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Measuring the impact of Realising Opportunities on HE access

Matthew Williams

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Institute for Employment Studies

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Front cover image source: Realising Opportunities

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Executive summary

Realising Opportunities (RO) is a higher education (HE) outreach programme aimed at the 'most able, least likely' students in Key Stage 5 (KS5) – students with good academic attainment, from backgrounds that are associated with lower than average access rates to HE – to raise their aspirations to apply to a university in general, and a research intensive university (RIU) in particular. Eligibility for free school meals, living in local areas with high material disadvantage and living in areas with low access rates to HE, are among the disadvantage indicators used to determine eligibility for the programme.

A dataset linking pupil data with HE records was obtained from the Department for Education to develop a counter-factual comparator group for RO students – those with similar academic records and meeting some of the disadvantage characteristics, from local areas in which RO operates but not participating in the programme – against whom the impact of RO on HE access can be measured.

The analysis was undertaken on students who entered Key Stage 5 from 2011 to 2015, corresponding with RO Cohorts 3 to 7. During this period, the HE access rate for RO students dipped in Cohort 5, while in the other four cohorts it was around 65–70%. RO students were on average more disadvantaged than students in the comparator group – more likely to be eligible for free school meals, or to live in areas with both high material disadvantage and low HE access rates.

For all cohorts except Cohort 5, the immediate HE access rates for RO students were higher than for the comparator group, and these differences were statistically significant at the 5% level (at least) using the Z-test for proportions. This pattern was repeated when looking at the access rate after two years.

The analysis also considered access to RIUs, and two measures were considered here – the proportion of students accessing RIUs as a proportion of all students, and as a proportion of those accessing HE in general. On the first measure, the RIU access rates of RO students were significantly higher than the comparator group in Cohorts 3, 6 and 7, while on the second measure the rate was higher for RO students in Cohorts 3 and 7.

The findings indicate that RO participation positively impacts on students' access rates to HE generally and RIUs in particular, therefore the programme is meeting its aim of increasing access for participating students. These results also support those from an alternative analysis of the impact of RO, based on a model of the factors influencing university access across all students and entering the details of RO students into the model parameters. This alternative analysis found a significantly higher access rate for RO students than for the population of all students.

However, there may be differences in attainment between RO students and comparators, even though they all meet the minimum attainment threshold for the programme, and the analysis does not control for differences in ‘predisposition’ to HE in general, or RIUs in particular, which other analyses have found to be an important factor. In relation to the former point, any higher average attainment levels among RO students are likely to be moderated by the higher average disadvantage levels. In relation to the latter point, around half of RO participants say they do not know what a RIU is at the start of the programme, so the degree of ‘predisposition’ among RO students is likely to be limited. Further research can extend this analysis into more recent RO cohorts, and controlling for differences in attainment levels between RO students and their comparators.

1 Introduction and background

This report presents the results of a counter-factual impact evaluation analysis of the Realising Opportunities (RO) programme, covering students who participated in the programme between 2011 and 2016. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES) has worked with RO as its independent evaluation partner since 2016.

This chapter presents details of the programme, the approach to evaluation, and key results on HE access for the cohorts covered by the impact evaluation. Subsequent chapters provide a full explanation of the counter-factual impact evaluation approach, the results of the impact that RO has on students' HE access, and the conclusions of the analysis.

1.1 The Realising Opportunities programme

Realising Opportunities (RO) is a higher education outreach programme aimed at the 'most able, least likely' students in Key Stage 5 – those students with good academic attainment, but from backgrounds that are associated with lower than average access rates to higher education (HE) – to equip them with the skills and information to make informed decisions about their futures, to raise their aspirations to apply to a research intensive university (RIU), and to support their current work at school or college.

RO began in 2009 as a partnership of 12 universities, initially funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as a three-year pilot scheme, before becoming fully self-financed by the Partnership in 2012 and expanding its membership in Cohort 4[1].

1.1.1 Programme elements

The elements of the programme have evolved over time, influenced by the results of the annual evaluations and other factors. The programme as it operated for the students included in this analysis consisted of the following key elements, although this different in a number of aspects to the experience of the students currently undertaking the programme:

- A launch event at the host university to start RO and to meet university representatives.
- A National Student Conference where participants get the chance to interact with students from across the country taking part in RO, as well as all of the RO universities.

[1] Table A.1 in the Appendix presents the list of RO Partnership members across Cohorts 3 to 7.

- The opportunity to develop skills in analysis, critical thinking, evaluation and research, through taking either the Extended Project Qualification (if offered at their school/college) or the RO Academic Assignment.
- Skills4Uni – an online study skills module which aims to help students develop their planning and independent research skills.
- Support from Student Ambassadors, who are current students at the RO universities, online support from the RO online community and live online 'question & answer' events.
- A wide range of events and activities, such as residential summer schools, subject taster sessions, and open days at the RO universities.

However, it should be noted that the programme described above differs in a number of aspects from the experience of the students currently undertaking the programme.

The RO programme is a pass/fail programme, rather than one based purely on participation. To successfully pass the programme, students covered by this analysis needed to pass the academic element (either the Extended Project Qualification or the RO Academic Assignment), pass the Skills4Uni online module, as well as attending at least two events and activities which can include the National Student Conference and launch events. Successful completion of the programme leads to a number of benefits, including:

- additional consideration of participating students' UCAS applications;
- an alternative offer which is typically two A level grades (or equivalent) lower than the standard offer;
- skills development through the Academic element (incorporating the Extended Project Qualification or the RO Academic Assignment), Skills4Uni, and participation in the annual National Student Conference;
- insight into student life at RO universities, through events, activities and residential opportunities; and
- access to professionals who will offer careers advice and information.

1.1.2 How students are recruited to the programme

Students are recruited onto the RO programme at the start of Year 12/First year of college. Eligibility is determined by a basket of widening participation indicators, including eligibility for free school meals (FSM), POLAR[2] and IMD,[3] which are updated annually to

[2] Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) is an area-based classification developed by HEFCE/OfS that groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education.
[3] The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a measure used to assess the relative deprivation of small areas in England.

ensure the programme only accepts the 'most able, least likely' students. There are also criteria for academic attainment, based on strong grades including English and maths and a certain number of top grades, which have also evolved over time (including for the changes to GCSE grading).

Recruitment is selective and conducted through a network of national link schools, with teachers helping to identify the most suitable candidates.

Students apply via a robust application system that requires approval from parents/ carers/guardians and teachers. Partner universities then shortlist applicants for their respective 'host' groups using a weighting system, and places are allocated accordingly.

1.2 Evaluation

The RO programme has a robust evaluation framework to measure progress against its key objectives and has worked with external evaluation partners since it started – the National Foundation for Education Research for first three years, then the Institute for Effective Education and the Department of Education at University of York, and IES from 2016 onwards.

Evaluation activity consists of four student surveys at different times in students' journeys – at the start and end of the programme, one year after the end of KS5, and three-and-a-half years after the end of KS5 – as well as analysis of UCAS data on university applications, and data from the HESA student record on study in HE (via HEAT). The key question in the evaluation framework that is investigated in this paper is:

- are RO students more likely to have as their final destination (after HE application) university in general, and RIUs in particular, than an established comparator group, and can this be attributed to involvement in the RO programme?

1.3 Key results for RO students in Cohorts 3 to 7

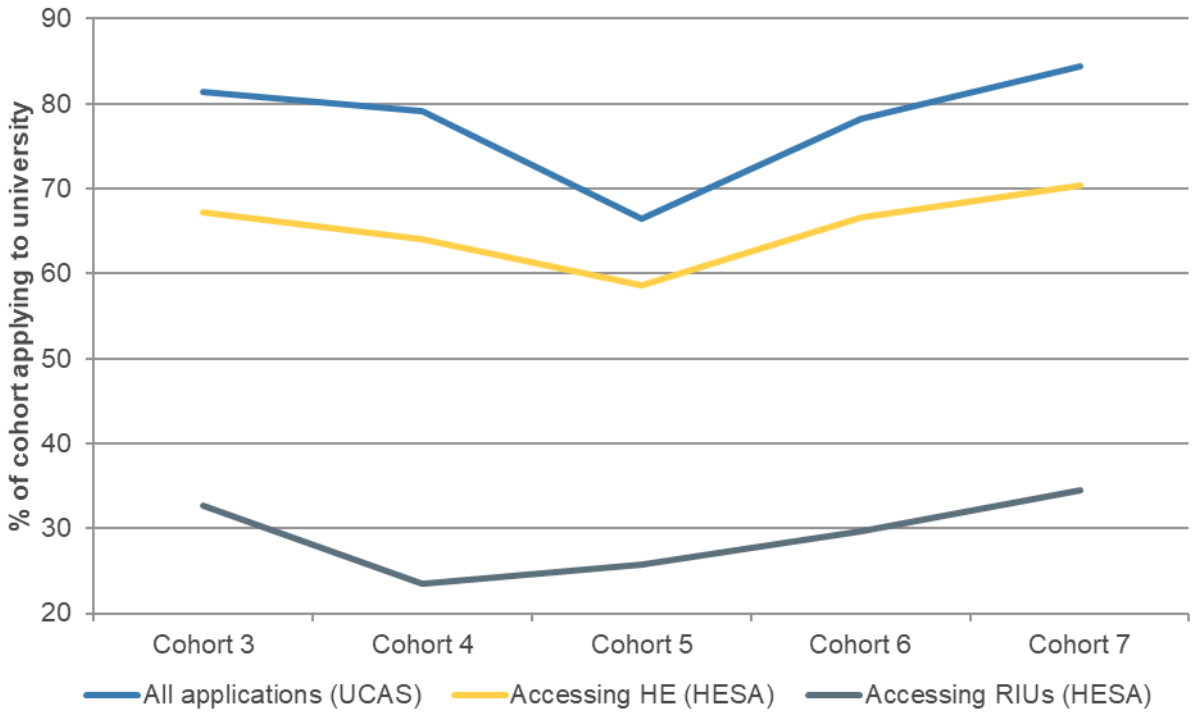
Before describing the comparator analysis, it is helpful to consider the overall results for HE application and access for RO students in the period under investigation.

