

Qualifications gained at UK Higher Education Institutions:

Northern Ireland analysis – 2017/18

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This statistical bulletin has been produced by the Department for the Economy (DfE) and provides information on qualifications gained by Northern Ireland (NI) students at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and all students at NI HEIs.

- At 17,780, the number of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2017/18 has decreased by 2.5% since 2016/17 (18,240) (Tables 1a and 1c).
- Almost four-fifths (78.9%) of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2017/18 have been through full-time study, an increase of 12.1% over the last 10 years (12,525 to 14,035) (Tables 1d, 1e and 2f).
- During 2017/18, 47.5% of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Broad STEM related subject, and 23.9% in a Narrow STEM related subject (Table 4b).
- At 15,500, the number of qualifications gained by students from NI HEIs in 2017/18 has decreased by 4.0% since 2016/17 (16,145) (Tables 6a and 6c).
- In 2017/18, 78.7% of 'first degree' graduates from NI HEIs achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 9b).
- During 2017/18, 48.5% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Broad STEM related subject, and 23.2% in a Narrow STEM related subject (Table 8b).
- In 2017/18, almost three-fifths (58.9%) of students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs were female (Table 7e).

READER INFORMATION

Purpose	Monitor and report on 1) NI domiciled Qualifiers from Higher Education Institutions in the United Kingdom, and 2) All Qualifiers from NI Higher Education Institutions.
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Detailed Tables	All tables referenced in the publication are available in Excel and Open Data format.
Further copies from	analyticalservices@economy-ni.gov.uk
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Feedback	As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to: Michael MacNeill – Michael.MacNeill@economy-ni.gov.uk (Tel: 028 90 2 57897) Kimberley Gillespie – Kimberley.Gillespie@economy-ni.gov.uk (Tel: 028 90 2 57825) Kerry McColgan – Kerry.McColgan@economy-ni.gov.uk (Tel: 028 90 2 57753)

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STATISTICS AND RESEARCH BRANCH (TERTIARY EDUCATION)

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) colleges across Northern Ireland (NI) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) focused on NI HEIs and NI domiciled students in attendance at any UK HEI. Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic individual level administrative systems.

The Head of the Branch is the Principal Statistician, Brian French. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the Economy Committee, FE colleges, universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the DfE, other educational organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations, as well as the general public.

The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the Higher Education (HE) and FE sectors, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, departmental research projects, development of service frameworks as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a significantly high volume of Assembly questions and ad hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications, including: HE enrolments; HE qualifications; Destinations of leavers from Higher Education (DLHE); FE activity; and Essential Skills enrolments and outcomes.

A detailed list of these publications is available from:

Website: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-and-further-education-and-training-statistics>

KEY STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND DOMICILED QUALIFIERS FROM UK HEIs

The number of qualifiers has increased over the decade.....

Although fluctuating over the past ten academic years, the number of NI domiciled qualifiers from UK HEIs has increased by 2.0% from 17,440 in 2008/09 to 17,780 in 2017/18. This is mainly due to a 12% increase in qualifiers from GB HEIs (Tables 1a and 1b).

...but decreased over the year.

At 17,780, the number of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2017/18 has decreased by 2.5% since 2016/17 (18,240); this has been driven largely by a 5.1% decline in the number of NI qualifiers from NI HEIs (excluding OU) (Tables 1a and 1c).

The vast majority of qualifications are from full time courses.....

Almost four-fifths (78.9%) of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students in UK HEIs in 2017/18 have been through full time study. Over the last 10 years, the number of full-time qualifications gained has risen by 12.1% (12,525 to 14,035), in contrast to a 23.8% decrease in qualifications gained through part-time study (4,915 to 3,745) (Tables 1d, 1e and 2f).

....with more qualifying at Postgraduate level.

'Postgraduate' qualifications gained have experienced the largest percentage increase (18.7%) over the last ten years (3,745 to 4,450), while 'first degree' qualifications have increased by 7.1% (10,925 to 11,700). In contrast, the number of qualifications gained by students enrolled on 'other undergraduate' courses has decreased by 40.9% (2,765 to 1,635) (Tables 1d and 1e).

More females qualifying than males.....

In 2017/18, of the 17,780 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications, almost three-fifths (59.2%) were female. Over four-fifths (80.7%) of male students gaining a qualification had studied full-time, compared with 77.7% of female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

.....and there is variation by sex, in terms of the course subject area.

Females accounted for 83.7% of qualifications gained in 'subjects allied to medicine', 72.8% of those gained in 'education' and 71.4% of those gained in 'languages' in 2017/18. Male-dominated subject areas included 'engineering and technology' (82.1%), 'computer science' (76.0%) and 'architecture, building and planning' (67.8%) (Table 4c).

A higher proportion of males qualified in a STEM subject.....

During 2017/18, 47.5% of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Broad STEM related subject. A higher proportion of males (52.1%) than females (44.3%) gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject.

Almost a quarter (23.9%) of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Again a higher proportion of males (36.3%) than females (15.3%) gained their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject (Tables 4b and 4d).

.....but a higher proportion of females graduated with a first class or second class upper degree.

In 2017/18, almost four-fifths (79.3%) of NI domiciled first degree graduates from UK HEIs (excluding those attaining an unclassified first degree) achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree. Females (81.4%) were more likely than males (76.5%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 5b).

KEY STATISTICS FOR QUALIFIERS FROM NORTHERN IRELAND HEIs

<p>The number of qualifiers from NI HEIs has decreased since 2016/17...</p>	<p>At 15,500, the number of qualifications gained by students from NI HEIs in 2017/18 has decreased by 4.0% since 2016/17 (16,145) (Tables 6a and 6c).</p>
<p>...but the proportion of NI domiciled graduates is smaller than a decade ago.</p>	<p>In 2017/18, NI students accounted for 80.7% of all qualifications gained at NI HEIs, compared with 84.0% in 2008/09 (Table 6a).</p>
<p>The vast majority of qualifications gained are from full time courses.....</p>	<p>Of the 15,500 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 73.9% were through full-time study. Over the last 10 years, the number of full-time qualifications gained has risen by 16% (9,875 to 11,460), whereas the number of part-time qualifications gained has decreased by 23.4% from 5,275 to 4,040. (Tables 6a, 6b and 7f).</p>
<p>....and at 'First Degree' level.</p>	<p>Of the 15,500 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 9,185 (59.3%) were a 'first degree' qualification, 1,615 (10.4%) an 'other undergraduate' qualification and 4,695 (30.3%) a postgraduate qualification (Table 6d).</p>
<p>More females qualifying than males.....</p>	<p>In 2017/18, almost three-fifths (58.9%) of students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs were female. Over three-quarters (77.5%) of male students gaining a qualification had studied full-time, compared with 71.4% of female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).</p>
<p>.....and there is variation in sex, in terms of the course subject area.</p>	<p>Females accounted for 83.7% of qualifications gained in 'subjects allied to medicine', 73.6% of those gained in 'education' and 72.2% of those gained in 'languages' in 2017/18. Male-dominated subject areas included 'engineering and technology' (81.4%), 'computer science' (76.3%) and 'architecture, building and planning' (68.0%) (Table 8c).</p>
<p>A higher proportion of males qualified in a STEM subject.....</p>	<p>During 2017/18, 48.5% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Broad STEM related subject. A higher proportion of males (52.4%) than females (45.8%) gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject.</p> <p>Almost a quarter (23.2%) of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Again, a higher proportion of males (35.5%) than females (14.5%) gained their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject (Tables 8b and 8d).</p>
<p>.....but a higher proportion of females graduated with a first class or second class upper degree.</p>	<p>In 2017/18, over three-quarters (78.7%) of 'first degree' graduates (excluding those attaining an unclassified first degree) achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree. Females (81.0%) were more likely than males (75.6%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 9b).</p>

Coverage

This statistical bulletin has been produced by the Department for the Economy (DfE) and presents information on Higher Education (HE) qualifications gained by Northern Ireland (NI) domiciled students at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK in the 2017/18 academic year, and by all students at NI HEIs in the same time period. The statistics presented in this bulletin cover a range of topics, including changes over the last ten years, mode and level of study, subject of study and classification of first degree.

National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (the Authority) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice](#) for Statistics.

National Statistics status means that Official Statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All Official Statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are well explained and readily accessible; are produced according to sound methods; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. It is DfE's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Policy and Operational Context

There continues to be a lot of media interest in the HE sector and HE statistics. With changes in fee regimes throughout the UK, the effect of the economic recession and the potential impact of EU exit, the demand for HE is often in the spotlight. The Department for the Economy is responsible for formulating policy and administering funding to support education, research and related activities in the Northern Ireland higher education sector. This bulletin forms parts of the evidence base used to evaluate and shape the strategies and policies of DfE.

[Draft Programme for Government \(PfG\) Framework 2016-2021](#)

The work of the Department is shaped by the draft Programme for Government (2016-2021) that sets the strategic direction of travel for the work of the Executive, expressed

in terms of wellbeing-focused outcomes. The document identifies innovation, research and development, and skills and employability as the key drivers of achieving a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy. Higher education has a pivotal role in supporting this aspiration, especially with regard to increasing the skills levels of the Northern Ireland workforce and increasing the proportion of local graduates from local institutions in professional and management occupations, or indeed further study.

The PfG consultation document can be found at the link below:

<https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/pfg-consultation-document.PDF>

Data Collection

The information presented in this statistical bulletin is based on data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). HESA is the official agency for the collection of information on publicly funded UK HEIs. It was set up in 1993 following the White Paper 'Higher Education: a new framework', which called for more coherence in HE statistics. In this context, HEIs include all publicly-funded universities. The HESA statistics presented in this bulletin relate to students at UK HEIs and, therefore, do not include HE qualifications gained at FE colleges in NI or GB, or at institutions in the Republic of Ireland (ROI).

