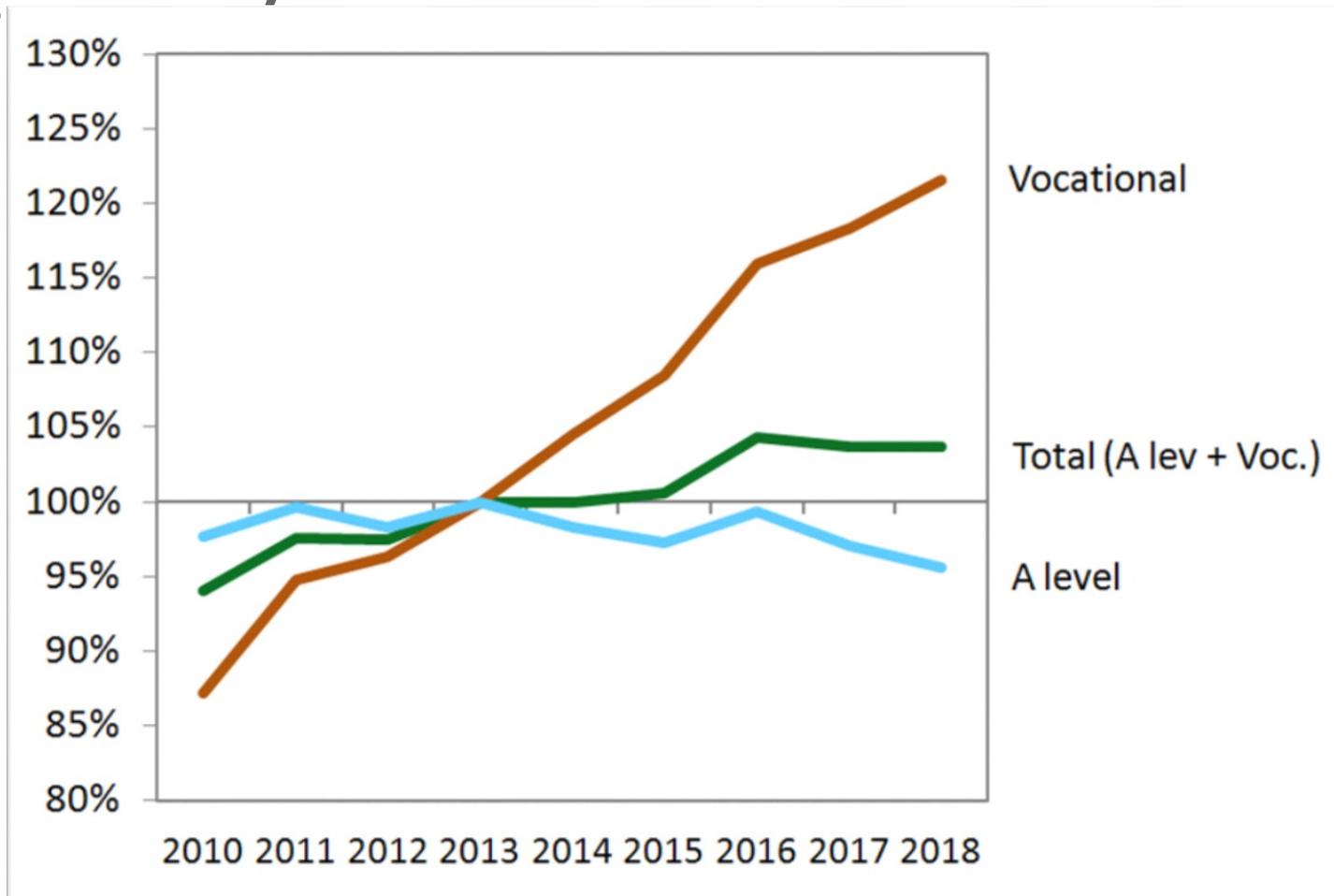
Challenges: outreach

- Strategic buy-in to outreach uneven

Range of spend (NEON)	No. of HEIs
<£5000,000	50
£500,000 - £1,000,000	33
£1,000,000 - £2, 000,000	32
£2,000,000 - £3,000,000	6
£3,000,000 - £4,000,000	2

- Shift to NCOP will have massive impact in some areas
- Kings College (UCL) report: increasing white W/C boys needs to begin at primary school and involve parents
- UCAS survey: Those knowing by age 10 are 2.6x as likely to attend higher tariff HEI

Challenges: Qualification reform (UCAS)



Qualification reform timeline

Aug/Sep 13 Aug/Sep 14 Aug/Sep 15 Aug/Sep 16 Aug/Sep 17 Aug/Sep 18



Key

First teaching



Reach HE

* Based on current recommendations

Last updated: April 2014

Challenges: qualification reform

- Sainsbury Review; at the age of 16, students will have to choose between:
 - “academic option” –A-levels leading to an undergraduate degree
 - “technical option” - students will embark on one of 15 technical education routes
 - i.e. end mixture of academic and vocational qualifications; likely to lead to greater specialisation in schools
- Already stark regional differences in the proportion of pupils studying A-levels in state schools - ranging from 2% to 74%.
 - The lowest is Knowsley & last school teaching A-levels is closing its sixth form; 7 authorities <20% of students taking A-levels
 - Implications for socio-economic groups and BME students

Challenges: BME attainment

- Increased gap between A levels and BTEC has implications for BME attainment
- Key policy-makers have increasingly recognised the importance of addressing the gap (ECU, 2008, HEFCE, 2015) but it has yet to substantially change (ECU, 2015)
- OFFA: 2014-15, £478.2m of access agreement spending went on financial support for students - it works BUT feels under threat

Challenges: The TEF

- Focus on outcomes (student achievement and employment; staff achievements), rather than 'added value' or learning gain of students
- Research on the effectiveness of GPA, as a measure of learning gain is inconclusive
- Difficult to establish a robust causal link between effective assessment and feedback practices and progression and attainment at institutional level.
- Graduate employment metrics are a poor proxy for teaching quality.
- **Oh need I go on!!!!**

Challenge(r)s: Alternate providers

- HESA “Experimental Statistical First Release (SFR)” of Undergraduate Designated Courses at Alternative Providers.
 - Important role in widening participation.
 - Student population is mature (43% 30+)
 - 34% = black and 19% as Asian and esp high numbers of BME students in computer science, creative subjects, and social studies.
 - Black and Asian students in computer science outnumber white students by 3 to 1.
- BIS report -surveyed students and institutions at 276 alternative providers back in 2014
 - 51% of students over 25 and 48% from a “non-white background.”

So should we be gloomy?

- Access bias is systemic - can't just blame the Russell Group
- Expansion of alternative providers - not all bad?
 - Almost total market freedom to expand may be good for WP
 - But if fees keep rising....squeezing out other providers
 - Plus worst off *are* more risk averse..
- HEIs already announcing increased fees
- Focus remains on young people, what about mature learners and esp. PT provision?
- BME degree attainment gap is a national disgrace
- Overall.... we have increased the number of young people in HE but access, retention and success rates remain variable...

Questions

- Before I go an lie down in a darkened room