Official statistics

Equality characteristics of students and staff at higher education providers: 2016/17 to 2022/23

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Summary:

This publication contains an analysis of equality characteristics of students and staff at higher education providers in Wales from the 2016/17 academic year to the 2022/23 academic year.

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Key Points

Students

- The proportion of students with a disability has increased every year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. The proportion has increased from 13% in 2016/17 to 17% in 2022/23.
- The proportion of students with an ethnic minority background has increased in every year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. The proportion has increased from 10% in 2016/17 to 14% in 2022/23.
- The majority of students are female. This size of this majority has increased from 55% in 2016/17 to 57% in 2022/23.

Staff

- The proportion of staff with a disability increased each year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. For academic staff the proportion increased from 4% to 7% and for non-academic staff the proportion increased from 6% to 10%.
- The proportion of staff with an ethnic minority background has increased each year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. For academic staff the proportion increased from 11% to 17% and for non-academic staff the proportion increased from 4% to 6%.
- The majority of academic staff are male, although the size of this majority has fallen slightly from 53% in 2016/17 to 52% in 2022/23. The majority of non-academic staff in this period were female. The size of this majority is 62% in 2022/23 which is the same as in 2016/17.

Introduction

1.   This document is a written analysis of the age, gender, disability and ethnicity data for students and staff at higher education providers in Wales. The underlying data is available on the Medr website.

Students

Age

Sector

2.   The largest age group each year was the 18 to 20 years old group. However, the proportion of all students in this age group has fallen every year since 2017/18 and stood at just less than a third (32%) in 2022/23.

3.   The number of students in both the 25 to 29 years old and 30 years old and over groups have increased every year since 2016/17. In 2016/17 these two age groups combined accounted for around one third (34%) of students; a smaller proportion than the 18 to 20 years old group (39%). In 2022/23, the growth in the older age groups meant that they accounted for over two fifths (45%) and the 30 years and over age group accounted for 30% of students on its own.

Providers

4.   The situation at each Welsh HE provider mostly reflected the sector pattern, although there were notable differences at some providers.

5.   At the Open University in Wales the age of students is generally higher. In 2022/23, those aged 30 and over account for nearly two thirds (64%) of students, with a further fifth (19%) of students being aged 25 to 29 years old. This has broadly been the case in most years. The 18 to 20 year old group accounted for 5% or fewer students each year.

6.   At the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the growth in students amongst the 30 years and older group is considerably higher than for other age groups. In 2022/23 this age group accounted for half (51%) of students compared to a third (34%) in 2016/17.

7.   At Wrexham University, there was a marked growth in those aged 30 and over, and a gradual decline in those aged 18 to 20 between 2016/17 and 2021/22. Between 2021/22 and 2022/23 student numbers increased in all age groups except 17 years and under. The 30 years and older age group is the largest age group at the University and accounts for 50% of students in 2022/23.

8.   At the University of South Wales there has been a steady decline in the number of students in the 18 to 20 years old group. In contrast, the 25 to 29 and 30 years and older age groups have seen increases. In 2021/22 the 30 years and over group

became the largest age group at the University ahead of the 18 to 20 years group and this continued in 2022/23.

Disability

9. The sector level data are presented at the lowest level of aggregation as collected for student disability. However for HE providers, the data are aggregated into the following groups: Disabled and No known disability. This is to reduce the risk of disclosing information about individuals due to small numbers.

Sector

10. Both the number and the proportion of students disclosing a disability rose each year. The number rose from 16,830 to 26,240, a 56% increase. The proportion rose from 13% to 17% between 2016/17 and 2022/23.

11. In every year, the most common disability category reported has been 'learning differences such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D'. 5% of all students reported having a disability from this category in 2022/23.

12. The second most common disability category reported is having a mental health condition, challenge or disorder such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety. This category was also recorded for 5% of students in 2022/23 and is the category that has the greatest increase in absolute numbers between 2016/17 and 2022/23, increasing from 3,180 to 7,260.

13. There has also been a large increase across the period in numbers of students declaring multiple conditions. This category has increased by 155% from 2016/17 to 2022/23.

Providers

14. There were many changes to how data was collected in 2022/23 with the implementation of the new Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record as part of the Data Futures programme. More information about Data Futures is included in the methodology section of this report. As part of Data Futures there were changes to improve the disability data collected, allowing providers to provide additional information for students with multiple disabilities. However, for 2022/23 there was noticeable impact on the disability data for two providers. These providers were:

- Swansea University, where the proportion of students with a disability dropped from 15% in 2021/22 to 8% in 2022/23. This is an under-reporting of the true figure of students with disabilities in 2022/23. The data collected on disability was adversely affected in the implementation of Data Futures and the quality of this data is expected to improve again in 2023/24.