Rounding Strategy

To prevent the identification of individuals, figures throughout the report are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1, and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown. Percentages are based on unrounded figures. Percentages have also been rounded to one decimal place. More information on the rounding strategy can be found in the [notes and definitions](#) section.

Data Quality

All information presented in this bulletin has been validated and quality assured by HEIs prior to publication. HEIs are given a set period of time to submit the information to HESA. Following submission, both HESA and DfE perform a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns. Trend analyses are used to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to HEIs for clarification and, if required, returns may be amended and/or re-submitted. Finally, prior to publication, the data are presented to HEIs for a final sign-off. More detail is available via the link [Quality of Higher Education Statistics](#).

Who will be interested in this bulletin?

The information presented in this statistical bulletin will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example, the statistics within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by: DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for the Economy to discharge his or her duties; by the NI Assembly and its Committee for the Economy to scrutinise the HE sector; by other governments such as DoF as a key indicator in the education domain of the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM); by prospective students to inform their choices around HE; by local businesses to quantify the supply of graduates in their business area; and by researchers and academics to try

and understand the underlying trends in HE. Further details about the uses made of HE statistics can be found in the [notes and definitions](#) section.

Main Uses of HE statistics

The main uses of these statistics are to monitor HE qualifications and the characteristics of students qualifying both from NI and to NI HEIs. This helps in assessing HEI performance, corporate monitoring, informing and monitoring related policy, and responding to parliamentary/assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public.

DfE is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory HE sector. Analysis of data trends against key strategic priorities remain a crucial component of data development within DfE.

HE Activity Elsewhere

Summary figures for the four UK administrations were published by HESA in their Statistical First Release on 17th January 2019.

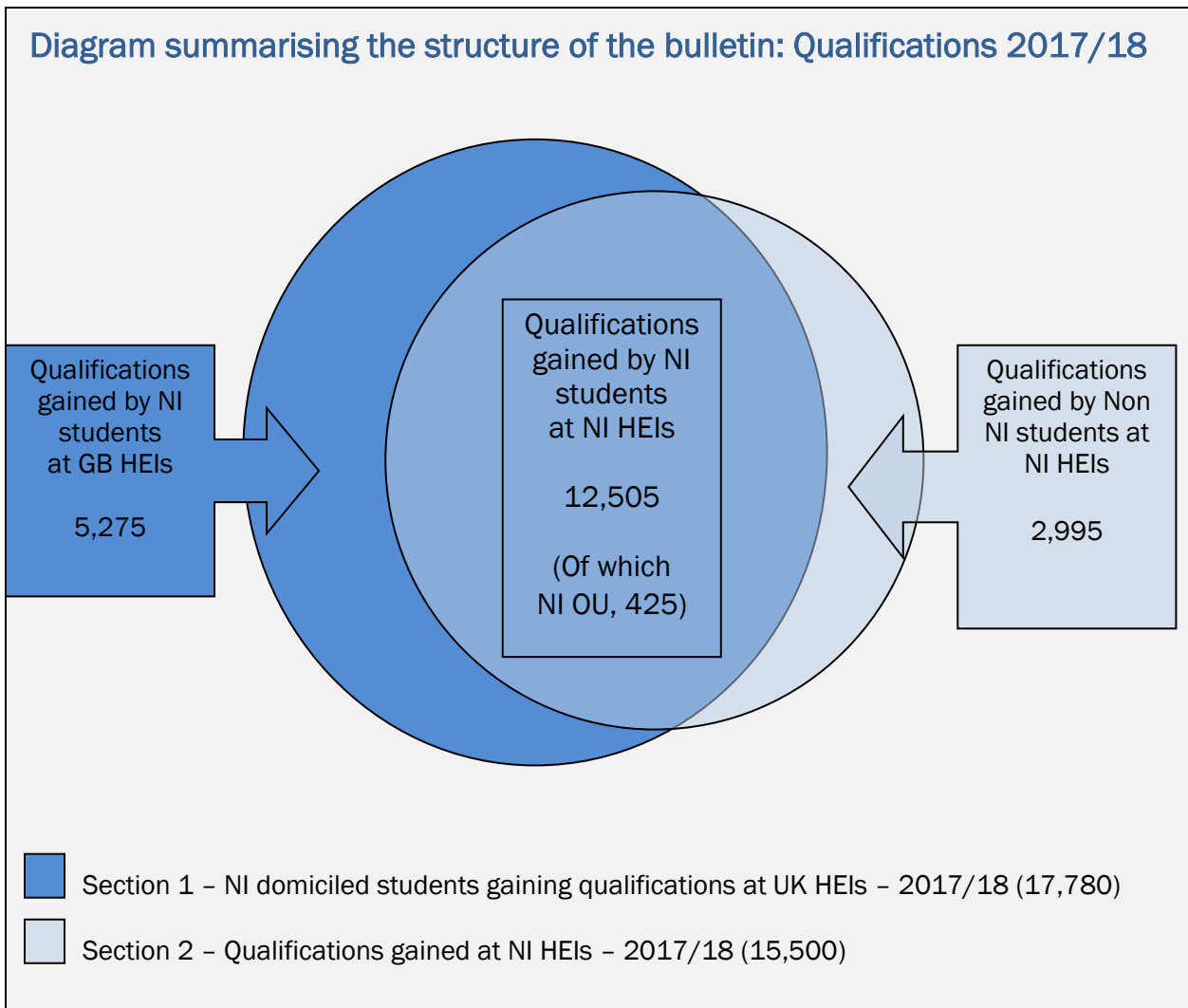
This statistical first release can be viewed at the following page -

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/17-01-2019/sb252-higher-education-student-statistics>

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The bulletin is divided into two sections. Section 1 focuses on NI domiciled students gaining qualifications at HEIs in NI, England, Scotland or Wales. Section 2 concentrates on all students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs. This division into two sections reflects the two distinct policy and operational responsibilities of the Department. Furthermore, it is clear from customer feedback, the nature of questions on HE asked in the Northern Ireland Assembly, and coverage of HE issues in the local media, that these two aspects are of key interest to readers.

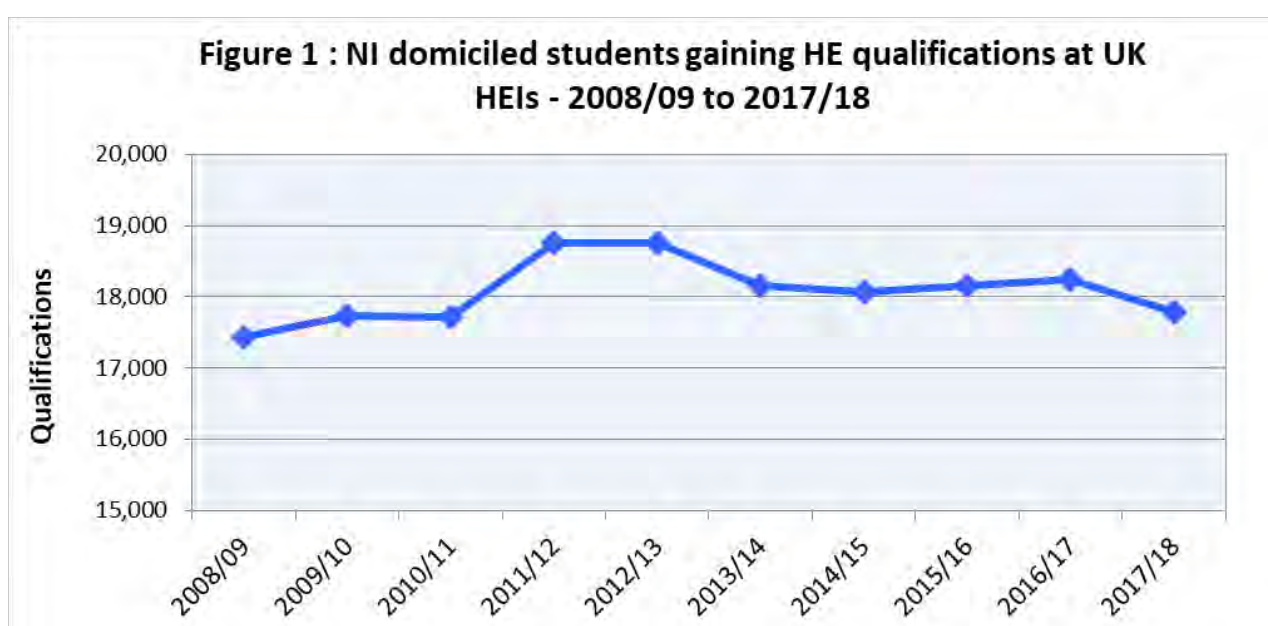
It is worth noting that there is a large overlap between Section 1 and Section 2, namely qualifications gained by NI students enrolled at NI HEIs are included in both sections of the bulletin. See the diagram below for details:



Section 1: Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining Higher Education qualifications at UK Higher Education Institutions (Tables 1 to 5b)

1.1 Change over the last 10 years – 2008/09 to 2017/18 (Tables 1 to 1f, Figure 1)

The number of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs has increased by a net 2.0% over the past 10 years, from 17,440 in 2008/09 to 17,780 in 2017/18; although this has been subject to fluctuation. Following a period of relative stability between 2008/09 (17,440) and 2010/11 (17,710), the number of qualifications gained rose to a peak of 18,750 (both 2011/12 and 2012/13), before falling again towards its current level (Tables 1a, 1b and 1c, Figure 1).



The number of qualifications gained by NI students at NI HEIs (excluding the OU) has decreased by a net 0.2% over the last 10 years (12,100 to 12,080), although this has been subject to some fluctuation. The number of NI students gaining qualifications at GB HEIs has increased by a net 12.0% over the last 10 years (4,710 to 5,275). In contrast the number of qualifications gained by NI students through the OU has decreased by 32.1%, from 625 to 425 over the 10-year period (Tables 1a and 1b).

