



Department
for Education

Higher education outcomes for EBacc subject entry

Ad-hoc notice

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Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Main findings | 3 |
| Methodology | 3 |
| Number of EBacc Pillars Entered by HE Institution Grouping | 5 |
| Entry to Humanity and Language EBacc Pillar by HE Institution Grouping | 5 |
| Differences in school and pupil characteristics by HE Institution Grouping | 7 |
| Tables | 8 |

Introduction

First introduced in 2010, the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is a performance measure based on attainment in core academic subjects. The aim of this publication is to investigate how pupil entry and attainment rates in EBacc subjects differ based on the higher education institution a pupil goes on to attend. This analysis focuses on language and humanity entry which historically are the most common missing pillars for pupils entering four of the five EBacc pillars.

This publication looks at the cohort of pupils at the end of key stage 4 (KS4) in 2012 and tracks their subsequent progress into higher education institutions across a three-year period. The analysis focuses on comparisons between pupils enrolled at Russell Group universities, pupils enrolled at other higher education institutions and pupils with no recorded higher education outcome. Differences in the school and pupil characteristics between groups are provided for additional context.

Main findings

- 92% of 2012 KS4 pupils who entered an undergraduate course at an Oxbridge college entered the EBacc language pillar and 88% entered the humanity pillar. 78% of these pupils entered the full EBacc combination of subjects.
- 82% of 2012 KS4 pupils who entered an undergraduate course at a Russell Group university entered the EBacc language pillar and 82% entered the humanity pillar. 66% of these pupils entered the full EBacc combination of subjects.
- Pupils attending other higher education institutions were almost half as likely to have entered the EBacc (36%) compared to those attending Russell group universities. These pupils were also less likely to have entered the EBacc language pillar (57%) and the humanity pillar (64%) at KS4 in 2012.
- These results highlight the relationship between pupils' KS4 subject choice and the university they enrol in, but this does not allow us to infer causality.

Methodology

This analysis is based on attainment data taken from the National Pupil Database¹, covering pupils at the end of KS4 in the academic year 2011/12 only. It includes pupils attending both state-funded schools² and other independent settings. Pupil characteristic

¹ The national pupil database (NPD) is a longitudinal database linking student characteristics (e.g. age, gender, and ethnicity) to school and college learning aims and attainment information for children and young people in schools and colleges in England.

² This includes all English mainstream state-funded schools and colleges, special schools and alternative provision

data was taken from the January 2012 School Census and matched to attainment data to create a single pupil-level dataset.

Pupils' progress from KS4 into higher education has been matched from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) dataset³; this analysis focuses only on pupils who have enrolled on an undergraduate first degree course between the academic years of 2014/15 and 2016/17. The destinations of pupils within the 2012 KS4 cohort entering higher education after 2017 have been omitted from these results. This data does not highlight whether a student completes a HE course, only whether they had enrolled at the start of that year.

Pupils in this combined dataset were placed into groups based on the higher education institution at which they enrolled. These include:

- Oxbridge colleges
- Russell Group⁴ universities (including Oxbridge)
- Other non-Russell Group higher education institutions
- Pupils with no recorded higher education destination.

[Table 1](#) outlines the size of each group in terms of pupil numbers and as a proportion of the overall cohort. 11% of the cohort enrolled into Russell Group universities between 2015 and 2017, and those attending Oxbridge colleges made up a subset of this group equating to 1% of the overall cohort. Just under 2,000 pupils enrolled at multiple institutions, and in the analysis we include these pupils in the results for all the groups which they are in.

For each group, the following measures have been calculated:

- The percentage of pupils entering all pillars of the EBacc⁵
- A breakdown of the number of EBacc pillars entered
- The percentage of pupils entering the language and humanity EBacc pillars
- The distribution of grades⁶ for pupils entering the language and humanity EBacc pillars
- Average point score across KS4 subjects entered

³ Data covering United Kingdom higher education institutions but won't cover pupils studying courses abroad

⁴The Russell Group of universities are a research-intensive group of higher education institutions with generally high UCAS tariff scores required for entry. The group expanded from 20 to 24 in 2012. For further detail on exactly which institutions are included in each of these groups, see our quality and methodology information.

⁵ Figures for 2012 EBacc entry include unreformed GCSEs and Level 1/2 certificates (including regulated IGCSEs and IGCSE-style qualifications). Level 1/2 certificate made up 3% of exam entries in EBacc subjects in 2012. More information on exam entries in individual EBacc subjects can be found in table 12 of the [SFR Additional Tables](#). From 2018 only GCSEs and AS levels count in the EBacc performance measure.