- Wrexham University, where the proportion of students with a disability increased from 13% in 2021/22 to 22% in 2022/23. This was confirmed to be accurate with the changes made to the process for data capture during enrolment appearing to have led to improved engagement with students reporting disabilities.

15. Most providers had a greater proportion of students with a declared disability in 2022/23 compared to previous years. The exceptions were Swansea University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David, however as noted above, for Swansea University the 2022/23 data is not a true reflection of the number of students with a disability

16. For University of Wales Trinity Saint David the proportion decreased every year from 2016/17 to 2021/22, before increasing again in 2022/23 but still being below the 2016/17 figure. Despite the falling proportion, the number of students with a declared disability has increased every year.

17. In 2022/23 the proportion of students with a known disability at each provider ranged from 7% at Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges to 28% at the Open University in Wales.

Ethnicity

18. This section covers the ethnic minority backgrounds of UK-domiciled students. Ethnic minority backgrounds referred to in this section relate to all ethnic backgrounds other than white ethnic backgrounds. The analysis is restricted to UK-domiciled students as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record only collects ethnicity data for UK-domiciled students.

19. In 2022/23 the categories used for ethnic background data changed and included a more detailed breakdown of the white ethnic background group, including the categories 'English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British', 'Gypsy or Irish Travellers', 'Irish', 'Roma' and 'Any other White background'. In this analysis these groups are aggregated together as the ethnicity data was backfilled with data from 2021/22 to address quality concerns about the level of missing ethnicity data in the 2022/23 collection. Due to this, the more detailed ethnic background information is not available for all students. However, this data is monitored internally and we will review if and how we can display this in future years. More information about the quality issue can be found on the HESA website under Issue ID 22056081.

20. Apart from the above, the sector level data are presented at the lowest level of aggregation as collected for student ethnicity. However, for HE providers, the data are aggregated into the following groups: Asian, Black, Mixed, Other and White. This is to reduce the risk of disclosing information about individuals due to small numbers.

21. The quality of this data can be affected by the level of students who are returned with an unknown ethnicity. Across the period the level of unknowns at the sector level has varied between 1% and 2%. Although a relatively small proportion of the total student population, if these unknowns are disproportionately students with ethnic minority backgrounds it would lead to a noticeable under-reporting in the number of students with these ethnic backgrounds.

Sector

22. The number and proportion of students with an ethnic minority background has increased in every year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. The proportion has increased from 10% in 2016/17 to 14% in 2022/23.

23. The largest three ethnic minority groups were the same in every year from 2016/17. Mixed and multiple ethnic backgrounds was the largest group, followed by Black African or Black African British and then Indian or Indian British.

24. Between 2016/17 and 2022/23 the groups with the largest increases were:

   - Pakistani or Pakistani British – increased by 114% to 1,970 students in 2022/23.
   - Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi British – increased by 98% to 1,625 students in 2022/23.
   - Any other ethnic background – increased by 106% to 1,740 students in 2022/23.

Providers

25. The proportion of students with an ethnic minority background at each provider in 2022/23 ranged from 4% at Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges to 22% at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

26. With the exception of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, the proportion of students with an ethnic minority background has increased at every provider between 2016/17 and 2022/23.

27. The largest increases in the proportion of students with ethnic minority backgrounds were at:

   - University of Wales Trinity Saint David – 11% in 2016/17 and 22% in 2022/23.
   - Wrexham University – 6% in 2016/17 and 13% in 2022/23.

28. In the majority of the Higher Education providers the largest ethnic minority group is Asian in most years. The exceptions to this are Aberystwyth University and the Open University in Wales where the Mixed or Multiple ethnic backgrounds group is largest, and at Wrexham University where the Black group is largest.

Sex

29. In 2022/23, the option to return that students had refused to provide sex data was introduced, although the HESA guidance stated that it was not expected to be a default option presented to students. This means that in 2022/23 there are a small number (315) of students where sex information was not provided which was not the case in earlier years.

Sector

30. In each year the majority of students were female, and this majority has increased slightly between 2016/17 and 2022/23. In 2022/23 57% of enrolments were female students.

31. Although fewer than 1% of students reported their sex was Other the number of students in this group increased considerably from 85 in 2016/17 to 720 in 2022/23.

Providers

32. The situation at each Welsh HE provider mostly reflected the sector pattern, where the majority of students are female. Exceptions to this were at Swansea University and Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges where the majority of students were male throughout the period. Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges has a particularly high proportion of male students at 80% or more each year. Gower College Swansea also had a majority of male students in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

33. In 2022/23 the majorities at each provider ranged from a male majority of 80% at Grŵp Colegau NPTC Group of Colleges to a female majority of 67% at the Open University in Wales.