The NPD data obtained covered the period for the first seven cohorts of RO. However, for Cohorts 1 and 2, the submission of student data to UCAS and HEAT was done on a limited basis; these were considered a trial run, to check both the process and the outputs. As a result, the student data obtained did not fully represent the entire cohorts. Therefore, this impact analysis begins with Cohort 3, from which point complete cohort data were submitted.

Figure 1.1 shows the trends in the application and access rates for Cohorts 3 to 7 which are covered in this impact analysis. Application rates were around 80% for all cohorts apart from Cohort 5, for which there was a considerable dip in applications. This fed through to lower access rates for Cohort 5, just under 60% compared with around 67% for the other cohorts. One possible explanation for this dip for Cohort 5 is that students were

more interested in taking a gap year than students in other cohorts, on the basis of responses to the student survey at the start of the programme; the gap in the access rate after two years was much lower, which supports the gap year/later entry element.

Figure 1.1: Immediate university applications and access for RO students, Cohorts 3 to 7



Source: UCAS/HEAT HESA Track

The proportion of students in HE and studying at RIUs was lowest in Cohort 4, at just under one in four, while in Cohorts 3 and 7 it was around one in three.

2 Developing a counter-factual impact evaluation approach

2.1 Approaches to evaluating widening participation and outreach interventions

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on evaluating the impact of the investment in widening participation and outreach interventions, and a move to develop and share robust evaluation methods across the sector. The drive for greater accountability in public spending has played a key role, alongside a genuine desire to understand what works, improve interventions and scale up effective practices.

To support the move to undertake evaluation of widening participation and outreach activity, especially at individual intervention or institution level, the Office for Students (OfS) has developed an evaluation standards framework that sets out three distinct types of impact evaluation, as follows:

- Type 1 is **Narrative**. This type provides a narrative or a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of activities in the context of a coherent strategy, and uses of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on access and participation activity effectiveness or from existing evaluation results. It is about knowing what the programme is doing and why.
- Type 2 is **Empirical enquiry**. This type collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes (though does not establish any direct causal effect), using quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change or a difference compared to what might otherwise have happened. It aims to present evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes.
- Type 3 is **Causality**. This type provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention, using quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on participants relative to an appropriate control or comparison group who did not take part in the intervention. It is about showing the effect of the intervention while controlling for alternative explanations for the outcomes observed.

Type 3 evaluations can be Randomised Control Trail designs (RCT) or Quasi-Experimental Designs (QED). Which method is used depends on data availability, how accurately eligibility for the intervention can be assessed, and whether or not applicants as well as participants can be identified. RCTs are true experimental designs which seek to eliminate factors that can influence the outcome, except for the intervention being studied by randomly assigning individuals to either a treatment group (who take part in the intervention) and a control group (who don't take part). OfS guidance suggests they are most appropriate when an underpinning theory needs testing, for light touch binary interventions (where activity can be isolated and groups readily assigned into treated

versus not treated), and when there are general rather than very specific targeting criteria for intervention eligibility. QED approaches are appropriate when true randomisation cannot be used and involve some aspect of assigning comparison groups, to mirror the characteristics/conditions of the intervention participants as closely as possible. When using QED, researchers have to be mindful of the potential for selection bias and contamination of comparison groups.

2.2 Previous evaluations of Realising Opportunities

The Institute for Employment Studies has been evaluating the RO programme since 2016. The evaluation approach includes surveys of students at four time points during and after the programme, analysis of UCAS data on university applications, and analysis of HESA student data on students in HE, their qualifications, and their destinations. With the analysis of UCAS and HEAT data, comparisons are made with overall application/ access rates, and rates by student characteristics. However, within these sources alone it has not been possible to compare the application/access rates of RO students with those of a closely matched comparator group. Results of the impact of RO on students' HE access and success have been published in 2016,[4] 2019,[5] and 2024.[6]

An article by Dr Paul Martin, Research Fellow Centre for Education Policy and Equalising Opportunities at UCL, presented the results from an analysis trying to measure the impact that RO has on students' HE access rates. Rather than make comparisons between RO students and closely matched comparators, the analysis used a modelled approach of HE access that had been developed with the whole linked NPD-HESA population. The characteristics of individual RO students were fed into the regression calculations from the model, to calculate their likelihood of accessing 'top third universities', and the results were then compared with the overall HE access rate. The analysis found that participation in RO was positively associated with an increased likelihood of progression to a top third university, although it was recognised that it is not possible to be sure that the effect is causal, given that not all potential confounding variables can be accounted for in the modelling.

2.3 Developing a counter-factual impact evaluation approach

To answer the question in the RO evaluation framework of whether the access rates of RO students to university in general, and RIUs in particular, are higher than those of a

[4] https://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/RO-Impact-Report.pdf
[5] https://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/RO_Improvingaccess-for-the-most-able-but-least-likely_IES_Jan2019.pdf
[6] https://www.realisingopportunities.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/RO-Impact-Report-2024.pdf

closely matched comparator group, the IES research team explored approaches to using linked NPD-HESA data to identify a comparator group.

An initial approach of identifying RO participants in the NPD data so that individual comparators could be identified through techniques such as propensity score matching was not possible due to the nature of the data permissions for the early cohorts of RO students – linking to DfE datasets was not explicitly mentioned in the privacy statements and so this approach was ruled out.

Therefore, an alternative approach was developed to identify 'potential comparator' students in the NPD on the basis of the eligibility criteria used in Cohorts 3 to 7, that is those who:

- met the 'most able' attainment criteria of GCSEs – eight passes at grade C or above including English and maths, with five passes at grade B or above;[7]
- met the 'least likely' disadvantage criteria of FSM, low POLAR or low IMD; and
- were at a school that did not participate in RO but was in the same local authority as a RO-participating school and had a similar level of KS5 attainment, and had a broadly similar number of potentially eligible students as the number of RO participants (i.e. not matching a large FE college with a RO school that had two or three participants).

Because comparators were identified using only a limited subset of the basket of indicators used for RO eligibility – FSM, POLAR and IMD – the RO population for the comparative analysis was adjusted to match this, i.e. excluding some RO students who met other disadvantage criteria (first generation HE students, in receipt of discretionary payments etc.) but who were not FSM, low POLAR or low IMD. Around 90% of RO participants were in scope for the comparative analysis (i.e. were eligible for FSM or were from areas with low POLAR or IMD).

Table 2.1 shows the breakdown of RO students and comparators by degree of disadvantage. RO students were more likely than the comparator group to be eligible for FSM or meet both area-based measures – around two thirds of RO students were in this group as opposed to meeting one area-based measure only, while in the comparator group there was a broadly even split. The differences between the RO population and comparators in their disadvantage profiles were highly statistically significant, and so may be a partial explanation for any differences in HE access rates. However, the implication of the lower disadvantage profile of the comparator group is that if their profile was the same as that of the RO population then their access rates would be lower, as HE access is negatively correlated with the degree of disadvantage.

[7] The cohorts in this analysis completed their GCSEs under the old A–G grading system before the introduction of the reformed 9–1 grading system, introduced from 2017; the attainment criteria were updated to reflect the new grading system for Cohort 9 onwards.

Table 2.1 Profile of RO population and comparator population by FSM, POLAR and IMD (%)

	C3		C4		C5		C6		C7	
	RO	Comp.	RO	Comp.	RO	Comp.	RO	Comp.	RO	Comp.
POLAR only	21	35	23	37	31	35	22	32	18	31
IMD only	11	16	15	20	9	22	11	22	15	21
POLAR and IMD	39	35	37	29	32	24	33	29	34	29
FSM only	6	4	4	3	6	5	7	4	6	6
FSM and POLAR	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	1	4	2
FSM and IMD	9	3	7	6	13	9	11	7	13	6
FSM, POLAR and IMD	13	6	12	4	9	5	13	5	11	4
One area-based measure only	32	51	38	57	40	57	33	54	32	53
FSM/both area-based measures	68	50	62	43	60	43	67	46	68	48
N=	427	1,795	421	1,595	658	1,665	735	1,800	800	1,235

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

3 Impact of RO on HE access

This chapter presents the results of the comparative analysis of the HE access rates of RO students and those pupils in the NPD who met the attainment and disadvantage criteria and were at similar but non-participating schools.