There has been a 2.7 percentage point net increase in the proportion of NI students gaining qualifications at GB HEIs, from 27.0% (4,710) in 2008/09 to a peak of 29.7% (5,275) in 2017/18. Recent increases in this proportion may have occurred as a result of interaction between several factors, including changes to tuition fees, the gradual lifting of the MaSN cap in England, increased application and offer activity during clearing, widening participation initiatives and a prolonged ‘demographic dip’ among 18-year olds in both NI and GB. The net effect has been increased competition between providers for a smaller pool of students, increased scope to make ‘lower tariff’ offers and increased opportunities to attend university (Table 1a).

In terms of the level of qualification gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs, 'postgraduate' qualifications have experienced the largest percentage increase (18.7%) over the last ten years, from 3,745 to 4,450. 'First degree' qualifications, similarly, have increased by 7.1%, from 10,925 to 11,700 over the same period. In contrast, the number of qualifications gained by students enrolled on 'other undergraduate' courses (such as foundation degrees, diplomas, HNDs and HNCs) has fallen by 40.9%, from 2,765 in 2008/09 to 1,635 in 2017/18. This drop is due primarily to a fall in the number studying part-time 'other undergraduate' courses (Tables 1d and 1e).

Almost four-fifths (78.9%) of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs in 2017/18 have been through full-time study. Over the past 10 years, the number of full-time qualifications has risen by 12.1%, from 12,525 to 14,035, in contrast to a 23.8% decrease in qualifications gained through part-time study (4,915 to 3,745). The drop in part-time qualifications is mainly related to the decrease in the number enrolled in part-time 'other undergraduate' courses over the last decade (Table 1a, 1b and 2f).

1.2 Breakdown of qualifications gained – 2017/18 (Tables 1f to 2f, Figures 1 and 2)

All Higher Education Qualifications

In 2017/18, 17,780 qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; a 2.5% decrease from 18,240 in 2016/17 (Tables 1a and 1c).

Mode of study – Of the 17,780 qualifications gained in 2017/18, 78.9% were through full-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining qualifications decreased by 2.3%, from 14,365 to 14,035. The number of part-time qualifiers decreased by 3.4%, from 3,880 to 3,745, over the same period (Tables 1a and 1c).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 17,780 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications, almost three-fifths (59.2%) were female. This is broadly reflective of the sex breakdown in NI domiciled enrolments¹ at UK HEIs. Just over four-fifths (80.7%) of the 7,245 male students gaining a qualification had studied full-time, compared with 77.7% of the 10,530 female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

Over two-thirds (67.1%) of males qualifying in 2017/18 gained a 'first degree', while 8.4% gained an 'other undergraduate' qualification and 24.5% obtained a 'postgraduate' qualification. This compares with 64.9%, 9.8% and 25.3% respectively for female students (Table 2d).

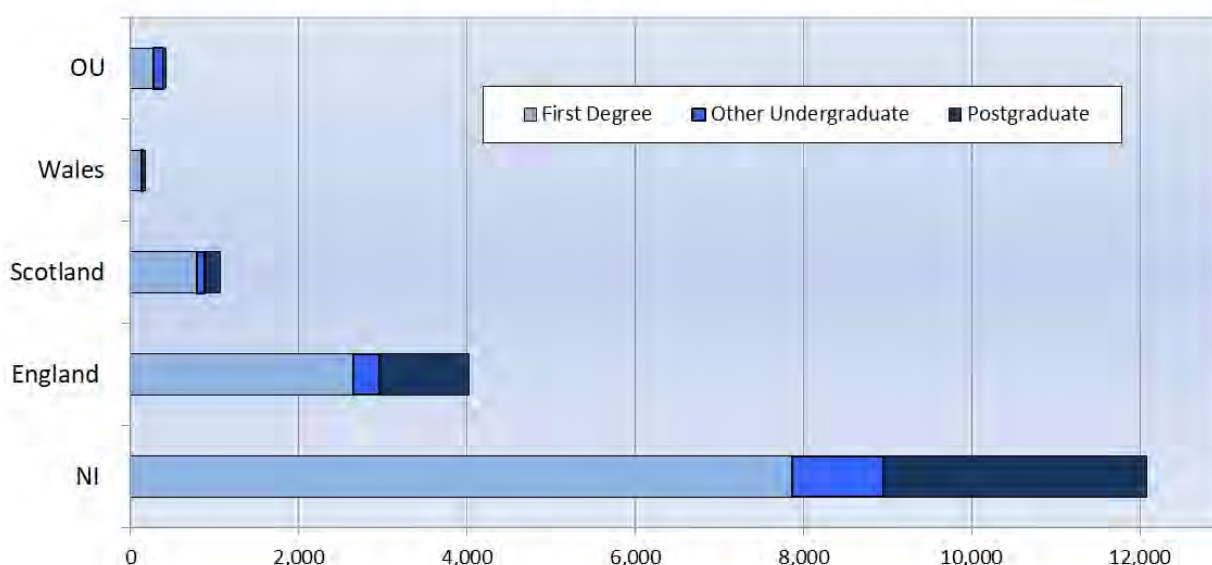
Location of study – In 2017/18, of the 17,780 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications, 67.9% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 29.7% at GB HEIs and 2.4% locally through the OU. In total, 70.3% of NI domiciled students gaining qualifications had done so at NI HEIs (including 2.4% studying locally at the OU) (Tables 1a and 2c and Figure 2).

¹ See [2017/18 Higher Education Enrolments bulletin](#)

Of the 12,080 NI students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 76.9% were through full-time study; this compares with 90.0% of the 5,275 qualifying from GB HEIs. All qualifications gained at the OU were through part-time study (425) (Table 2b).

Level of Qualification - Of the 17,780 qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs, 11,700 (65.8%) were 'first degree' qualifications, 1,635 (9.2%) were 'other undergraduate' qualifications and 4,450 (25.0%) were 'postgraduate' qualifications (Table 1d).

Figure 2 : NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by location of study and level of qualification - 2017/18



'First Degree' Qualifications

In 2017/18, 11,700 'first degree' qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; a decrease of 3.3% from the 2016/17 figure of 12,100 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Mode of study - Of the 11,700 'first degree' qualifications gained in 2017/18, 93.2% were through full-time study and 6.8% through part-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining 'first degree' qualifications decreased by 2.9%, from 11,230 to 10,900. Part-time numbers decreased by 8.1%, from 870 to 800 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Sex - In 2017/18, of the 11,700 NI domiciled students gaining 'first degree' qualifications, 58.4% were female. Of the 4,860 male students gaining a 'first degree' qualification, 92.6% had studied full-time. Similarly, of the 6,835 female students gaining a 'first degree' qualification, 93.5% had studied full-time (Tables 2e and 2f).

Location of study - In 2017/18, of the 11,700 NI domiciled students gaining 'first degrees' at UK HEIs, 67.3% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 30.5% at GB HEIs and 2.3% locally through the OU (Table 2c).

Of the 7,870 NI students gaining 'first degrees' at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 94.0% had studied full-time; this compares with 98.3% of the 3,565 qualifying from GB HEIs. All those gaining 'first degrees' locally through the OU had studied part-time (270) (Table 2b).

'Other Undergraduate' Qualifications

In 2017/18, 1,635 'other undergraduate' qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; a decrease of 2.6% from the 2016/17 figure of 1,680 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Mode of study – Of the 1,635 'other undergraduate' qualifications gained in 2017/18, 57.0% were through part-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining 'other undergraduate' qualifications increased by 1.2%, from 695 to 705, while part-time numbers decreased by 5.3%, from 985 to 930, over the same period (Tables 1d and 1f).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 1,635 NI domiciled students gaining 'other undergraduate' qualifications, 62.9% were female. Over half (52.1%) of the 605 male students gaining an 'other undergraduate' qualification had studied full-time, compared with 37.7% of the 1,025 female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

Location of study – In 2017/18, of the 1,635 NI domiciled students gaining 'other undergraduate' qualifications at UK HEIs, 66.4% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 26.1% at GB HEIs and 7.5% locally through the OU (Table 2c).

Of the 1,085 NI students gaining 'other undergraduate' qualifications at NI HEIs, 65.9% had studied part-time; this compares with 22.0% of the 425 qualifying from GB HEIs. All those gaining 'other undergraduate' qualifications locally at the OU had studied part-time (120) (Table 2b).

'Postgraduate' Qualifications

In 2017/18, 4,450 'postgraduate' qualifications were gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs; a decrease of 0.4% from the 2016/17 figure of 4,465 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Mode of study – Of the 4,450 'postgraduate' qualifications gained in 2017/18, 54.7% were through full-time study (Table 2b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining 'postgraduate' qualifications decreased by 0.2% from 2,440 to 2,435, while part-time numbers decreased by 0.5% from 2,025 to 2,015 (Tables 1d and 1f).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 4,450 NI domiciled students gaining 'postgraduate' qualifications, 60.0% were female. Of the 1,780 male students gaining 'postgraduate' qualifications, 57.6% had studied full-time, compared with 52.8% of the 2,670 female students qualifying (Tables 2e and 2f).

