



Annual Monitoring Report 2019/2020



1.0 Introduction

This report highlights the main findings given in response to the National Youth Agency (NYA) Annual Monitoring pro forma' survey which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are required to complete as a part of their validation process.

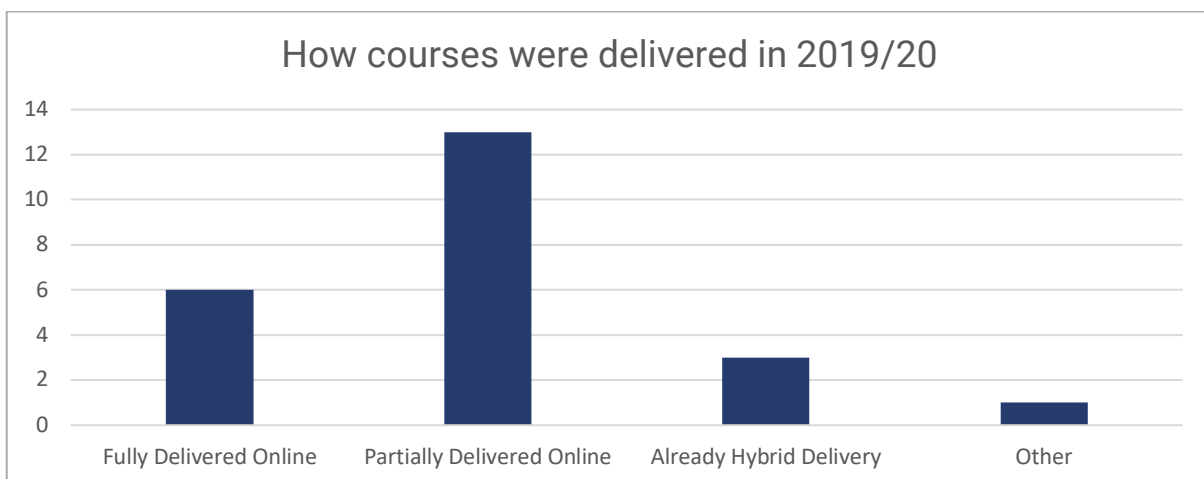
The report supports the NYA, and the wider Youth Work sector, in maintaining a clear picture of the professional Youth Work Training landscape in England. This data will be used by the NYA in its ongoing work around youth workforce development, and will support HEIs in the development of their own Youth Work courses.

Pro-formas were disseminated to **21 HEIs** offering **25 programmes**. The data was received from **24 programmes**, a 94% response rate.

Context of 2019/20:

The context of Covid-19 is dominant in the qualitative responses provided and explains some of the disruptions to quantitative trends which differ from patterns in previous years.

It also affected delivery across nearly all courses to be either completely or partially delivered online.



Increased online delivery of the teaching and theoretical element of courses has not been seen to be problematic, and course leaders have cited benefits to this enforced change in providing flexibility to students. Further benefits were evident through consolidating relationships between fieldwork providers, students, and the university. There were also some comments that the upskilling of staff in the use of digital delivery methods was a positive.

Conversely the practical and placement side of course requirements required face-to-face and intergroup work for maximal teaching efficacy. Comments from external examiners and course leaders support this, highlighting that the diversity of approaches to learning across different settings is a key element of high quality in preparing students for employment. There are therefore some placement hours still to be completed which have affected completion rates this year, notwithstanding the reduced requirement in hours put in place to help provide contingency.

Despite the challenges there is much evidence throughout that the courses are highly valued and considered of excellent quality both internally, by students and university management, and externally, by examiners.

2.0 Executive Summary

1. The number of HEIs, programmes and students for this year are at record lows for each.

However, there are signs of recovery as:

- 4 new courses previously validated are due to have student intakes next academic year.
- 5 further new courses have been validated during this academic year.
- At the time of writing (June 2020) discussions are in place with one other course.

2. Staffing levels have remained stable relative to student numbers, and students retain good access to JNC qualified staff and supervisors. All courses (aside from one smaller college) have at least one full-time JNC lecturer, with the smaller college having multiple part-time JNC qualified lecturers.

HEIs continue to provide long-arm JNC qualified support to students in placements where possible despite fewer settings having JNC qualified supervisors in-house. HEIs have used local networks to provide placements, including through previous graduates. Where no JNC supervisors are available HEIs have maintained a commitment to the importance of high-quality supervision; contracting with external 'pools' of supervisors or, as a last resort, providing support and guidance to non-JNC supervisors. This has benefitted students who are able to undertake a wide variety of placements in non-traditional youth work settings (especially schools) reflecting the increasing diversity of graduate employment destinations.

3. Student intakes continue to be ethnically diverse, have a range of starting ages, and are accessible to many disabled students. This year 23% of students were recorded as having a disability, with 2% recorded as being registered as disabled.

Whilst this inclusivity and diversity is positive, there is a growing gap in recruitment between males (24%) and females (76%), the widest gap on record. This is more pronounced at postgraduate level: males (21%) and females (79%).

The diversity in age ranges is also reflective of fewer students undertaking these courses directly from school, with many undertaking the course as professional development in later years.

4. Completion rates have dipped this year, although there are various comments attributing much of this to Covid-19 related circumstances. These include changes to personal circumstances as a result of the pandemic and the deadline for required placement hours for several courses having been extended into the summer.