The analysis used three outcome measures for HE access:

- the proportion of all students who attended any university;
- the proportion of all students who attended a research intensive university (RIU); and
- the proportion of students who attended university who were studying at a RIU.

These outcomes were measured for students' immediate HE entry, and for entry within two years, which is the key performance indicator used in the RO framework.

The analysis was run on the whole RO and comparator population, and with breakdowns by disadvantage characteristics, using the FSM or two area-based indicators versus one area-based indicator only split as described in Chapter 2, and by each disadvantage characteristic separately.

This work contains statistical data from ONS which is Crown Copyright. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates.

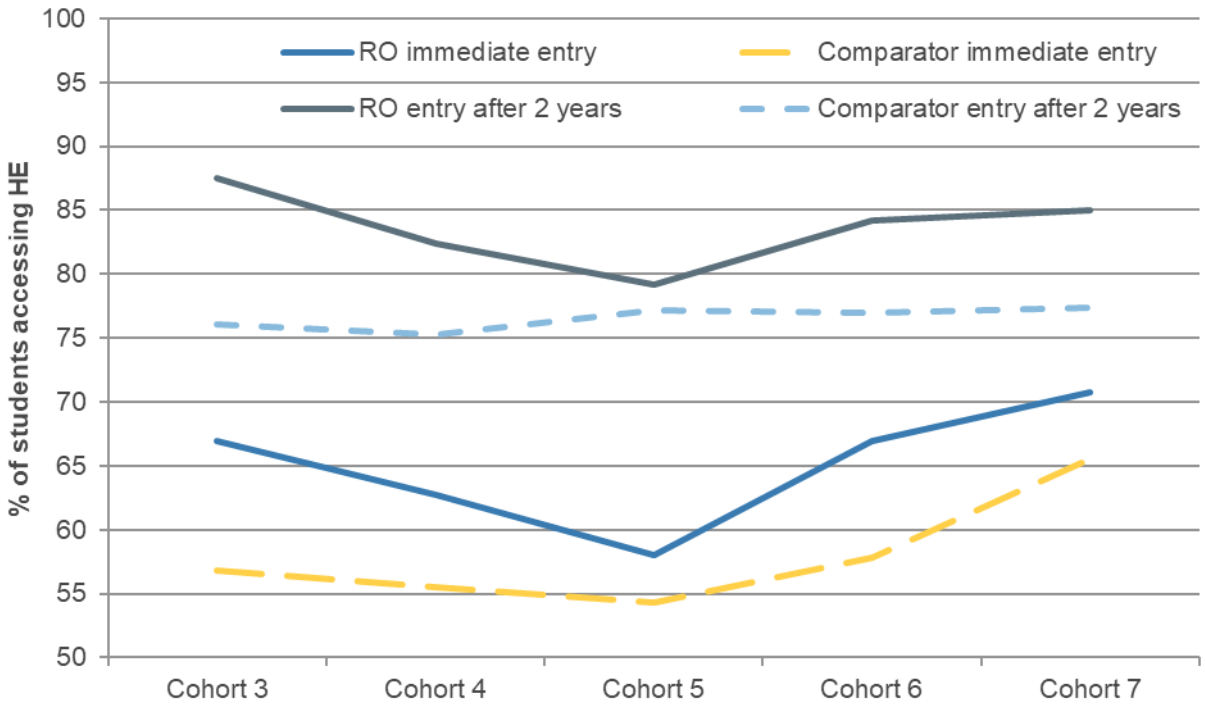
Analysis was carried out in the Secure Research Service, part of the Office for National Statistics.

3.1 Results for whole RO/comparator population

Figure 3.1 shows the trends over the five cohorts in the proportions of RO students and comparators who accessed HE immediately after completing Key Stage 5, and within their first two HE-ready years. The access rates (both immediate and after 2 years) for RO students in Cohort 3 were above the rates for the comparator group by around 10 percentage points. The gaps then shrunk over the next two cohorts, because the application and access rates for RO students declined somewhat (see Figure 1.1), with the gap lowest in Cohort 5, at four percentage points for the immediate access rate and only two percentage points for the access rate within two years. From Cohort 5, the gaps widened again in Cohorts 6 and 7, and this was particularly marked for access over two years; the rate for the two-year access rate for the comparator group stayed broadly

stable while the rate for RO students rose, whereas the immediate access rate for comparators rose at a similar rate to the RO rate and so the gap did not widen as much.

Figure 3.1: HE access rates of RO students and the comparator group

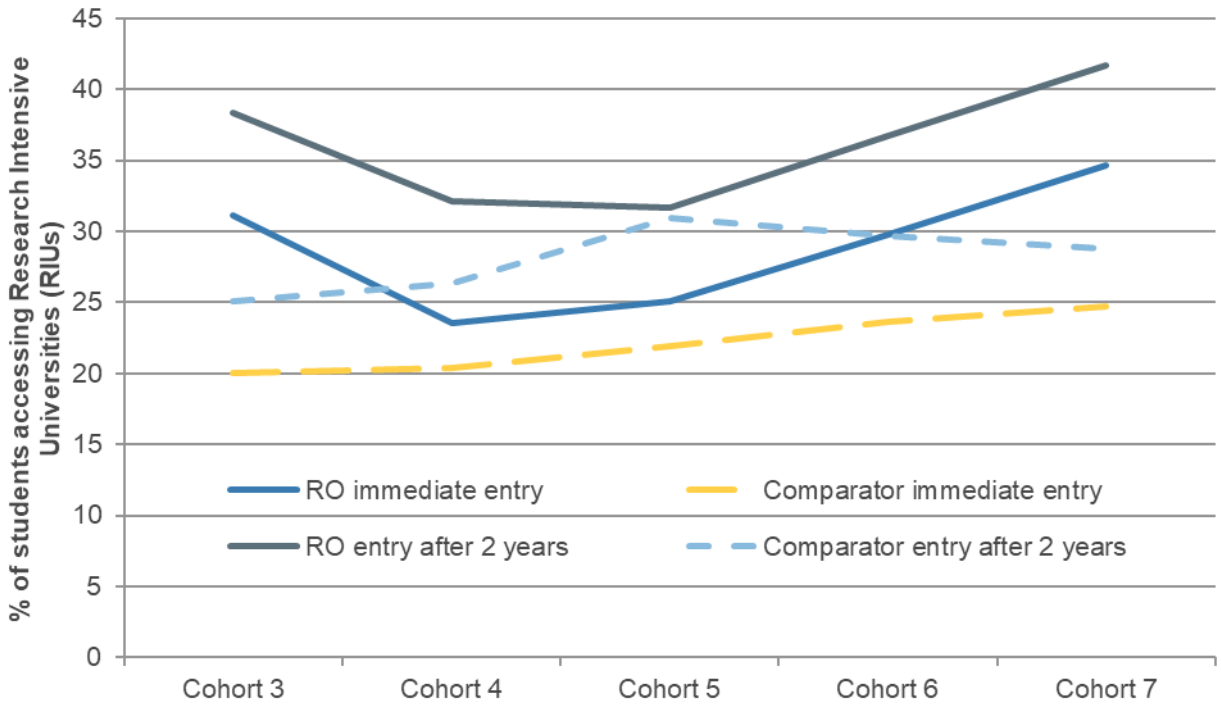


Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Figure 3.2 shows the trends in the proportions of RO students and comparators who attended RIUs either immediately or within two years, which show a similar pattern to the overall access rate, with large gaps in Cohort 3 shrinking over the next two cohorts, before rising again.