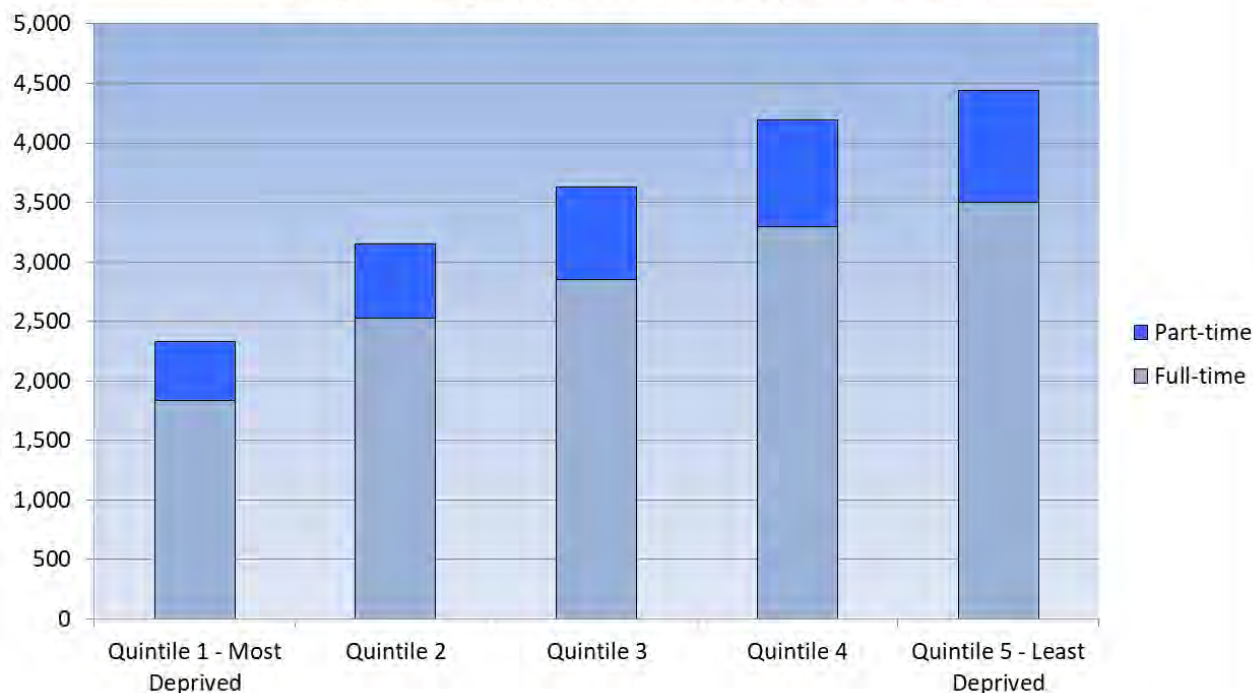
Location of study – In 2017/18, of the 4,450 NI domiciled students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at UK HEIs, 70.3% had studied at NI HEIs (excluding the OU), 28.9% at GB HEIs and 0.8% locally through the OU (Table 2c).

Of the 3,125 NI students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 51.4% had studied part-time; this compares with 29.0% of the 1,285 qualifying from GB HEIs. Those gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications locally at the OU had all studied part-time (35) (Table 2b).

1.3 NI Multiple Deprivation Measure quintiles 2017/18 (Tables 3 and 3a, Figure 3)

Of the 17,780 NI domiciled students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs in 2017/18 for whom a NI MDM quintile could be assigned, a quarter (25.0%) were from the least deprived quintile (Quintile 5 in Figure 3), while the lowest proportion (13.1%) were from the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1 in Figure 3) (Tables 3 and 3a).

Figure 3: NI domiciled students gaining HE qualifications at UK HEIs by mode of study and multiple deprivation measure quintile - 2017/18



1.4 Subject of Study 2016/17 (Tables 4 to 4d, Figure 4)

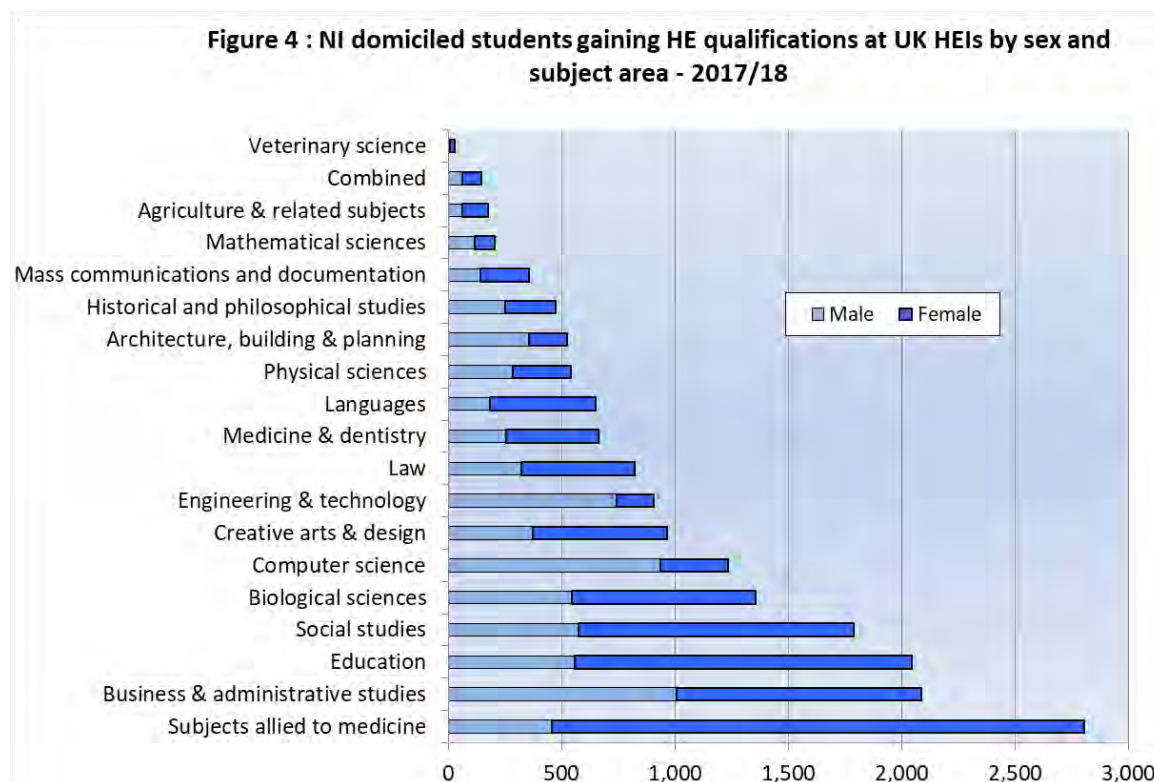
The most popular subject groups for NI students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs in 2017/18 were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (15.8%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (11.7%) and ‘education’ (11.5%) (Table 4a).

In 2017/18, females accounted for 83.7% of qualifications gained in ‘subjects allied to medicine’, 72.8% of those gained in ‘education’ and 71.4% of those gained in ‘languages’. In contrast, males accounted for 82.1% of qualifications gained in ‘engineering and technology’, 76.0% of ‘computer science’ qualifications and 67.8% of ‘architecture, building and planning’ qualifications (Table 4c and Figure 4).

The most popular subject groups for those NI students attaining a ‘first degree’ qualification at UK HEIs in 2017/18 were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (15.6%), ‘business and administrative studies’ (12.9%) and ‘social studies’ (9.7%) (Table 4a).

For NI students attaining an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification at UK HEIs in 2017/18, the three most popular subject groups were ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (26.8%), ‘education’ (19.7%) and ‘business and administrative studies’ (10.5%) (Table 4a).

For those NI domiciled students attaining a ‘postgraduate’ qualification at UK HEIs in 2017/18, the three most popular subject groups were ‘education’ (25.3%), ‘subjects allied to medicine’ (12.1%) and ‘social studies’ (12.0%) (Table 4a).



In 2017/18, 47.5% of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Broad STEM² related subject. A higher proportion of males than females gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject; 52.1% compared with 44.3%. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 50.7% were in Broad STEM related subjects, compared with 47.3% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 39.0% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 4b and 4d).

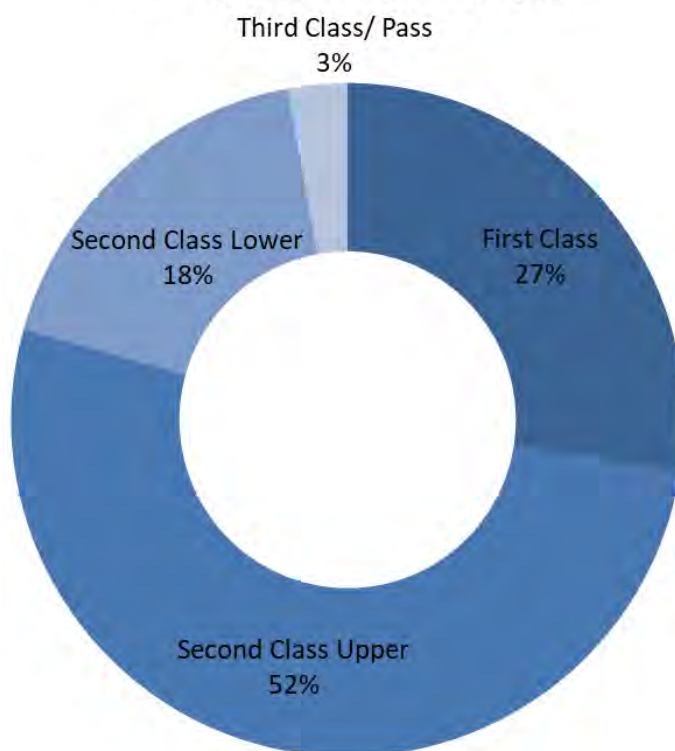
In 2017/18, 23.9% of qualifications gained by NI domiciled students at UK HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. A much higher proportion of males than females gained their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject; 36.3% compared with 15.3%. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 27.8% were in Narrow STEM related subjects, compared with 18.0% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 15.8% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 4b and 4d)

² Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – see notes to readers for full description.