34. Aberystwyth University had the highest proportion of students with a sex of 'Other' in 2022/23 at 3% of students.

Staff

35. The numbers of staff given are the full-person equivalent based on the HESA staff contract population, which includes those contracts that were active on 1 December in the relevant academic year.

36. Data relating to atypical staff are not included. Atypical staff are those members of staff whose contracts involve working arrangements that are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and/or involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider.

37. Unlike the HESA student record, the HESA staff record only collects data from the eight higher education institutions in Wales. Therefore staff at the further education institutions included in the student section are not included here. The Open University in Wales is also not included as the data collected about Open University staff covers the entire United Kingdom rather than Wales specifically.

Age

Sector – academic staff

38. The largest age group amongst academic staff since 2017/18 has been the 36 to 45 years group, accounting for 30% of academic staff in 2022/23.

39. There were small decreases in the number of staff in the 26 to 35 years and 46 to 55 years groups between 2016/17 and 2022/23. All other age groups increased by at least 10% over the same period. The largest percentage increase was in the 66 years and over group with a 16% increase.

Sector – non-academic staff

40. The 36 to 45 years group was the largest in every year from 2016/17, accounting for 28% of non-academic staff in 2022/23.

41. Across the period, the number of non-academic staff in the 25 years and under and 26 to 35 years groups decreased by 27% and 5% respectively. All other age groups had increases with the largest percentage increase in the 66 years and over group which increased by 62%.

Providers – academic staff

42. In 2022/23, there were three providers where the largest age group was not the 36 to 45 year group as seen in the sector. These providers were Aberystwyth University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David and Wrexham University where the largest age group was the 46 to 55 years group. In earlier years, the 46 to 55 years group was largest for more providers, including the University of South Wales in every year until 2021/22 and Bangor University from 2016/17 to 2019/20.

Providers – non-academic staff

43. The largest age group amongst non-academic staff varied across providers and years. In most years the largest age group at Aberystwyth University, Bangor University and University of Wales Trinity Saint David differed from the sector. The 46 to 55 years group was the largest age group in all years since 2017/18 at Aberystwyth University and Bangor University, whilst at Wrexham University the 46 to 55 years group was the largest in 2016/17 but this has changed over the years until the 26 to 35 years group was the largest group in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Disability

44. The sector level data are presented at the lowest level of aggregation for staff disability. However, for HE providers, the data are aggregated into the following groups: Disabled and No known disability. This is to reduce the risk of disclosing information about individuals due to small numbers.

Sector – academic staff

45. Both the number and the proportion of academic staff declaring a disability rose each year. From 2016/17 to 2022/23 the number of academic staff with a declared disability rose from 430 to 780. The proportion of academic staff with a disability rose from 4% to 7%.

46. The two types of disability most likely to be declared by academic staff were a long-term illness or health condition and a learning difference such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D. Together these account for just under half of all disabilities declared by academic staff each year. These are also the disabilities that have seen the largest growth in absolute numbers from 2016/17.

47. As well as the two disability categories above, the number of staff reporting the following disabilities has more than doubled since 2016/17:

   - Mental health conditions, challenges or disorders (increased by 143% from 45 to 115).
   - Social/communication conditions (increased by 567% from 5 to 20).

Sector – non-academic staff

48. The number and proportion of non-academic staff declaring a disability rose each year from 2016/17. The number rose from 680 in 2016/17 to 1,070 in 2022/23. The proportion of non-academic staff with a disability increased from 6% to 10%.

49. The two types of disability most likely to be declared by academic staff were a long-term illness or health condition and having a learning difference such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D. Together these account for between 44% and 46% of non-academic staff with a reported disability in each year.

50. The disability with the greatest increase in absolute numbers amongst non-academic staff was having a mental health condition, challenge or disorder. This category increased by 183% between 2016/17 and 2022/23. The only other

disability with a greater percentage increase across this period was social/communication conditions which increased by 350% from 5 to 25.

Providers – academic staff

51. The number and proportion of academic staff declaring a disability between 2016/17 and 2022/23 increased at every provider.

52. In 2022/23, the proportion of academic staff declaring a disability at Welsh HE providers varied from 5% at the University of South Wales to 10% at Bangor University.

Providers – non-academic staff

53. The number and proportion of academic staff declaring a disability between 2016/17 and 2022/23 increased at all providers except Wrexham University.