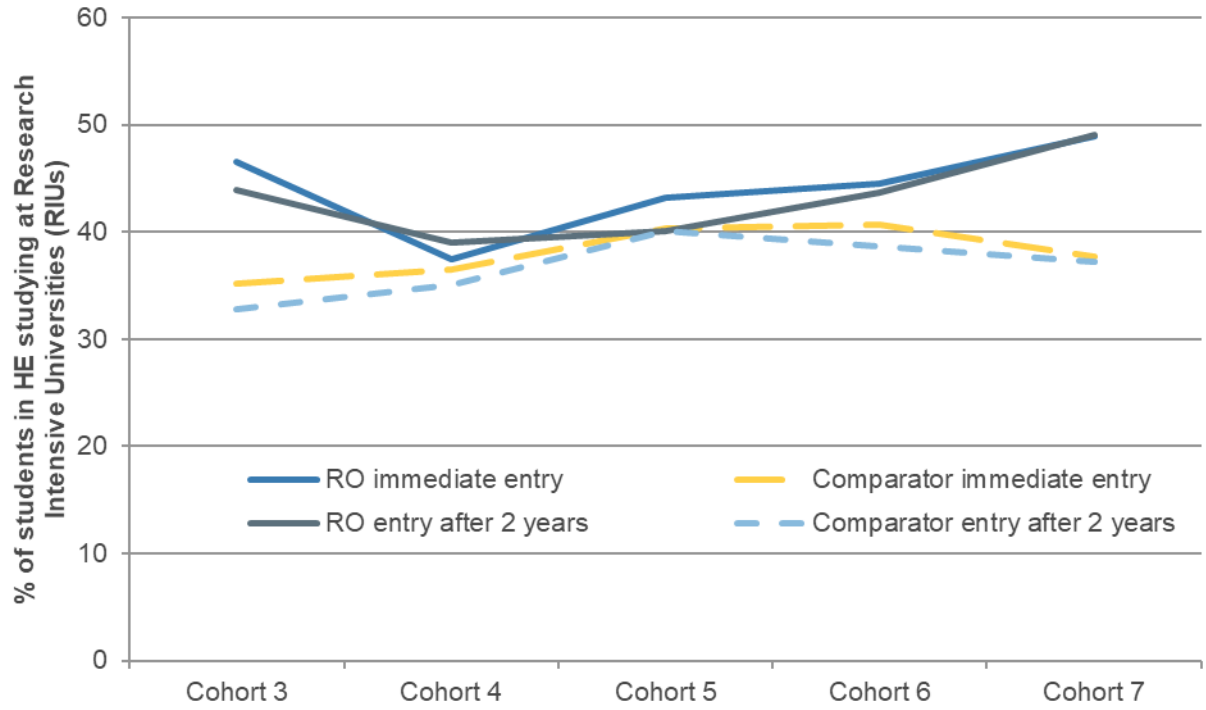
Figure 3.3 shows the trends in the proportions of RO students and comparators who were in HE and were studying at RIUs. In Cohort 3, nearly half of RO students who accessed HE immediately after KS5 were studying at RIUs, compared with around one third of comparator students. As with the other measures, the gap narrowed in Cohorts 4 and 5 before widening again across Cohort 6 and 7.

Figure 3.2: Access rates to RIUs of RO students and the comparator group



Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Figure 3.3: Proportion of RO and comparator students in HE studying at RIUs



Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

3.1.1 Significance testing

To get an understanding of whether the differences are statistically significant, that is unlikely to be down to chance alone, we have undertaken calculations of the Z scores for proportions for the difference between the access rates for RO students and for the comparator group. The Z score test for two proportions can show whether two populations or groups differ significantly on a single categorial characteristic. Figure 3.4 shows the formula.

Figure 3.4: Formula for calculation for a two sample Z test for proportions

$$Z = \frac{\hat{p}_1 - \hat{p}_2}{\sqrt{\hat{p}(1-\hat{p})\left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}}$$

Where:

- $\hat{p}1$ and $\hat{p}2$ are the access rates for RO students and the comparator group respectively;
- $\hat{p}$ is the overall proportion across the two groups combined; and
- *n1* and *n2* are the population sizes for RO students and the comparator group respectively.

The Z statistic can then be used to calculate a p value on the basis of the normal distribution, showing the likelihood of the populations not differing on the access rate. Results where the p value is less than 0.05 (5% level), indicating a likelihood that a difference of this size would be observed less than 1-in-20 times due to natural variation, are flagged as statistically significant, in line with common convention; higher levels of significance are highlighted at the 1% level ($p<0.01$) and the 0.1% level ($p<0.001$).

Looking first at the differences in the immediate access rates, the rate for RO students was significantly higher than the rate for the comparator group for all Cohorts except Cohort 5 – with the difference in Cohort 7 being significant at the 5% level, the difference in Cohort 4 being significant at the 1% level, and the differences in Cohorts 3 and 6 being significant at the 0.1% level. The differences in the access rates after two years follow a similar pattern, with significant differences in all cohorts except Cohort 5.

Turning to differences in immediate access rates to RIU, the rate for RO students was significantly higher than the rate for the comparator group for Cohorts 3, 6 and 7. However, whereas the overall access rate for RO students in Cohort 4 was significantly above the rate for comparators, this was not the case for the RIU access rate. For Cohort

4, the proportion of RO students in HE who were at RIUs was very similar to the rate for comparators (see Figure 3.3), meaning that there was a large convergence in the access rate to RIUs between the two groups in Cohort 4 (see Figure 3.2). Looking at the differences in the RIU access rates after two years, there are significant differences in all Cohorts except Cohort 5.

Finally, looking at differences in the proportion of students in HE who were studying at RIUs in their first HE-ready year, there were highly statistically significant differences (0.01% level) in Cohorts 3 and 7, while in the other cohorts the differences were not significant. There were also highly statistically significant differences in the proportion of students in HE who were studying at RIUs within their first two HE-ready years, and in addition the difference in Cohort 6 was significant at the 5% level.

3.2 Results by disadvantage characteristics

In addition to the analysis for the groups as a whole, the analysis was undertaken by disadvantage characteristics in two ways:

- a split between those students who met the FSM criterion, or who met both of the area-based characteristics, POLAR and IMD – this is the 'higher disadvantage' group – and those who met only one of the area-based characteristics – the 'lower disadvantage' group; and
- students who met each disadvantage characteristic individually – all FSM students would be in the 'higher disadvantage' group, although a subset of the total group, while POLAR and IMD students would be a mix of those in the higher and lower disadvantaged groups.

This section presents differences in rates for immediate HE access, looking at students overall and the 'higher' and 'lower' disadvantage groups. Results for each disadvantage characteristic individually, and differences in rates within the first two HE-ready years, are presented in the Appendix tables, and the two-year rates generally reflect the patterns in immediate access rates.

3.2.1 Immediate HE access rates

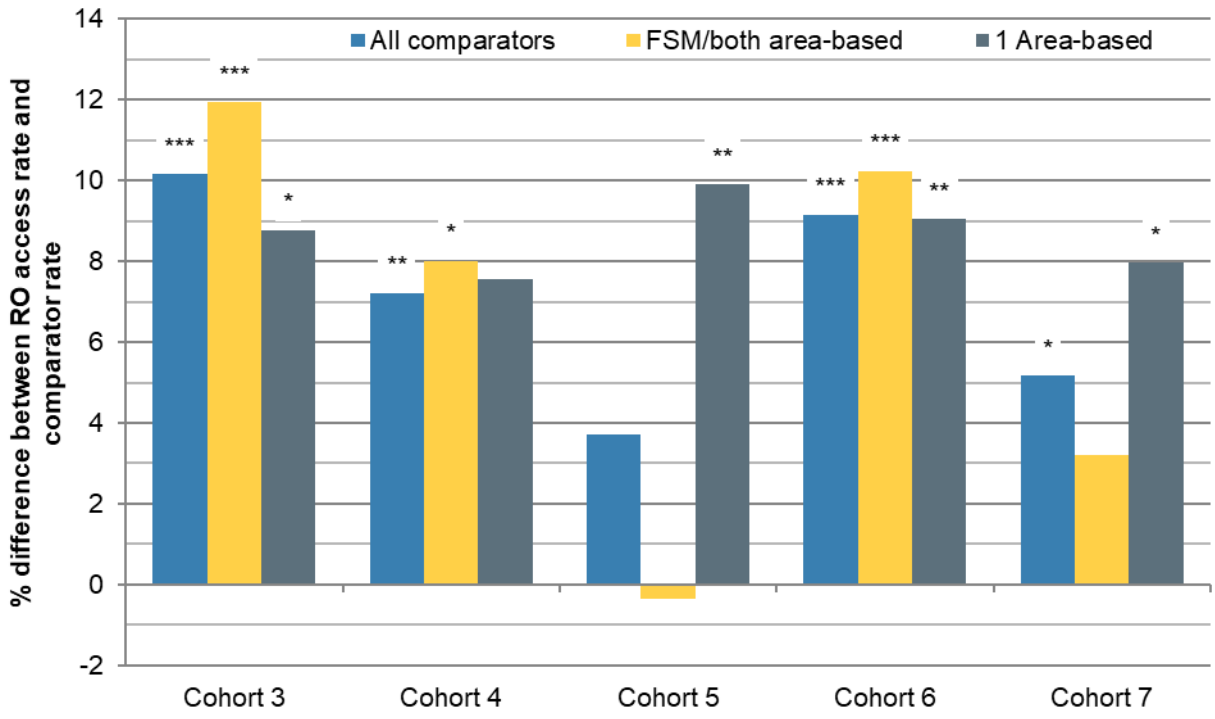
Figure 3.5 shows the percentage point difference in the immediate HE access rates of RO students and the comparator group for each cohort, and separately for all comparators, for those in the 'higher disadvantage' group (FSM or both area-based characteristics), and those in the 'lower disadvantage' group (one area-based characteristic only). The Figure also indicates statistically significant differences at the three levels (5%, 1%, and 0.1% levels).

The calculation of statistical significance is affected not only by the size of the difference in rates, but also by the population sizes. There are some instances where there is a larger difference in one of the disadvantage groups than for the overall population, but the significance level is lower, or not significant, because of the smaller population size.

The Figure shows that in Cohorts 3 and 6, the differences in immediate access rates were statistically significant for both disadvantage groups, while in Cohorts 4 and 7 the rates were significant for the higher disadvantage group and lower disadvantage group respectively. In Cohort 5, although the difference for all comparators was not significant, it was for the lower disadvantage group, where the access rate for RO students was 10 percentage points higher than the rate for comparators.