1.5 Classification of first degree³ (Tables 5 to 5b, Figure 5)

In 2017/18, 79.3% (8,810) of NI domiciled 'first degree' graduates (excluding those 600 attaining an unclassified 'first degree') achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree. Females (81.4%) were more likely than males (76.5%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 5a and 5b).

Figure 5: NI domiciled students gaining first degree qualifications at UK HEIs by classification - 2017/18



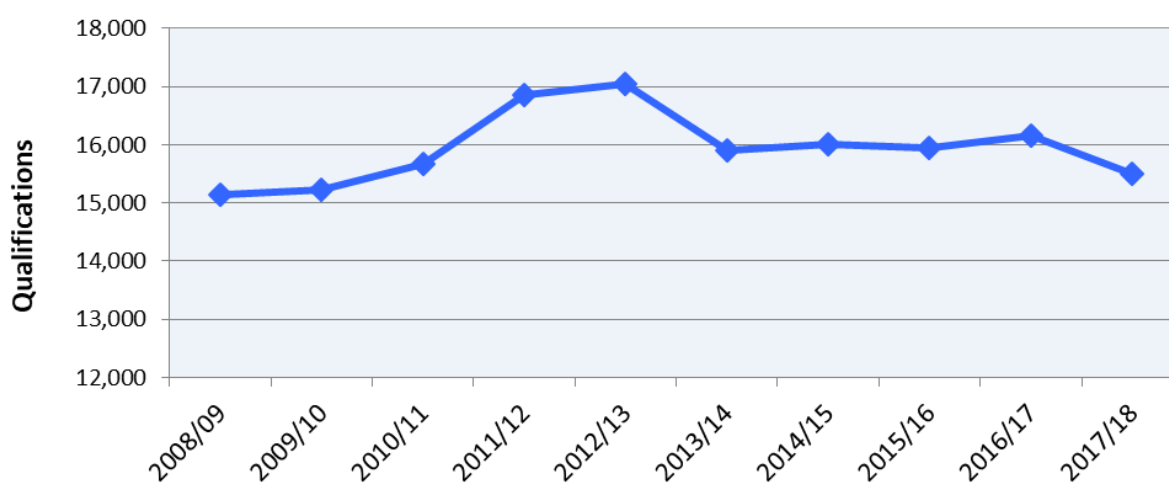
³ See [notes and definitions](#) point 16

Section 2: Students gaining Higher Education qualifications at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions (Tables 6 to 11b)

2.1 Change over the last 10 years – 2008/09 to 2017/18 (Tables 6 to 6f, Figure 6)

The number of qualifications gained has increased by a net 2.3% over the past 10 years, from 15,150 in 2008/09 to 15,500 in 2017/18; although this has been subject to fluctuation. Following a period of relative stability between 2008/09 (15,150) and 2009/10 (15,215), the number of qualifications gained increased in successive years to a peak of 17,055 in 2012/13, before decreasing again towards its current level (Tables 6a, 6b and 6c, Figure 6).

Figure 6 : Qualifications gained at NI HEIs - 2008/09 to 2017/18



Qualifications gained by students from NI now make up a smaller proportion of the total number of qualifications gained at NI HEIs than they did 10 years ago. In 2008/09, qualifications gained by students from NI accounted for 84.0% (12,725) of the total number of qualifications gained at NI HEIs; by 2017/18, this proportion has decreased to 80.7% (12,505). Over this period, NI HEIs have seen a 23.6% increase in qualifications gained by students from outside NI, from 2,425 in 2008/09 to 2,995 in 2017/18. This is broadly reflective of the enrolment⁴ breakdown at NI HEIs, with a higher proportion from outside NI in 2017/18 than in 2008/09 (Tables 6a and 6b).

In terms of level of qualification, 'first degree' qualifications gained have increased by 6.5% from 8,625 to 9,185 over the 10 year period. 'Postgraduate' qualifications gained have also increased by 18.6%, from 3,960 to 4,695. In contrast, qualifications gained by students on 'other undergraduate' courses (such as foundation degrees, diplomas, HNDs and HNCs) have decreased by 37.0%, from 2,570 in 2008/09 to 1,615 in 2017/18 (Tables 6d and 6e).

The number of full-time qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs has increased by 16.0%, from 9,875 to 11,460, over the last 10 years, whereas part-time qualifications gained have decreased by 23.4%, from 5,275 to 4,040, over the same period (Table 6b).

⁴ See [2017/18 Higher Education Enrolments](#) bulletin Table 8a.

2.2 Breakdown of qualifications gained – 2017/18 (Tables 6a and 7f, Figure 7)

All Higher Education Qualifications

In 2017/18, 15,500 qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; a decrease of 4.0% from the 2016/17 figure of 16,145 (Tables 6a and 6c).

Mode of study – Of the 15,500 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 73.9% were through full-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining qualifications decreased by 4.4%, from 11,990 to 11,460, while part-time numbers decreased by 2.7%, from 4,155 to 4,040, over the same period (Table 6a and 6c).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 15,500 students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs, 58.9% were female. This is broadly reflective of the sex breakdown in enrolments⁵ at NI HEIs. Of the 6,365 male students gaining a qualification, 77.5% had studied full-time, compared with 71.4% of the 9,135 female students qualifying (Table 7e and 7f and Figure 7).

In 2017/18, the majority of males (61.7%) gained a ‘first degree’, while 9.6% gained an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification and 28.8% obtained a ‘postgraduate’ qualification. The equivalent breakdown for females was 57.6%, 11.0% and 31.4% respectively (Table 7d).

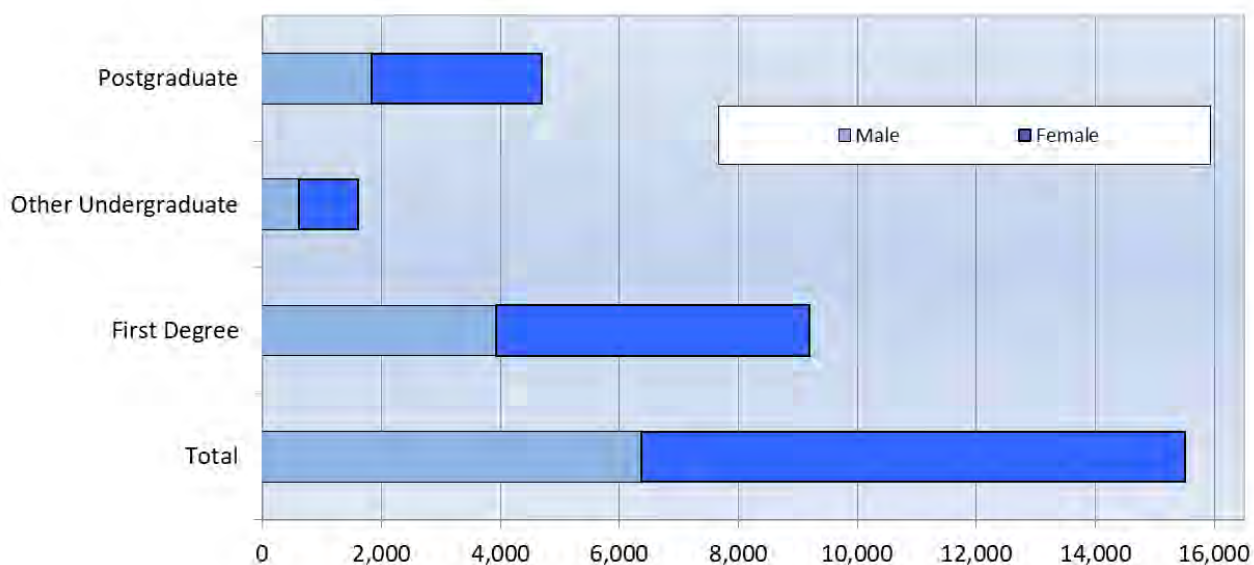
Domicile – In 2017/18, of the 15,500 students gaining a qualification at NI HEIs, 80.7% were from NI, 8.0% from non-EU countries, 6.1% from GB, 4.4% from RoI and 0.8% from other EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 12,505 students from NI gaining qualifications at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 74.3% were full-time; this compares with 93.8% of the 1,240 students from non-EU countries, 54.7% of the 950 students from GB, 56.3% of the 690 students from RoI and 86.1% of the 120 students from other EU countries (Table 7b).

Level of Qualification - Of the 15,500 qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 9,185 (59.3%) obtained a ‘first degree’ qualification, 1,615 (10.4%) an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification and 4,695 (30.3%) obtained a ‘postgraduate’ qualification (Table 6d).

⁵ See [2017/18 Higher Education Enrolments](#) bulletin

Figure 7 : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by level of qualification and sex - 2017/18



‘First Degree’ Qualifications

In 2017/18, 9,185 ‘first degree’ qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; a decrease of 6.0% from the 2016/17 figure of 9,770 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Mode of study – Of the 9,185 ‘first degree’ qualifications gained in 2017/18, 91.3% were through full-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining ‘first degree’ qualifications decreased by 6.0%, from 8,920 to 8,385, while part-time numbers decreased by 5.7% from 850 to 800 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 9,185 students gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs, 57.3% were female. Of the 3,925 male students gaining a ‘first degree’ qualification, 91.2% had studied full-time compared with 91.4% of the 5,260 female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).

Domicile – In 2017/18, of the 9,185 students gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs, 88.6% were from NI, 4.3% from non-EU countries, 3.9% from GB, 2.7% from RoI and 0.6% from other EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 8,135 students from NI gaining ‘first degrees’ at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 90.9% were full-time. This compares with 98.5% of the 395 students from non-EU countries, 93.0% of the 355 students from GB, 88.6% of the 245 students from RoI and almost all 50 students from other EU countries (Table 7b).