⁶ Pupils who took unreformed GCSE qualifications in 2012 therefore grades are scored from A*-G. Where pupils have entered an AS level in an EBacc pillar the points score has been converted to an equivalent GCSE grade.

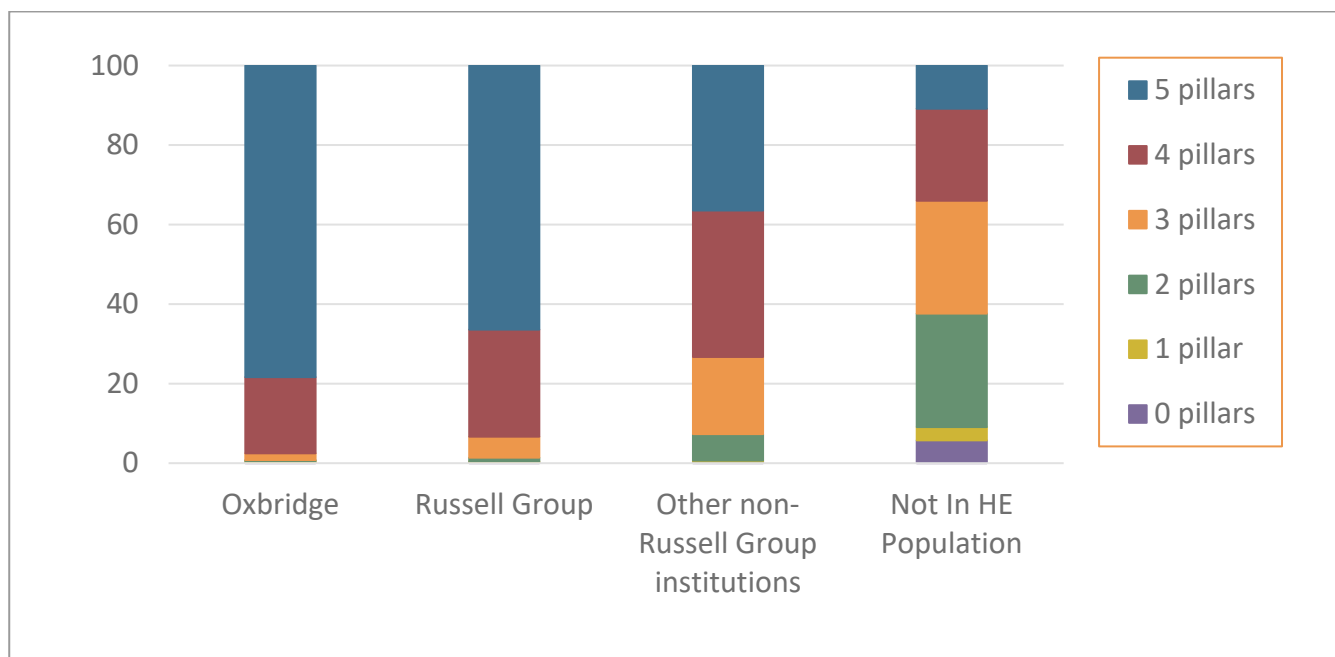
- KS2 prior attainment
- The percentage of pupils that were disadvantaged at KS4
- The percentage of pupils at state-funded schools at KS4

Number of EBacc Pillars Entered by HE Institution Grouping

[Table 2](#) shows what percentage of pupils within each group entered all five of the EBacc pillars. It highlights that amongst those enrolled at Russell Group universities, 66% entered the EBacc, compared to only 36% of pupils enrolled at other institutions. Pupils enrolled at Oxbridge colleges fall within this wider group of Russell Group universities; 78% of this subset of pupils had entered the EBacc at KS4 in 2012. This comparison is shown visually below in Figure 1.

Within these four groups, pupils with no recorded higher education destinations were the least likely to have entered the EBacc combination of subjects. There are around 350,000 pupils in this group and only 11% of them entered all five pillars.