It was noted above (section 2.3 and Table 2.1) that the comparator group was less disadvantaged than RO students, with higher proportions in the one area-based measure group and lower proportions in the FSM/both area measures group. Access rates were generally higher among the 'lower disadvantage' group, and so the differences in profile may have an influence on the rate comparisons. To account for this, a weighting exercise was undertaken to re-weight the disadvantage profile of the comparator group to match that of RO students; however, this made only marginal changes to the access rates for the comparator group and did not reveal any further significant differences in access rates between the two groups.

Figure 3.5: HE access for all students and by the two disadvantage groups



Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

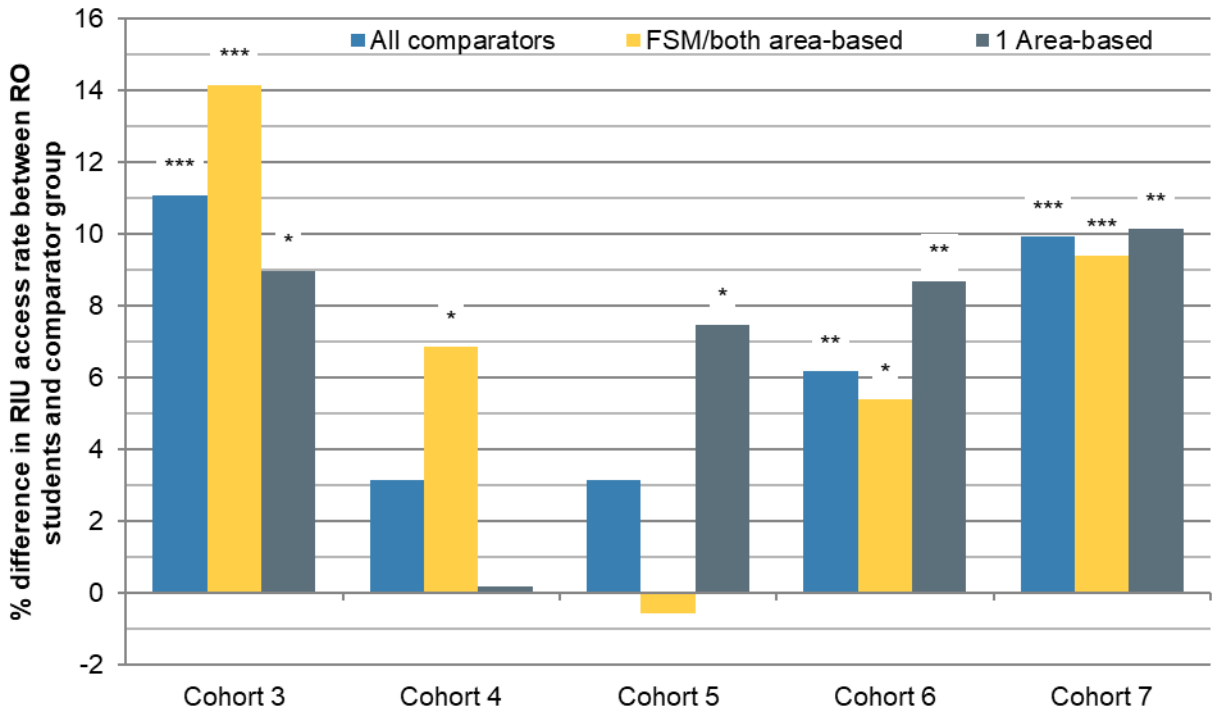
Results presented in the Appendix tables show the percentage point differences in immediate HE access rates between RO students and comparators by the three disadvantage characteristics. There were statistically significant differences in three of the cohorts:

- In Cohort 3, differences by POLAR and IMD were highly statistically significant (0.1% level).
- In Cohort 2, differences by FSM and POLAR were significant, at the 1% and 5% levels respectively.
- In Cohort 6, differences by POLAR and IMD were significant, at the 0.1% level and 1% levels respectively.

3.2.2 Immediate RIU access rates

Figure 3.6 shows the percentage point differences in the RIU access rates in students' first HE-ready year between RO students and the matched comparators, overall and by the two disadvantage groups. There were statistically significant differences for all groups in Cohorts 3, 6 and 7, while in Cohort 4 the difference was significant for FSM students or those meeting both area-based criteria, and in Cohort 5 the difference was significant for students meeting only one of the area-based criteria.

Figure 3.6: RIU access for all students and by the two disadvantage groups



Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

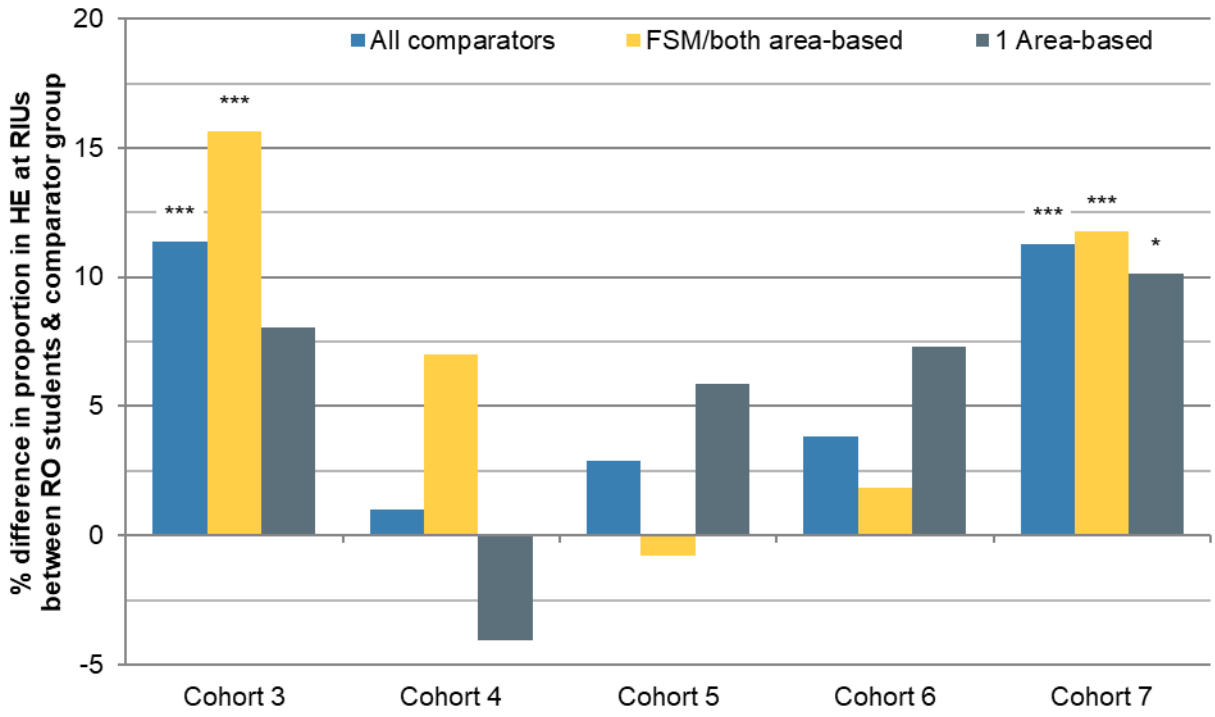
The Appendix tables show the differences by each of the three disadvantage criteria. In Cohorts 3 and 7 the differences in immediate RIU access rates were significant by each of the disadvantage characteristics, at the 5% level for FSM and at higher levels for

POLAR and IMD. The differences by FSM in Cohort 4, and by POLAR in Cohort 6, were also highly statistically significant.

3.2.3 Proportion of students in HE in first HE-ready year studying at RIUs

Figure 3.7 shows the percentage point differences between RO students and comparators in the proportions in HE who were studying at RIUs, overall and by the two disadvantage groups. The overall differences, and the differences for the FSM/both area-based measures group were highly statistically significant for Cohorts 3 and 7, while the difference for the group meeting one area-based measure only was statistically significant at the 5% level for Cohort 7. There were no significant differences for Cohorts 4 to 6.

Figure 3.7: RIU access for all students and by the two disadvantage groups



Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

The differences in the proportions of students in HE who were at RIUs by each of the three disadvantage characteristics are presented in the Appendix tables. There were statistically significant differences for three Cohorts:

- In Cohort 3, the differences were significant by POLAR (0.1% level) and by IMD (5% level).
- In Cohort 4, the difference was significant by FSM (5% level).

- In Cohort 7, the differences were significant by POLAR (1% level) and by IMD (0.1% level).

4 Conclusion

The results of the comparative analysis show that for four of the five annual cohorts of students under investigation in this analysis, the immediate HE access rate for RO students was statistically significantly higher than the access rate for a closely matched comparator group (who were similar to the RO students in terms of attainment at GCSE, meeting at least one of the three disadvantage characteristics of FSM, POLAR or IMD, and were at schools in the same parts of the country and with similar KS5 attainment levels).

This strongly suggests that participation in the RO programme is having a significant positive impact on students' access rates to HE in general and RIUs in particular, and thus the programme is meeting its aim of increasing access for participating students.