‘Other Undergraduate’ Qualifications

In 2017/18, 1,615 ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs, 5.6% lower than the 2016/17 figure of 1,715 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Mode of study – Of the 1,615 ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications gained in 2017/18, 62.2% were through part-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications decreased by 5.4%, from 645 to 610, whereas part-time numbers decreased by 5.7% from 1,065 to 1,005 over the same period (Tables 6d and 6f).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 1,615 students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 62.4% were female. Of the 610 male students gaining an ‘other undergraduate’ qualification, 50.3% had studied full-time, compared with 30.3% of the 1,010 female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).

Domicile – In 2017/18, of the 1,615 students gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 74.6% were from NI, 11.3% from non-EU countries, 8.2% from GB, 5.7% from RoI and 0.2% from other EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 1,205 students from NI gaining ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 69.3% were part-time. This compares with 65.2% of the 130 students from GB and 89.1% of the 90 students from RoI. All students from Non-EU countries studied full-time. (Table 7b).

‘Postgraduate’ Qualifications

In 2017/18, 4,695 ‘postgraduate’ qualifications were gained by students at NI HEIs; an increase of 0.7% from the 2016/17 figure of 4,665 (Tables 6d and 6f).

Mode of study – Of the 4,695 ‘postgraduate’ qualifications gained in 2017/18, 52.4% were through full-time study (Table 7b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, the number of full-time students gaining a ‘postgraduate’ qualification increased by 1.5% from 2,425 to 2,460, while part-time numbers decreased by 0.2% from 2,240 to 2,235 over the same period (Tables 6d and 6f).

Sex – In 2017/18, of the 4,695 students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 61.0% were female. Of the 1,830 male students gaining a ‘postgraduate’ degree, 57.2% had studied full-time, compared with 49.3% of the 2,865 female students qualifying (Tables 7e and 7f).

Domicile – In 2017/18, of the 4,695 students gaining ‘postgraduate’ qualifications at NI HEIs, 67.3% were from NI, 14.0% from non-EU countries, 9.8% from GB, 7.5% from RoI and 1.4% from other EU countries (Table 7c).

Of the 3,160 students from NI gaining 'postgraduate' qualifications at NI HEIs, 51.9% were part-time. This compares with 10.8% of the 660 students from non-EU countries, 69.3% of the 460 students from GB, 54.4% of the 350 students from RoI and 23.5% of the 70 students from other EU countries (Table 7b).

2.3 Subject of study (Tables 8 to 8d, Figure 8)

The most popular subject groups for students gaining qualifications at NI HEIs in 2017/18 were 'subjects allied to medicine' (17.5%), 'business and administrative studies' (15.9%) and 'social studies' (10.3%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

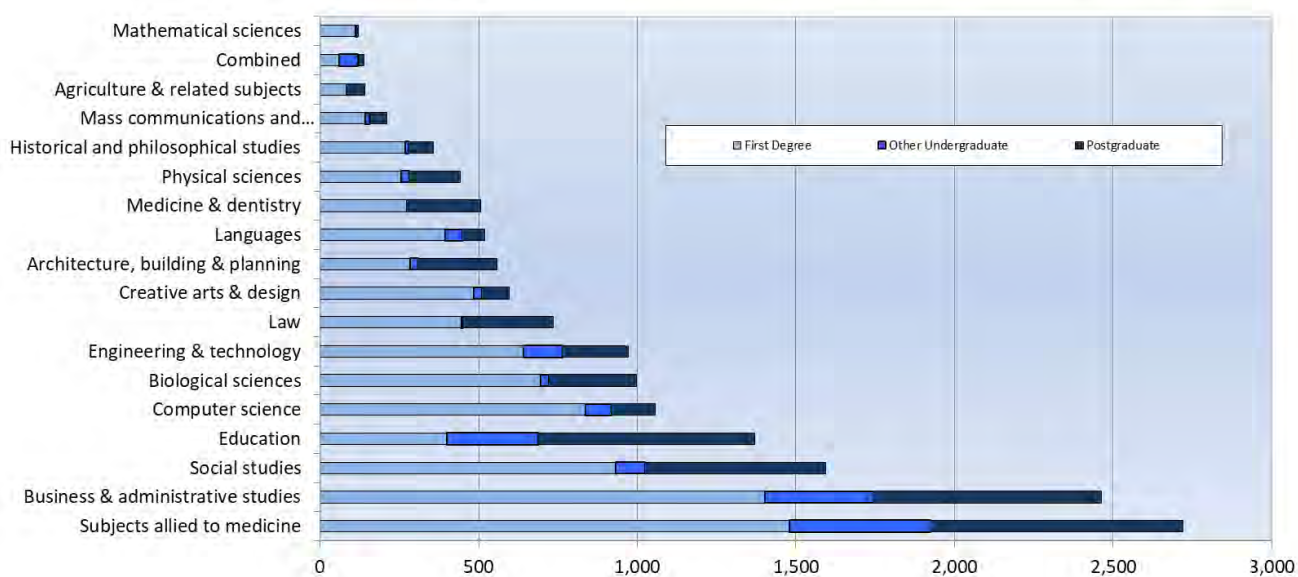
In 2017/18, females accounted for 83.7% of qualifications gained in 'subjects allied to medicine', 73.6% of those gained in 'education' and 72.2% of those gained in 'languages'. In contrast, males accounted for 81.4% of qualifications gained in 'engineering and technology', 76.3% of 'computer science' qualifications and 68.0% of 'architecture, building and planning' qualifications (Table 8c).

The most popular subject groups for students attaining a 'first degree' qualification at NI HEIs in 2017/18 were 'subjects allied to medicine' (16.1%), 'business and administrative studies' (15.3%) and 'social studies' (10.1%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

For students attaining an 'other undergraduate' qualification at NI HEI in 2017/18, the three most popular subject groups were 'subjects allied to medicine' (27.6%), 'business and administrative studies' (21.1%) and 'education' (17.8%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

For those students attaining a 'postgraduate' qualification at NI HEIs in 2017/18, the three most popular subject groups were 'subjects allied to medicine' (16.9%), business and administrative studies' (15.3%) and 'education' (14.6%) (Table 8a and Figure 8).

Figure 8 : Students gaining HE qualifications at NI HEIs by subject and level of qualification - 2017/18

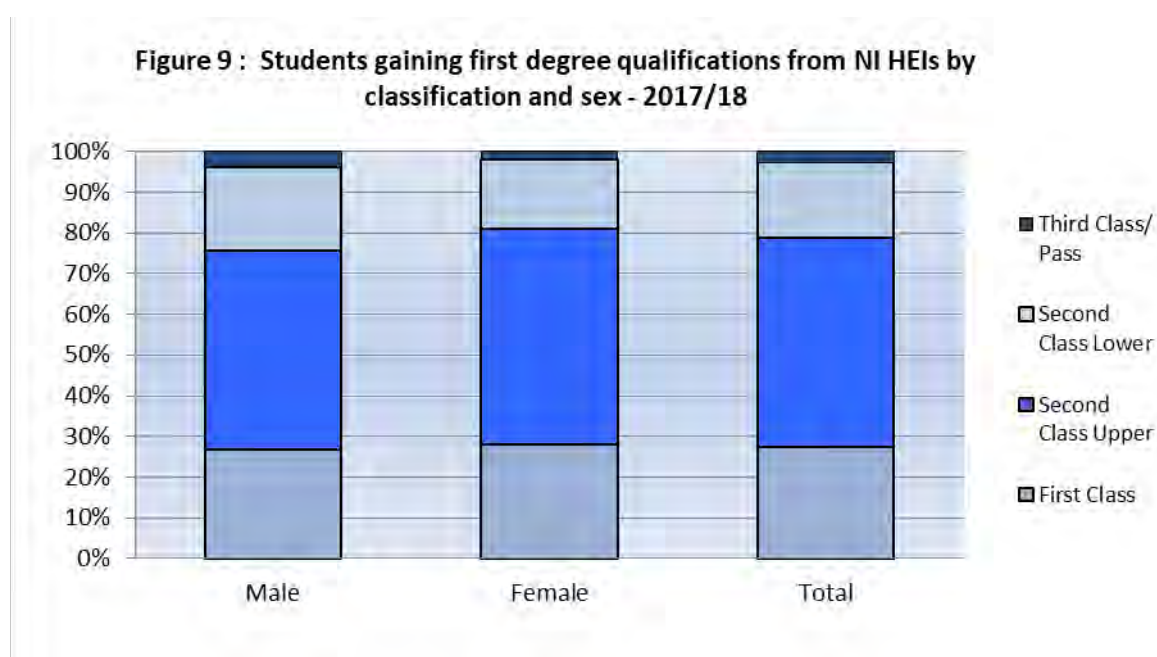


In 2017/18, 48.5% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Broad STEM⁶ related subject. A higher proportion of males (52.4%) than females (45.8%) gained their qualification in a Broad STEM related subject. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 50.7% were in Broad STEM related subjects, compared with 45.1% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 45.3% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 8b and 8d).

In 2017/18, 23.2% of qualifications gained by students at NI HEIs were in a Narrow STEM related subject. Male students (35.5%) were considerably more likely than female students (14.5%) to gain their qualification in a Narrow STEM related subject. Of ‘first degree’ qualifications gained, 27.7% were in Narrow STEM related subjects, compared with 16.0% for ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications and 16.8% for ‘postgraduate’ qualifications (Tables 8b and 8d).

2.4 Classification of first degree⁷ (Tables 9 to 9b, Figure 9)

In 2017/18, 78.7% (7,000) of ‘first degree’ graduates from NI HEIs (excluding those 290 attaining an unclassified ‘first degree’) achieved either a first class or upper second class honours degree. Females (81.0%) were more likely than males (75.6%) to achieve a first class or upper second class honours degree (Table 9a and 9b and Figure 9).