Figure 1: The percentage of pupils entering the EBacc across the four HE institution groupings

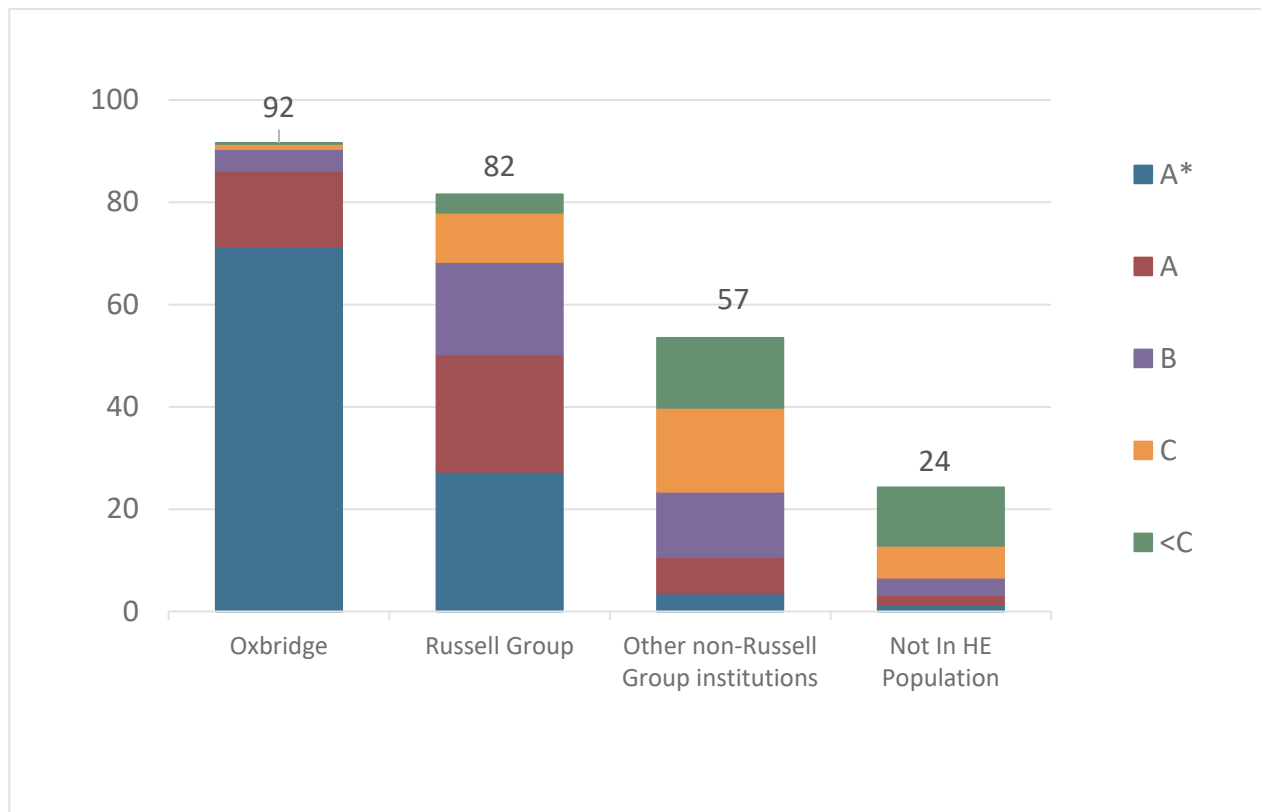


Entry to Humanity and Language EBacc Pillars by HE Institution Grouping

[Table 3](#) shows that 82% of pupils who enrolled at Russell Group universities entered the EBacc language pillar, while those enrolled at Oxbridge were the most likely to enter this pillar (92%). Pupils with no higher education record were the least likely to enter the language pillar (24%).

The results also highlight the difference in language attainment amongst these four groups: 79% of all pupils enrolled at Russell Group universities gained at least a C grade in an EBacc language subject, compared to less than half of those attending other higher education institutions (45%). The full range of grade comparisons are visualised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Percentage of pupils at each HE institution entering the EBacc language pillar and highest grade achieved in the EBacc language pillar



[Table 4](#) shows that similar differences exist when comparing entry to the humanity pillar between groups. Visualised in Figure 3 below, the data highlights that humanity entry is highest amongst pupils at Russell Group universities (82%), and in particular those at Oxbridge colleges (88%). Pupils at other higher education institutions were less likely to have entered the humanity pillar (64%) while entry for those outside the recorded HE population was lowest of all four groups (37%).

There are similar differences between these groups in the grades achieved in the humanity pillar. Of all pupils enrolled at Russell group universities 81% gained at least a C in a language, this compared to just over half (53%) of all pupils enrolled at other higher education institutions.