However, it should be noted that there may be differences between the groups within the criteria that have been used in developing the comparator groups that could be influencing the results. For example, RO students might have higher average attainment than comparators within the attainment criteria of 8 passes – they may have more passes in total, or have better average grades across their passes. However, RO students are on average more disadvantaged than their comparators – around two thirds of RO students were FSM or met both area-based measures, whereas in the comparator group the proportion was around half – and on the basis of greater degrees of disadvantage being associated with lower access rates, this would perhaps balance out any possible differences in attainment levels.

Furthermore, the analysis does not identify which aspects of the RO programme have the greatest impact on HE access. Students who successfully complete RO can receive Alternative Offers from RO partner universities which are typically up to two grades lower than the standard grades for those courses, and this element of the programme might be the most significant factor driving higher access rates rather than the broader support or skills enhancement. So, if comparator students were able to obtain contextual offers to the same extent as RO students, then their access rates may be closer to those of RO students.

However, the size of some of the differences between RO students and their comparators, and the degree of statistical significance, would suggest that the RO programme is having a large positive impact on students' HE access.

There is also the issue of 'predisposition' towards RIUs – students who apply for and participate in RO already have an interest in progressing to RIUs, whereas among the comparator group there may be a sizeable proportion of students who are considering other universities, or even other destinations after A-levels. An evaluation of The Sutton Trust summer schools (Mann & Hoare, 2011) tried to isolate the impact of the summer schools programme from any predisposition effects by comparing the rates of applications to and registrations at 'elite' universities of summer school participants against

unsuccessful applicants (who were similarly predisposed) and also against a wider comparator group drawn from all university applicants. Their research found both impact and predisposition effects – summer school participants had higher rates of application/access to 'elite' universities than unsuccessful applicants (impact), who in turn had higher rates than the outer control group (predisposition). The implication is that the results here, which show that RO students in HE (so isolating any predisposition to HE overall) were more likely to be studying at RIUs than the comparator group, may be overstating the impact of RO, as RO participants are more disposed to RIUs than the comparator group. However, the results from student surveys at the start of the programme show that around half of participants across the cohorts under analysis did not know what a RIU was, or did not think it was important to attend one, suggesting that predisposition may only be a factor for around half of RO participants.

As is often the case, further research could be helpful in exploring this issue further. Within the existing cohorts analysed, it might prove useful to delve into attainment differences within the comparator population as well as the differences in disadvantage characteristics. Additionally, extending the analysis to cover later cohorts of RO students will provide further results, and may also open up the possibility of undertaking individual matching of students if data permissions allow. This could enable multi-variate analysis approaches such as logistic regression, which would control for multiple attainment and disadvantage characteristics at the same time and show whether or not RO has an impact on HE access while holding all other characteristics constant. This would also allow for interaction effects to be investigated further to explore whether the impact of the treatment varies by disadvantage or attainment.

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Appendix tables

RO Partnership membership Cohorts 3 to 7

Table A.1 below shows the members of the RO Partnership across Cohorts 3 to 7. The 12 members in Cohort 3 where the 12 founding members, and these were joined by Goldsmiths, Sheffield and Sussex in Cohort 4. Essex left the Partnership in Cohort 5, and UCL joined in Cohort 7.

Table A.1 RO Partnership members, Cohorts 3 to 7

	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort 5	Cohort 6	Cohort 7
University of Birmingham	■	■	■	■	■
University of Bristol	■	■	■	■	■
University of Essex	■	■			
University of Exeter	■	■	■	■	■
King's College London	■	■	■	■	■
University of Leeds	■	■	■	■	■
University of Leicester	■	■	■	■	■
University of Liverpool	■	■	■	■	■
University of Manchester	■	■	■	■	■
Newcastle University	■	■	■	■	■
University of Warwick	■	■	■	■	■
University of York	■	■	■	■	■
Goldsmiths, University of London		■	■	■	■
University of Sheffield		■	■	■	■
University of Sussex		■	■	■	■
University College London					■

Source: Realising Opportunities

Detailed results tables

The tables presented in this section of the appendix show the access rates for RO students and the comparator group, along with sample sizes, confidence intervals, and the Z statistic and p values from the Z test on proportions, with statistically significant differences highlighted.

Results are presented for the whole sample in each cohort, along with those students with FSM or meeting both area-based measures, those meeting only one area-based measure, and those with each of the three disadvantage characteristics individually.

Tables are presented for:

- HE access to any university in students' first HE-ready year (Table A.2), and within two years (Table A.3);
- access to RIUs in students' first HE-ready year (Table A.4), and within two years (Table A.5); and
- the proportion of students in HE who were studying at RIUs in students' first HE-ready year (Table A.6), and within two years (Table A.7).

Table A.2 Immediate HE access rates for RO students and comparator students, Cohorts 3 to 7

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 3	All comparators	0.67	425	0.63	0.71	0.57	1,795	0.55	0.59	-3.8314	0.0001	***
	FSM/both	0.66	290	0.61	0.72	0.54	890	0.51	0.58	-3.5671	0.0004	***
	1 Area-based	0.68	140	0.60	0.76	0.59	910	0.56	0.63	-1.9650	0.0494	*
	FSM	0.60	125	0.51	0.68	0.49	265	0.43	0.55	-1.9546	0.0506	
	POLAR	0.69	320	0.64	0.74	0.57	1,390	0.55	0.60	-3.8236	0.0001	***
	IMD	0.68	305	0.63	0.73	0.56	1,075	0.53	0.59	-3.7438	0.0002	***
Cohort 4	All comparators	0.63	420	0.58	0.67	0.55	1,595	0.53	0.58	-2.6623	0.0078	**
	FSM/both	0.62	260	0.56	0.68	0.54	680	0.50	0.57	-2.2154	0.0267	*
	1 Area-based	0.64	160	0.57	0.72	0.57	915	0.54	0.60	-1.7836	0.0745	
	FSM	0.64	105	0.55	0.74	0.49	225	0.42	0.55	-2.6645	0.0077	**
	POLAR	0.63	310	0.58	0.68	0.56	1,125	0.54	0.59	-2.1198	0.0340	*
	IMD	0.60	295	0.54	0.66	0.56	940	0.53	0.59	-1.2380	0.2157	
Cohort 5	All comparators	0.58	660	0.54	0.62	0.54	1,665	0.52	0.57	-1.6167	0.1060	
	FSM/both	0.54	395	0.49	0.59	0.54	720	0.51	0.58	0.1151	0.9083	
	1 Area-based	0.64	265	0.59	0.70	0.54	945	0.51	0.58	-2.8688	0.0041	**
	FSM	0.49	185	0.42	0.56	0.52	325	0.47	0.58	0.6778	0.4979	
	POLAR	0.59	480	0.55	0.64	0.56	1,070	0.53	0.59	-1.3844	0.1662	
	IMD	0.55	415	0.50	0.60	0.55	990	0.51	0.58	-0.2182	0.8272	

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 6	All comparators	0.67	735	0.64	0.70	0.58	1,800	0.55	0.60	-4.2799	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.66	495	0.62	0.70	0.56	830	0.53	0.59	-3.6779	0.0002	***
	1 Area-based	0.68	240	0.62	0.74	0.59	970	0.56	0.62	-2.5760	0.0100	*
	FSM	0.60	255	0.54	0.66	0.60	315	0.55	0.66	-0.0380	0.9697	
	POLAR	0.67	520	0.63	0.71	0.55	1,210	0.52	0.58	-4.5375	0.0000	***
	IMD	0.66	500	0.62	0.71	0.58	1,125	0.55	0.61	-3.1157	0.0018	**
Cohort 7	All comparators	0.71	800	0.68	0.74	0.66	1,235	0.63	0.68	-2.4311	0.0151	*
	FSM/both	0.70	540	0.66	0.74	0.67	585	0.63	0.70	-1.1535	0.2487	
	1 Area-based	0.73	260	0.67	0.78	0.65	650	0.61	0.68	-2.3051	0.0212	*
	FSM	0.70	275	0.65	0.76	0.64	225	0.58	0.71	-1.3974	0.1623	
	POLAR	0.70	530	0.66	0.74	0.66	815	0.62	0.69	-1.7379	0.0822	
	IMD	0.71	580	0.68	0.75	0.68	755	0.65	0.72	-1.1783	0.2387	

Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Table A.3 HE access rates within 2 years for RO students and comparator students, Cohorts 3 to 7