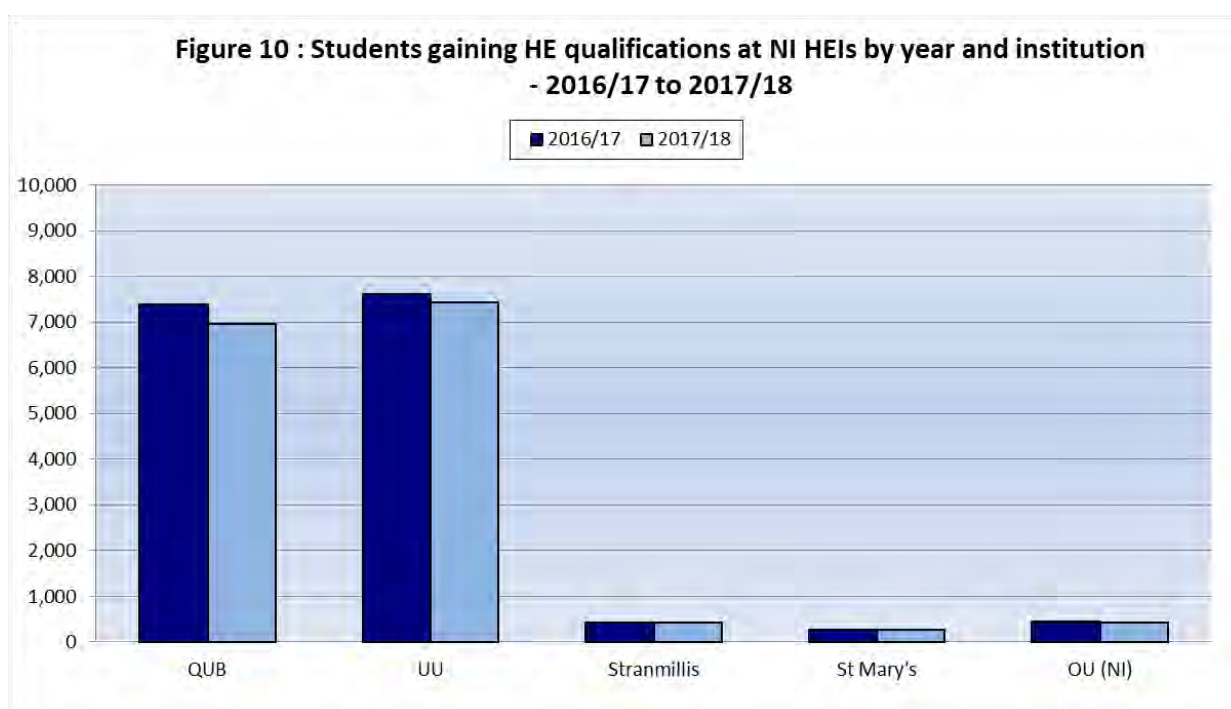
⁶ Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – see notes to readers for full description.

⁷ See [notes and definitions](#) point 16.

2.5 Institutional breakdown (Tables 10 to 10c, Table 11, Figure 10)

Of all qualifications gained at NI HEIs in 2017/18, 47.9% were from Ulster University (UU), 44.9% from Queen's University Belfast (QUB), 2.7% from the Open University, 2.7% from Stranmillis University College and 1.8% from St Mary's University College (Table 10 and 10a).

The NI HEI with the greatest proportion of qualifications gained by students from outside NI was QUB (24.0%), followed by UU (17.6%). In contrast, very few non-NI students gained qualifications from the other three NI HEIs (Table 11 a).



Ulster University:

The number of students gaining qualifications from UU decreased by 2.5%, from 7,615 in 2016/17 to 7,425 in 2017/18 (Table 10b).

The number of students gaining qualifications from UU through full-time study decreased by 4.8%, from 5,590 in 2016/17 to 5,325 in 2017/18, while those gaining qualifications through part-time study increased by 3.9%, from 2,025 to 2,100, over the same period (Table 10b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, 'first degree' and 'other undergraduate' qualifications gained from UU decreased by 3.8% and 3.2% respectively, while 'postgraduate' qualifications increased by 0.9% (Table 10c).

Queen's University Belfast:

The number of qualifications gained by students from QUB decreased by 5.8%, from 7,385 in 2016/17 to 6,955 in 2017/18 (Table 10b).

Within this, the number of students gaining qualifications through full-time study decreased by 5.1%, from 5,850 in 2016/17 to 5,550 in 2017/18, while those gaining qualifications through part-time study decreased by 8.4%, from 1,530 to 1,405, over the same period (Table 10b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, 'first degree' and 'other undergraduate' 'postgraduate' qualifications gained from QUB decreased by 8.1% and 19.3% respectively, whereas 'postgraduate' qualifications gained increased by 1.6% (Table 10c).

Open University (NI):

All OU enrolments are part-time. The number of students gaining qualifications on this basis decreased by 4.5%, from 445 in 2016/17 to 425 in 2017/18 (Table 10b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, 'other undergraduate' qualifications gained locally from the OU increased by 22.0%, while 'first degree' and 'Postgraduate' qualifications gained decreased by 12.1% and 12.5% respectively (Table 10c).

Stranmillis University College:

The number of students gaining qualifications from Stranmillis University College decreased by 2.1%, from 430 in 2016/17 to 420 in 2017/18 (Table 10b).

Within this, the number of students gaining qualifications through full-time study increased by 13.9%, from 300 in 2016/17 to 345 in 2017/18, while those gaining qualifications through part-time study decreased by 40.2%, from 125 to 75, over the same period (Table 10b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, 'other undergraduate' qualifications gained at Stranmillis increased by 48.7%, whereas the number of 'first degree' and 'postgraduate' qualifications gained decreased by 5.6% and 46.3% respectively (Table 10c).

St Mary's University College:

The number of students gaining qualifications from St Mary's University College in 2017/18 (275) was similar to that in 2016/17 (275) (Table 10b).

2.6 UK comparison (Tables 12 to 12b, Figure 11)

The number of students gaining qualifications at UK HEIs increased by 2.6%, from 757,300 in 2016/17 to 777,005 in 2017/18 (Table 12a).

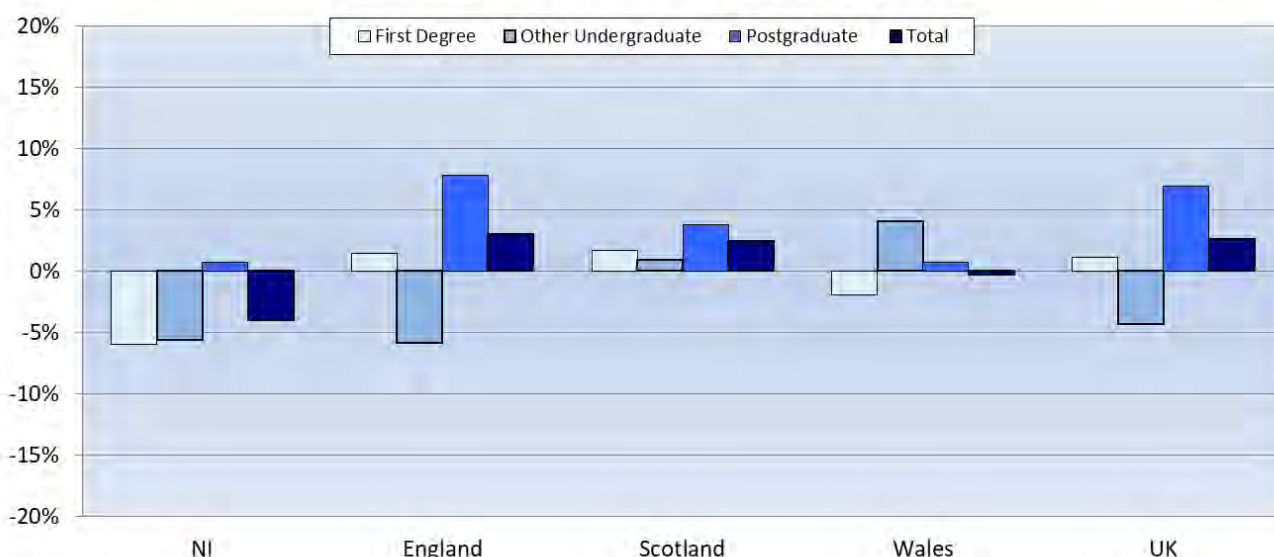
Qualifications gained at English HEIs increased by 3.0%, from 625,645 to 644,275, qualifications gained at Scottish HEIs increased by 2.4% (74,765 to 76,595), whereas those at NI HEIs decreased by 4.0% (16,145 to 15,500), and Welsh HEIs experienced a decrease of 0.3% (40,740 to 40,635) (Table 12a).

Figure 11 below illustrates the percentage change in qualifications gained for each country and for each level of qualification between 2016/17 and 2017/18. Both Scotland and England experienced an increase in ‘first degree’ qualifications gained between 2016/17 and 2017/18, whereas Northern Ireland and Wales both experienced a decrease (Scotland 1.7%, England 1.4%, Wales -2.0%, and NI -6.0%) (Table 12b).

Both Wales and Scotland experienced an increase in ‘other undergraduate’ qualifications gained between 2016/17 and 2017/18, whereas Northern Ireland and England both experienced a decrease (Wales 4.1%, Scotland 0.9%, NI -5.6%, and England -5.8%) (Table 12b).

Between 2016/17 and 2017/18, all UK countries experienced increases in ‘postgraduate’ qualifications gained (England 7.8%, Scotland 3.8%, Wales 0.8% and NI 0.7%) (Table 12b).

Figure 11 : Percentage change in qualifications gained at UK HEIs by level of qualification and location of institution - 2016/17 to 2017/18



The number of qualifications gained through full-time-time study increased by 5.0% (511,060 to 536,655) in England and by 3.5 % in Scotland (63,080 to 65,290) between

2016/17 and 2017/18, whereas in NI they decreased by 4.4% (11,990 to 11,460) and in Wales they decreased by 0.2% (33,415 to 33,335) (Table 12a).