54. In 2022/23, the proportion of non-academic staff declaring a disability at Welsh HE providers varied from 5% at Wrexham University to 12% at Bangor University.

Ethnicity

55. Ethnic minority backgrounds referred to in this section relate to all ethnic backgrounds except white ethnic backgrounds. Data are collected for the white ethnic minority groups of Gypsy or Traveller and are in the single figures.

56. The sector level data are presented at the lowest level of aggregation for staff ethnicity. However, for HE providers, the data are aggregated into the following groups: Asian, Black, Mixed, Other and White. This is to reduce the risk of disclosing information about individuals due to small numbers.

57. There is a relatively high proportion of staff whose ethnicity is returned as either not known, prefer not to say or not available in the sector. This affects how representative the data is of the entire staff population and should be considered when interpreting the data. In 2022/23, 10% of academic staff across the sector were in this category, having steadily increased from 5% in 2016/17. The impact will be particularly noticeable at the University of South Wales where 30% of academic staff were returned with an unknown ethnicity. For non-academic staff the percentage of staff with these unknown ethnicity values has varied between 2% and 5%, and was at 4% in 2022/23.

Sector – academic staff

58. The number and proportion of academic staff with an ethnic minority background has increased between 2016/17 and 2022/23. Of academic staff whose ethnic background was known; 11% had an ethnic minority background in 2016/17 and this increased to 17% in 2022/23.

59. For every ethnic minority background group, the number of academic staff has also increased. The proportion of academic staff from each group is also higher in 2022/23 than in 2016/17.

60. The Chinese or Chinese British group has been the largest ethnic minority background group amongst academic staff since 2017/18 and accounted for 3% of academic staff in 2022/23.

61. The largest percentage increases from 2016/17 to 2022/23 were in the Black African or Black African British group (176% increase from 65 to 185) and the Pakistani or Pakistani British group (170% increase from 40 to 115).

Sector – non-academic staff

62. The number and proportion of non-academic staff with an ethnic minority background increased between 2016/17 and 2022/23. Of non-academic staff whose ethnic background was known; 4% had an ethnic minority background in 2016/17 and this increased to 6% in 2022/23.

63. For every ethnic minority background group, the number of non-academic staff has increased. The proportion of non-academic staff from each group is also higher in 2022/23 than in 2016/17 with the exception of the Any other ethnic background group.

64. The Mixed or Multiple ethnic backgrounds group has been the largest ethnic minority background group amongst non-academic staff since 2017/18 and accounted for 1% of non-academic staff in 2022/23.

65. The largest percentage increases from 2016/17 to 2022/23 were in the Black Caribbean or Black Caribbean British group (doubling from 15 to 30) and the Black African or Black African British group (84% increase from 40 to 70).

Providers – academic staff

66. The proportion of academic staff from an ethnic minority background in 2022/23 ranged from 8% at Aberystwyth University to 24% at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

67. From 2016/17 to 2022/23 the proportion of academic staff from an ethnic minority background increased at five of the eight providers. In the three providers with a decrease in the proportion there was a difference of a percentage point or less.

68. For all providers the most common ethnic minority background amongst academic staff was Asian in nearly every year from 2016/17 to 2022/23.

Providers – non-academic staff

69. The proportion of non-academic staff from an ethnic minority background in 2022/23 ranged from 4% at the University of South Wales, Wrexham University and Bangor University to 8% at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

70. From 2016/17 to 2022/23 the proportion of non-academic staff from an ethnic minority background increased at all providers.

71. For most providers the most common ethnic minority background amongst non-academic staff was Asian in most years from 2016/17 to 2022/23.

Sex

72. In 2022/23, the option to return that staff have refused to provide sex data was introduced, although the HESA guidance stated that it was not expected to be a default option presented to staff. This means that in 2022/23 there are a small number (5) of staff where sex information was not provided which was not the case in earlier years.

Sector – academic staff

73. The majority of academic staff were male in every year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. The size of this majority has decreased slightly from 53% to 52%.

Sector - non-academic staff

74. The majority of non-academic staff were female in every year from 2016/17 to 2022/23. The size of this majority was 62% in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2022/23, although it increased slightly in the intervening years.

Providers – academic staff

75. The majority of academic staff were male at Cardiff University, Swansea University and University of South Wales in every year from 2016/17. The University of Wales Trinity Saint David have also had a male majority of academic staff since 2021/22.

76. The majority of academic staff were female at Bangor University, Cardiff Metropolitan University and Wrexham University in every year from 2016/17. There was also a female majority of academic staff at Aberystwyth University in 2022/23 after having a male majority in all previous years since 2016/17.