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 3	All comparators	0.88	410	0.84	0.91	0.76	1,795	0.74	0.78	-5.0752	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.87	280	0.83	0.91	0.76	890	0.73	0.79	-4.0634	0.0000	***
	1 Area-based	0.88	125	0.83	0.94	0.76	910	0.74	0.79	-3.0023	0.0027	**
	FSM	0.87	120	0.81	0.93	0.77	265	0.72	0.82	-2.1919	0.0284	
	POLAR	0.87	300	0.84	0.91	0.76	1,390	0.73	0.78	-4.4458	0.0000	***
	IMD	0.87	300	0.84	0.91	0.77	1,075	0.74	0.79	-3.9853	0.0001	***
Cohort 4	All comparators	0.82	420	0.79	0.86	0.75	1,595	0.73	0.77	-3.0832	0.0020	**
	FSM/both	0.80	260	0.75	0.85	0.72	680	0.69	0.75	-2.3671	0.0179	*
	1 Area-based	0.87	160	0.82	0.92	0.78	915	0.75	0.80	-2.6576	0.0079	**
	FSM	0.82	105	0.75	0.89	0.71	225	0.65	0.77	-2.1805	0.0292	**
	POLAR	0.82	310	0.78	0.87	0.74	1,125	0.71	0.76	-3.1039	0.0019	**
	IMD	0.80	295	0.76	0.85	0.75	940	0.72	0.78	-1.7857	0.0741	
Cohort 5	All comparators	0.79	660	0.76	0.82	0.77	1,665	0.75	0.79	-1.0343	0.3010	
	FSM/both	0.79	395	0.75	0.83	0.76	720	0.73	0.79	-1.0889	0.2762	
	1 Area-based	0.79	265	0.74	0.84	0.78	945	0.75	0.80	-0.4352	0.6634	
	FSM	0.76	190	0.70	0.82	0.75	325	0.71	0.80	-0.0703	0.9439	
	POLAR	0.79	480	0.75	0.82	0.76	1,070	0.74	0.79	-1.0656	0.2866	
	IMD	0.80	415	0.76	0.84	0.79	990	0.77	0.82	-0.4021	0.6876	

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 6	All comparators	0.84	730	0.82	0.87	0.77	1,800	0.75	0.79	-4.0747	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.86	500	0.82	0.89	0.76	830	0.73	0.79	-4.2136	0.0000	***
	1 Area-based	0.81	230	0.76	0.86	0.77	970	0.75	0.80	-1.3428	0.1793	
	FSM	0.82	255	0.78	0.87	0.81	315	0.77	0.85	-0.3848	0.7004	
	POLAR	0.83	520	0.80	0.87	0.74	1,210	0.71	0.76	-4.4585	0.0000	***
	IMD	0.86	495	0.83	0.89	0.79	1,125	0.76	0.81	-3.6562	0.0003	***
Cohort 7	All comparators	0.85	800	0.83	0.87	0.77	1,235	0.75	0.80	-4.2667	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.85	540	0.82	0.88	0.78	585	0.74	0.81	-3.2001	0.0014	**
	1 Area-based	0.85	260	0.80	0.89	0.77	650	0.74	0.80	-2.5792	0.0099	**
	FSM	0.86	275	0.82	0.90	0.80	225	0.75	0.85	-1.6948	0.0901	
	POLAR	0.83	530	0.80	0.87	0.75	815	0.72	0.78	-3.7118	0.0002	***
	IMD	0.86	580	0.84	0.89	0.79	755	0.77	0.82	-3.2912	0.0010	**

Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Table A.4 Immediate RIU access rates for RO students and comparator students, Cohorts 3 to 7

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 3	All comparators	0.31	425	0.27	0.36	0.20	1,795	0.18	0.22	-4.9579	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.30	290	0.25	0.36	0.16	890	0.14	0.19	-5.2513	0.0000	***
	1 Area-based	0.33	140	0.25	0.40	0.24	910	0.21	0.26	-2.2766	0.0228	*
	FSM	0.28	125	0.20	0.36	0.17	265	0.12	0.22	-2.5570	0.0106	*
	POLAR	0.33	320	0.28	0.38	0.19	1,390	0.17	0.22	-5.2832	0.0000	***
	IMD	0.28	305	0.23	0.33	0.19	1,075	0.16	0.21	-3.7083	0.0002	***
Cohort 4	All comparators	0.24	420	0.19	0.28	0.20	1,595	0.18	0.22	-1.4059	0.1598	
	FSM/both	0.24	260	0.19	0.29	0.17	680	0.14	0.20	-2.4048	0.0162	*
	1 Area-based	0.23	160	0.17	0.30	0.23	915	0.20	0.26	-0.0483	0.9615	
	FSM	0.26	105	0.18	0.34	0.11	225	0.07	0.15	-3.5007	0.0005	***
	POLAR	0.23	310	0.19	0.28	0.21	1,125	0.19	0.24	-0.7816	0.4345	
	IMD	0.21	295	0.16	0.25	0.19	940	0.17	0.22	-0.6538	0.5132	
Cohort 5	All comparators	0.25	660	0.22	0.28	0.22	1,665	0.20	0.24	-1.6323	0.1026	
	FSM/both	0.22	395	0.18	0.26	0.23	720	0.20	0.26	0.2215	0.8247	
	1 Area-based	0.29	265	0.24	0.35	0.22	945	0.19	0.24	-2.5386	0.0111	*
	FSM	0.23	185	0.17	0.29	0.22	325	0.17	0.26	-0.3826	0.7021	
	POLAR	0.25	480	0.21	0.28	0.22	1,070	0.19	0.24	-1.1375	0.2553	
	IMD	0.23	415	0.19	0.27	0.22	990	0.19	0.24	-0.5830	0.5599	

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 6	All comparators	0.30	735	0.26	0.33	0.24	1,800	0.22	0.26	-3.2457	0.0012	**
	FSM/both	0.28	495	0.24	0.32	0.23	830	0.20	0.26	-2.1952	0.0282	*
	1 Area-based	0.33	240	0.27	0.39	0.24	970	0.22	0.27	-2.7497	0.0060	**
	FSM	0.26	255	0.20	0.31	0.25	315	0.21	0.30	-0.0801	0.9362	
	POLAR	0.29	520	0.25	0.33	0.21	1,210	0.19	0.23	-3.5399	0.0004	***
	IMD	0.29	500	0.25	0.33	0.24	1,125	0.22	0.27	-1.7688	0.0769	
Cohort 7	All comparators	0.35	800	0.31	0.38	0.25	1,235	0.22	0.27	-4.8412	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.34	540	0.30	0.38	0.25	585	0.21	0.28	-3.4658	0.0005	***
	1 Area-based	0.36	260	0.30	0.41	0.25	650	0.22	0.29	-3.0633	0.0022	**
	FSM	0.38	275	0.32	0.43	0.29	225	0.23	0.35	-2.0765	0.0378	*
	POLAR	0.31	530	0.27	0.35	0.24	815	0.21	0.27	-2.9904	0.0028	**
	IMD	0.35	580	0.31	0.39	0.26	755	0.23	0.29	-3.5658	0.0004	***

Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Table A.5 RIU access rates after 2 years for RO students and comparator students, Cohorts 3 to 7

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate.	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 3	All comparators	0.38	410	0.34	0.43	0.25	1,795	0.23	0.27	-5.4406	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.38	280	0.32	0.44	0.21	890	0.19	0.24	-5.5831	0.0000	***
	1 Area-based	0.39	125	0.31	0.48	0.28	910	0.25	0.31	-2.6292	0.0086	**
	FSM	0.37	120	0.28	0.45	0.23	265	0.18	0.28	-2.9279	0.0034	**
	POLAR	0.40	300	0.35	0.46	0.24	1,390	0.22	0.26	-5.8924	0.0000	***
	IMD	0.36	300	0.30	0.41	0.23	1,075	0.21	0.26	-4.3352	0.0000	***
Cohort 4	All comparators	0.32	420	0.28	0.37	0.26	1,595	0.24	0.28	-2.3716	0.0177	*
	FSM/both	0.30	260	0.24	0.36	0.22	680	0.19	0.25	-2.5409	0.0111	*
	1 Area-based	0.36	160	0.28	0.43	0.30	915	0.27	0.32	-1.5516	0.1208	
	FSM	0.32	105	0.23	0.41	0.20	225	0.15	0.25	-2.3549	0.0185	*
	POLAR	0.31	310	0.26	0.36	0.27	1,125	0.25	0.30	-1.4180	0.1562	
	IMD	0.29	295	0.24	0.34	0.24	940	0.22	0.27	-1.4626	0.1436	
Cohort 5	All comparators	0.32	660	0.28	0.35	0.31	1,665	0.29	0.33	-0.3718	0.7101	
	FSM/both	0.30	395	0.26	0.35	0.31	720	0.27	0.34	0.0610	0.9514	
	1 Area-based	0.34	265	0.28	0.39	0.31	945	0.28	0.34	-0.7720	0.4401	
	FSM	0.33	190	0.27	0.40	0.29	325	0.24	0.34	-0.9720	0.3311	
	POLAR	0.30	480	0.26	0.34	0.30	1,070	0.27	0.33	-0.1527	0.8786	
	IMD	0.31	415	0.27	0.36	0.32	990	0.29	0.35	0.2699	0.7872	

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 6	All comparators	0.37	730	0.33	0.40	0.30	1,800	0.28	0.32	-3.4451	0.0006	***
	FSM/both	0.35	500	0.31	0.39	0.29	830	0.26	0.32	-2.3693	0.0178	*
	1 Area-based	0.40	230	0.34	0.47	0.30	970	0.27	0.33	-3.0371	0.0024	**
	FSM	0.33	255	0.27	0.39	0.33	315	0.28	0.39	0.1327	0.8945	
	POLAR	0.35	520	0.31	0.39	0.27	1,210	0.24	0.29	-3.4108	0.0006	***
	IMD	0.37	495	0.32	0.41	0.31	1,125	0.28	0.34	-2.1303	0.0331	*
Cohort 7	All comparators	0.42	800	0.38	0.45	0.29	1,235	0.26	0.31	-6.0341	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.41	540	0.37	0.45	0.28	585	0.25	0.32	-4.4664	0.0000	***
	1 Area-based	0.43	260	0.37	0.49	0.30	650	0.26	0.34	-3.8769	0.0001	***
	FSM	0.43	275	0.37	0.49	0.31	225	0.25	0.37	-2.7750	0.0055	**
	POLAR	0.37	530	0.33	0.41	0.27	815	0.24	0.30	-4.0133	0.0001	***
	IMD	0.42	580	0.38	0.46	0.30	755	0.27	0.34	-4.4555	0.0000	***

Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Table A.6 Proportions of RO and comparator students accessing HE immediately who were studying at RIUs, Cohorts 3 to 7

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 3	All comparators	0.47	285	0.41	0.52	0.35	1,025	0.32	0.38	-3.5136	0.0004	***
	FSM/both	0.46	190	0.39	0.53	0.30	480	0.26	0.34	-3.8447	0.0001	***
	1 Area-based	0.48	95	0.38	0.58	0.40	540	0.36	0.44	-1.4658	0.1427	
	FSM	0.47	75	0.36	0.59	0.35	130	0.26	0.43	-1.7837	0.0745	
	POLAR	0.48	220	0.41	0.55	0.34	800	0.30	0.37	-3.8596	0.0001	***
	IMD	0.42	210	0.35	0.49	0.33	605	0.29	0.37	-2.2828	0.0224	*
Cohort 4	All comparators	0.38	265	0.32	0.43	0.37	890	0.33	0.40	-0.2910	0.7711	
	FSM/both	0.39	160	0.31	0.46	0.32	365	0.27	0.36	-1.5664	0.1173	
	1 Area-based	0.36	105	0.27	0.45	0.40	525	0.36	0.44	0.7746	0.4386	
	FSM	0.41	70	0.29	0.52	0.23	110	0.15	0.31	-2.5464	0.0109	*
	POLAR	0.37	195	0.30	0.44	0.38	635	0.34	0.42	0.1872	0.8515	
	IMD	0.35	180	0.28	0.42	0.34	525	0.30	0.38	-0.1324	0.8946	
Cohort 5	All comparators	0.43	380	0.38	0.48	0.40	905	0.37	0.44	-0.9532	0.3405	
	FSM/both	0.42	210	0.35	0.48	0.42	390	0.37	0.47	0.1895	0.8497	
	1 Area-based	0.45	170	0.38	0.53	0.39	520	0.35	0.44	-1.3518	0.1764	
	FSM	0.47	90	0.37	0.57	0.42	165	0.35	0.50	-0.6681	0.5041	
	POLAR	0.41	285	0.36	0.47	0.39	595	0.36	0.43	-0.5403	0.5890	
	IMD	0.42	230	0.36	0.48	0.40	540	0.36	0.44	-0.5443	0.5862	

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 6	All comparators	0.45	490	0.40	0.49	0.41	1,045	0.38	0.44	-1.4243	0.1544	
	FSM/both	0.43	330	0.37	0.48	0.41	465	0.36	0.45	-0.5128	0.6081	
	1 Area-based	0.48	165	0.41	0.56	0.41	575	0.37	0.45	-1.6684	0.0952	
	FSM	0.42	155	0.35	0.50	0.43	185	0.36	0.50	0.1404	0.8883	
	POLAR	0.43	350	0.38	0.49	0.38	665	0.35	0.42	-1.5560	0.1197	
	IMD	0.43	330	0.38	0.48	0.42	655	0.38	0.46	-0.3267	0.7439	
Cohort 7	All comparators	0.49	565	0.45	0.53	0.38	810	0.34	0.41	-4.1698	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.49	380	0.44	0.54	0.37	390	0.32	0.42	-3.2920	0.0010	**
	1 Area-based	0.49	190	0.42	0.56	0.39	425	0.34	0.43	-2.3398	0.0193	*
	FSM	0.54	190	0.47	0.61	0.43	150	0.35	0.51	-1.8930	0.0584	
	POLAR	0.45	370	0.40	0.50	0.36	540	0.32	0.40	-2.5834	0.0098	**
	IMD	0.49	415	0.44	0.54	0.38	515	0.34	0.42	-3.3801	0.0007	***

Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Table A.7 Proportions of RO and comparator students accessing HE within 2 years who were studying at RIUs, Cohorts 3 to 7

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 3	All comparators	0.44	360	0.39	0.49	0.33	1,370	0.30	0.35	-3.8850	0.0001	***
	FSM/both	0.43	245	0.37	0.50	0.28	670	0.25	0.32	-4.3380	0.0000	***
	1 Area-based	0.45	110	0.35	0.54	0.37	690	0.33	0.41	-1.5542	0.1201	
	FSM	0.42	105	0.33	0.52	0.29	205	0.23	0.35	-2.3305	0.0198	**
	POLAR	0.46	260	0.40	0.52	0.31	1,050	0.29	0.34	-4.4983	0.0000	***
	IMD	0.41	260	0.35	0.47	0.30	830	0.27	0.33	-3.2247	0.0013	**
Cohort 4	All comparators	0.39	345	0.34	0.44	0.35	1,200	0.32	0.38	-1.3724	0.1699	
	FSM/both	0.38	205	0.31	0.44	0.31	490	0.27	0.35	-1.8176	0.0691	
	1 Area-based	0.41	140	0.33	0.49	0.38	710	0.34	0.42	-0.6600	0.5092	
	FSM	0.39	90	0.28	0.49	0.27	165	0.20	0.34	-1.8577	0.0632	
	POLAR	0.38	255	0.32	0.44	0.37	830	0.33	0.40	-0.3313	0.7404	
	IMD	0.36	235	0.30	0.42	0.33	705	0.29	0.36	-0.9149	0.3603	
Cohort 5	All comparators	0.40	525	0.36	0.44	0.40	1,285	0.37	0.43	0.0006	0.9995	
	FSM/both	0.38	315	0.33	0.44	0.40	555	0.36	0.44	0.3770	0.7061	
	1 Area-based	0.43	210	0.36	0.49	0.40	730	0.37	0.44	-0.5837	0.5594	
	FSM	0.44	145	0.36	0.52	0.40	240	0.33	0.46	-0.8600	0.3898	
	POLAR	0.39	380	0.34	0.43	0.39	815	0.36	0.43	0.2444	0.8069	
	IMD	0.39	335	0.34	0.44	0.40	785	0.37	0.44	0.4340	0.6643	

		RO		95% Confidence intervals		Comp.		95% Confidence intervals				
		Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Rate	N	Lower	Upper	Z stat	p value	Significance
Cohort 6	All comparators	0.44	615	0.40	0.48	0.39	1,385	0.36	0.41	-2.1120	0.0347	*
	FSM/both	0.41	425	0.36	0.46	0.38	630	0.34	0.42	-0.9742	0.3300	
	1 Area-based	0.49	190	0.42	0.57	0.39	750	0.35	0.42	-2.6943	0.0071	**
	FSM	0.40	210	0.33	0.47	0.41	255	0.35	0.47	0.2774	0.7815	
	POLAR	0.42	435	0.37	0.47	0.37	890	0.33	0.40	-1.9040	0.0569	
	IMD	0.42	425	0.38	0.47	0.40	885	0.36	0.43	-0.9349	0.3498	
Cohort 7	All comparators	0.49	680	0.45	0.53	0.37	955	0.34	0.40	-4.7944	0.0000	***
	FSM/both	0.48	460	0.43	0.52	0.36	455	0.32	0.41	-3.5781	0.0003	***
	1 Area-based	0.51	220	0.45	0.58	0.39	500	0.35	0.43	-3.0888	0.0020	**
	FSM	0.50	235	0.44	0.57	0.39	180	0.32	0.46	-2.3375	0.0194	*
	POLAR	0.45	440	0.40	0.49	0.36	610	0.32	0.40	-2.8563	0.0043	**
	IMD	0.49	500	0.45	0.53	0.38	605	0.34	0.42	-3.6406	0.0003	***

Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.1% level, ** indicates the 1% level, and * indicates the 5% level

Source: HEAT HESA Track data 2015-2019; Linked NPD-HESA data 2015-2019

Inclusive Terminology

The terminology used to define ethnicity continues to evolve, and greater awareness has arisen about gender, cognitive differences as well as of disability. IES seeks to be a learning organisation; as such we are adapting our practice in line with these shifts. We aim to be specific when referring to each individual's ethnicity and use their own self-descriptor wherever possible. Where this is not feasible, we are aligned with Race Disparity Unit (RDU) which uses the term 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British. RDU does not use the terms BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) or BME (black and minority ethnic) as these terms emphasise certain ethnic groups and exclude others. It also recommends not capitalising ethnic groups, (such as 'black' or 'white') unless that group's name includes a geographic place. More broadly, we understand that while individuals may have impairments it is society that disables them, hence we refer to disabled people. Not all people identify with male or female and we reflect their self-descriptions in our work and use the term non-binary should abbreviation be necessary. We value neurodiversity. Where possible we always use people's self-descriptors rather than impose categories upon them.

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