Qualifications gained through part-time study decreased in all UK countries (NI 2.7%, England 6.1%, Scotland 3.2% and Wales 0.3%) between 2016/17 and 2017/18 (Table 12a).

NOTES

1. The United Kingdom Statistics Authority (the Authority) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice](#) for Statistics.

National Statistics status means that Official Statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All Official Statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are well explained and readily accessible; are produced according to sound methods, and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed. It is the Department for the Economy's (DfE's) responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

2. The statistics presented in this bulletin are based on data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). HESA is the official agency for the collection of information on publicly funded Higher Education (HE) institutions in the UK. It was set up in 1993 following the White Paper 'Higher Education: a new framework', which called for more coherence in HE statistics. HE institutions include all publicly-funded universities. The HESA data presented in this bulletin relate to students at HE institutions in the UK and, therefore, do not include HE enrolments at FE colleges in NI or GB, or at institutions in the Republic of Ireland.
3. HESA releases separate publications providing information on HE Student Enrolments and Qualifications obtained at HEIs for the whole of the UK. A notable difference between the HESA publications and those released by the Department for the Economy (DfE) is that from 2014/15, HESA uses revised data returns for the time series figures, whereas DfE does not. Consequently, historical figures for the number of enrolments and qualifications at UK HEIs published by DfE may differ from those in HESA's publications. Further information on this can be found in the '[Notes](#)' section of HESA's Student Statistics Bulletin 2017/18.

4. **Change to HESA Methodology** - From 2013/14, HESA has changed the allocation of Open University (OU) students to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Previously, all OU enrolments and qualifications were counted as being within England, where the OU has its administrative centre. HESA has decided from its 2013/14 release onwards that enrolments and qualifications registered at one of the OU's national centres in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland will contribute to the totals of those countries where statistics are shown by country of provider. Please note that all non-UK domicile OU students and those who study at postgraduate research level are registered to the OU administrative centre in England.

A full public consultation of NI users of Higher Education Statistics was undertaken by DfE (formerly DEL) in 2015 on this change to the method for allocating OU students, which showed full support. This new allocation method for OU was adopted for all NI HE publications going forward from 2014/15.

5. **Further statistics** on the Northern Ireland HE sector, including enrolments, graduate destinations and various HE fact sheets can be downloaded from the Department's website: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics>
6. **Guidance on the production of HE statistics** - Information on methods for collecting and analysing HE data, the quality of HE statistics, and links to the quality guidance used in managing the production of higher education statistics can be accessed on our statistics guidance page - <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-education-statistics>
7. In 2008/09, an institution in NI mis-coded 535 'other undergraduate' qualifiers as not having gained HE qualifications, when in fact they had gained HE qualifications. The error has been corrected for the data used in this bulletin; however, care must be taken when comparing 2008/09 statistics with figures published by HESA. This error was not identified until after the HESA reporting deadline and, therefore, has not been corrected for HESA publications.
8. Figures for 2017/18 reported in this bulletin are counts of student enrolments associated with the award of HE qualifications during the period 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018 inclusive.
9. **Uses made of HE statistics** - This bulletin is disseminated direct to approximately 100 users. In addition, it is published on the Department's website and can be accessed through a link on the UK National Statistics [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) publication hub, using a filter of 'higher education' as the policy area and 'Department for the Economy' as the department. Users include policy colleagues in DfE, academics, researchers, members of the public, the NI Assembly, other government departments and other interested parties and individuals.

The bulletin and further analysis of the data provide an evidence base that is used in a number of DfE policies, strategies and reviews. Some of the most recent examples are: -

- DfE's Higher Education Strategy
- DfE's Widening Participation Strategy

Further details on these strategies are available from the DfE website:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/higher-education-strategies-northern-ireland>

In addition, HE statistics are used within other NI departments and their agencies. Some of the most recent examples are: -

- DoF – as a key indicator in the Education Domain of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NI MDM).
- DE – teacher demand model
- Invest NI – to quantify the supply of graduates for potential inward investment to NI

Around 200 HE statistical enquiries per year are received by the Department from various sources. These include requests for further breakdowns of enrolments, qualifications and destinations data.

10. Departmental Targets – Statistics from this bulletin are used in the measurement of the following key commitment as set in the Department’s Northern Ireland Higher Education Strategy – ‘[Graduating to Success](#)’:

“Increase the proportion of Higher Education graduates qualifying in STEM subjects to 22%”.

11. Rounding Strategy – DfE conforms to the HESA rounding strategy. Due to the provisions of the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Human Rights Act (1998), HESA (and therefore DfE) implements a strategy in published and released tabulations designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest 5, and suppressing percentages and averages based on small populations.

The HESA rounding strategy changed for the 2013/14 release onwards. Percentages are now suppressed if based on a population of fewer than 22.5 individuals; this is a change from the previous threshold of 52 individuals, used in earlier publications. This change will enable more percentage calculations to be published. A full list of the rounding strategy includes:

- 0, 1 and 2 are rounded to 0;
- all other numbers are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5;
- percentages based on fewer than 22.5 individuals are suppressed;
- averages based on fewer individuals are also suppressed;
- percentages and averages are based on unrounded figures;
- percentages are rounded to one decimal place;
- full-time equivalent (FTE) data are not rounded; and
- financial data are not rounded.

Total figures are also subject to this rounding methodology; so the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown.

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DEFINITIONS

13. Higher Education

HE students for the purpose of HESA's data collection are those students on courses for which the level of instruction is above that of level 3 of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (for example, courses at the level of Certificate of HE and above).

14. Level of qualification gained

- (i) Postgraduate programmes of study are those leading to higher degrees, diplomas and certificates (including Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) and professional qualifications) and usually require that entrants are already qualified to degree level (that is, already qualified at level 6 of the QCA National Qualifications Framework).
- (ii) Higher degrees include doctorates, masters degrees and higher bachelors degrees.
- (iii) Other postgraduate includes postgraduate diplomas, certificates and professional qualifications and PGCE.
- (iv) First degree includes: first degrees with or without eligibility to register to practice with a health or social care or veterinary statutory regulatory body; first degrees with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)/registration with a General Teaching Council (GTC); enhanced first degrees; first degrees obtained concurrently with a diploma; and intercalated first degrees.
- (v) Other undergraduate includes qualification aims equivalent to and below first degree level, such as: Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE); foundation degrees; diplomas in HE with eligibility to register to practice with a Health or Social Care or veterinary statutory regulatory body; Higher National Diploma (HND); Higher National Certificate (HNC); Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE); Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE); foundation courses at HE

level; NVQ/SVQ levels 4 and 5; post-degree diplomas and certificates at undergraduate level; professional qualifications at undergraduate level; other undergraduate diplomas and certificates, including post registration health and social care courses; other formal HE qualifications of less than degree standard; institutional undergraduate credit; and no formal undergraduate qualifications.

15. Mode of study - qualifications gained

- (i) Full-time students are those whose study was recorded as full-time (as described above), and also includes awards from dormant and writing-up status where the student's mode of study was previously full-time.
- (ii) Part-time students are those whose study was recorded as part-time (as described above), and also includes awards from dormant and writing-up status where the student's mode of study was previously part-time, and awards given to those on sabbatical.

16. Classification of first degrees

The classification of a first degree indicates the qualification class that the student obtained. Certain qualifications obtained at first degree level are not subject to classification of the award, notably medical and general degrees. These, together with ordinary degrees and aegrotat qualifications, have been included within the 'unclassified' category. Third class honours, fourth class honours and the pass category have been aggregated as 'third class/pass'. Lower second and undivided second class honours have been aggregated as 'second class, lower division'.

From 2008/09, the percentage calculations included in this bulletin are expressed excluding unclassified first degrees. Therefore, caution must be exercised when comparing percentages from previous years' bulletins.

17. Domicile

Domicile refers to a student's permanent place of residence prior to enrolment on a course. Student enrolments recorded with domicile UK region unknown, Channel Islands and Isle of Man are included in the GB category for the purposes of this bulletin.

18. Academic year

The academic year runs from 1st August to 31st July.

19. STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths Qualifications

Broad STEM includes the following subject areas: Medicine and Dentistry; Subjects allied to Medicine; Biological Sciences; Veterinary Sciences; Agriculture and related subjects; Physical Sciences; Mathematical Sciences; Computer Science; Engineering and Technology; and Architecture, Building & Planning.

Narrow STEM is a subset of Broad STEM and includes the following subject areas: Biological Sciences; Physical Sciences; Mathematical Sciences; Computer Science; Engineering and Technology.

20. Multiple Deprivation Measure (MDM)

The analysis presented in section 1.4 utilises five groups (quintiles) of Super Output Areas (SOAs) across NI. These five groups are determined based on level of deprivation using the NI Multiple Deprivation Measure (NI MDM) 2017.

Following consultation, NIMDM (2017) replaced NIMDM 2010 as the official measure of deprivation in NI.

SOAs ranked 1 to 178 are the most deprived quintiles relative to all other SOAs. Those ranked 713 to 890 are the most affluent relative to all other SOAs. SOA is determined using the postcode provided on the enrolment record.

NI MDM 2017 is a weighted combination of the seven domains of deprivation. The Income and Employment Deprivation domains account for nearly 50% of the multiple deprivation measure. The Health Deprivation and Disability Domain, and Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain account for a further 30%, and the remainder is made up of the Access to Services, Living Environment and Crime and Disorder Domains.

For further details on deprivation measurement in NI please follow this link:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017>

Media enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office in Netherleigh, Massey Avenue, Belfast, BT4 2JP, Tel: (028) 9052 9604, Email: pressoffice@economy-ni.gov.uk

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