77. In 2022/23 the majorities at providers ranged from a 61% female majority at Wrexham University to a 56% male majority at Swansea University.

Providers - non-academic staff

78. From 2016/17 to 2022/23 the majority of non-academic staff has been female at every provider in every year.

79. In 2022/23 the sizes of these majorities ranged from 56% at Aberystwyth University to 65% at the University of South Wales.

Methodology information

Data Sources

The data for this release come from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student and Staff records collected by Jisc.

In 2022/23 the student data was collected with the revised data collection delivered by the Data Futures programme. Jisc conducted a comprehensive quality assessment on the dataset and this is detailed in their 2022/23 student data quality report. A summary of the Student data collection process for 2022/23 covering timescales, validation and business rules and checking processes is included on the HESA website. Information about the earlier years of student data can also be found on the HESA website.

A summary of the Staff data collection process and associated quality rules can be found on the HESA Staff data collection page.

Coverage - Students

The statistics include students who are part of HESA's higher education standard registration population. More information on this population can be found in the student definitions on the HESA website.

All uses of 'students' in this bulletin refer to 'student enrolments'. This is a count of each enrolment for a course. In rare instances where a student was enrolled in two different courses in the same year, that student would be counted twice.

Coverage - Staff

These statistics include staff who are in the HESA staff contract population, which includes those individuals who have one or more contracts (which are not atypical) that are active on 1 December in the relevant HESA reporting period. Staff on a atypical contract are those members of staff whose contracts involve working arrangements that are not permanent, involve complex employment relationships and/or involve work away from the supervision of the normal work provider.

All figures on staff are the full-person equivalents (FPE). Individuals can hold more than one contract with a provider and each contract may involve more than one activity. In analyses staff counts have been divided amongst the activities in proportion to the declared full-time equivalent for each activity. This results in counts of FPE.

More information on this population can be found in the staff definitions on the HESA website.

Rounding Strategy

The data presented in this report follow the principles of the HESA Standard Rounding Methodology. The strategy is intended to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual.

This means that:

- Student and staff counts are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5.
- Percentages are calculated based on the unrounded counts and exclude unknowns. Percentages are not published if they are fractions of a small group of people (fewer than 22.5).
- Totals are also subject to this rounding methodology. As a result, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown precisely.

Quality information

Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in Medr's Statement of Compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

These official statistics demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and value in the following ways.

Trustworthiness

These statistics have been published according to Medr's Statement of Compliance and pre-release access to official statistics policy.

Quality and Value

This section provides a summary of information on this statistical release against five dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Timeliness and Punctuality, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability and Coherence. These also cover the aspects of the Value pillar in the Code of Practice for Statistics.

1. Relevance

   The data in this report gives an overview of some equalities characteristics of students and staff in the higher education sector in Wales. This can be used to identify how effective particular policies related to equalities characteristics in higher education are, or to identify whether those with particular characteristics are under-represented in higher education.

2. Accuracy

   The HESA student and staff data are both censuses rather than surveys, as such there is no inaccuracy due to estimation. However, the accuracy of the data can be affected by errors in the data submitted. This is mitigated with a comprehensive

set of quality checks, where potential issues are queried with providers so a suitable explanation for the data can be reached, or the data is corrected if necessary.

The other factor affecting accuracy is where personal characteristics are returned as unknown. During the data collection process high levels of unknown values are queried with HE providers to minimise this where possible. The number of students and staff returned with unknown values are included in the spreadsheet and PowerBI dashboard so the scale of these are clear to users.

3. Timeliness and punctuality

The data in this release refers to student and staff data up to the 2022/23 academic year. As the HESA student and staff data collections are retrospective collections there is a lag between the academic year and when the data can be made available. This lag has been extended for this publication due to two factors:

- Delays to the student data collection as a result of the implementation of the Data Futures programme. This resulted in data being available later than usual.

- The establishment of Medr. Prior to this release, these statistics were published by HEFCW. Unlike HEFCW, Medr is a producer of Official Statistics and setting up the appropriate processes for this, as well as the general establishment of Medr, contributed to an increased amount of time required to produce this analysis.

The latter of these factors will not affect future versions of this release, and the delays associated with the Data Futures programme will reduce as the new data collection process becomes established.

4. Accessibility and clarity

This statistical release was pre-announced on the Welsh Government's statistical release calendar.

This report is accompanied by a PowerBI dashboard and a spreadsheet which can both be accessed on the Medr website.

5. Comparability and coherence

As the HESA student and staff data collections are UK-wide data collections, these statistics can be compared to similar analysis of equalities data for Higher Education providers across the UK which is available on the HESA Open Data website.