Figure 3: Percentage of pupils at each HE institution entering the EBacc humanity pillar and highest grade achieved in the humanity pillar



Differences in school and pupil characteristics by HE Institution Grouping

These results highlight the relationship between pupils' KS4 subject choice and the university they enrol in, but this does not allow us to infer causality. Table 5 highlights some of the other differences in school and pupil characteristics within these groups, which provides some greater context for these results.

Of the higher education institution groups, pupils who enrolled at Russell Group universities were least likely to attend a state funded school (73%) and only 7% were classified as disadvantaged⁶. These pupils were also more likely to have high prior attainment at KS2 and on average gained the highest average points scores across all GCSE subjects.

Tables

Table 1: Number of pupils from the KS4 2012 cohort attending each university grouping

| Higher Education groupings | Number of Pupils | % of KS4 cohort |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| Russell Group | 70,478 | 11% |
| -Oxbridge colleges | 4,820 | 1% |
| -Other Russell Group universities | 65,658 | 11% |
| Other non-Russell Group institutions | 192,601 | 31% |
| Not in HE population | 355,983 | 57% |
| HE destination but not completing undergraduate study | 7,614 | 1% |
| Total KS4 cohort | 624,721 | - |

Table 2: The number of EBacc pillars entered per pupil from each higher education group

| Higher Education Groupings | #EBacc pillars entered | | | | | | Number of Pupils |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------------|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Oxbridge | 0% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 19% | 78% | 4,820 |
| Russell Group | 0% | 0% | 1% | 5% | 27% | 66% | 70,478 |
| Other non-Russell Group institutions | 0% | 0% | 7% | 19% | 37% | 36% | 192,601 |
| Not in HE population | 6% | 3% | 29% | 28% | 23% | 11% | 355,983 |

Table 3: The entry rates and grades achieved by pupils in the EBacc language pillar for each higher education grouping

| HE Institution | % of pupils at each HE institution taking an EBacc language | | | | | | Number of Pupils |
|--------------------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|------------------|
| | Entries | A* | A | B | C | <C | |
| Oxbridge | 92 | 71 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 4,820 |
| Russell Group | 82 | 29 | 23 | 17 | 9 | 3 | 70,478 |
| Other non-Russell Group institutions | 57 | 5 | 9 | 14 | 16 | 12 | 192,601 |
| Not in HE population | 24 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 11 | 355,983 |

Table 4: The entry rates and grades achieved by pupils in the EBacc humanity pillar for each higher education grouping

| HE Institution | % of pupils at each HE institution taking an EBacc humanity | | | | | | Number of Pupils |
|--------------------------------------|---|----|----|----|----|----|------------------|
| | Entries | A* | A | B | C | <C | |
| Oxbridge | 88 | 75 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4,820 |
| Russell Group | 82 | 36 | 30 | 12 | 4 | 1 | 70,478 |
| Other non-Russell Group institutions | 64 | 5 | 15 | 18 | 14 | 11 | 192,601 |
| Not in HE population | 37 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 19 | 355,983 |

Table 5: School type, disadvantage and prior attainment split of each university grouping

| Higher Education Groupings | % State-funded ⁷ | Disadvantage ⁸ | KS2 Prior Attainment % | | | | GCSE Average Points Score ⁹ |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--------|------|---------|--|
| | | | low | middle | high | unknown | |
| Russell Group | 73% | 7% | 1% | 12% | 57% | 30% | 51.3 |
| -Oxbridge colleges | 57% | 2% | 0% | 1% | 53% | 46% | 56.1 |
| -Other Russell Group universities | 74% | 7% | 1% | 13% | 57% | 29% | 50.9 |
| Other HE destination | 91% | 17% | 5% | 41% | 40% | 13% | 44.3 |
| Not in HE population | 92% | 30% | 24% | 51% | 17% | 9% | 35.7 |
| Other non-undergraduate HE study | 93% | 21% | 11% | 51% | 27% | 10% | 40.8 |
| Total 2012 KS4 cohort | 90% | 23% | 15% | 43% | 28% | 13% | 40.2 |

⁷ Schools in England can be divided into state-funded and independent schools. Independent schools are funded by fees paid by attendees. State-funded and independent schools are considered separately, because the department holds state-funded schools accountable for their performance.

⁸ Pupils are defined as disadvantaged if they are known to have been eligible for free school meals in the past six years (from year 6 to year 11), if they are recorded as having been looked after for at least one day or if they are recorded as having been adopted from care.

⁹ Points averaged across all GCSE qualifications taken by a pupil by the end of KS4 and follow the 2012 point scoring system



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