HEIs have demonstrated their commitment to providing flexible support for students and provision of placements where possible, although there is a continued theme throughout recent years of mental health issues and high levels of personal commitments contributing to the non-completion of courses amongst those students who seek support.

5. The benefits of a JNC recognised youth work degree are increasingly shown in the fact that of the available student destination data, the roles that graduates are moving into are increasingly diverse, but also that unemployment rates are extremely low.

Validation by a professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRBs), was especially highly valued by university management, with the delivery of learning off-site in work settings whilst on placement being essential.

3.0 Recommendations

- **Strategies to raise the profile of the raft of qualifications should be included in the Workforce Strategy, and measures implemented in the coming year. These should include the production of targeted marketing materials for each qualification / entry point into training. Work should be undertaken to build on the increased levels of enrolment on the Level 3 diploma and the new apprenticeship qualifications with a strengthened pathway to Level 6.**
- **Research to be undertaken to explore the employment destinations of graduates to ensure the increased diversity of employment settings is reflected in the workforce strategy.**
- **An infrastructure should be developed in the regions to provide pools of placement supervisors to support placements in a wider range of settings and with allied services. Resources to support good practice in placement supervision should be developed and shared as part of the workforce strategy.**
- **As NYA Census data becomes available review diversity in the workforce to establish if the recruitment figures to courses are reflected in the Youth Work field. Conclusions to be reported in next year's annual monitoring report.**
- **Covid related adjustments to courses (eg digital delivery) should be evaluated and findings shared – perhaps this could be instigated by the ETS Covid sub group?**
- **The existing mitigations for courses to ease pressure during the Covid pandemic should be reviewed and updated as a matter of urgency.**

4.0 Methodology

The following quantitative and qualitative information is currently collected;

- Data on admission, progression and completion and the demographic profile of student numbers;
- Data on staffing levels, placements and supervisors;
- Confirmation of quality assurance within the programme with main strengths and development areas highlighted.

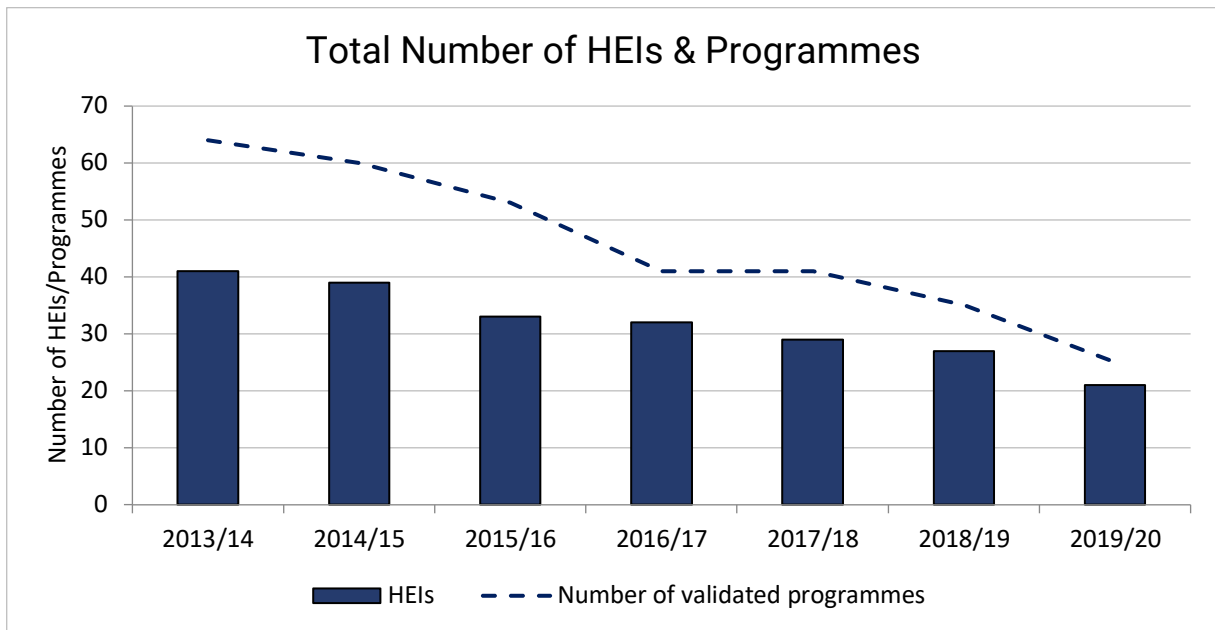
The collection of quantitative data has some minor inconsistencies: for example, some courses receive both January and September intakes with course lengths also differing between distance learning and traditional 'in-house' courses as well across part-time and full-time courses. Some courses also record certain data as a 'percentage' rather than as an 'aggregate'. Some students undertake resits, which can further skew data.

The overall 'completion' rate is slightly lower this year as some data has proved difficult to provide as a result of Covid-19.

To help mitigate against any inconsistencies calculations are mainly undertaken on the basis of 'known' data.

5.0 Analysis of Data

5.0.1 HEIs and Programmes - High level overview of programmes:



Both the number of HEIs offering programmes, and the number of programmes offered are at record lows, but there are positive indications that the downward trend may be halted.

- 4 new courses previously validated are due to have student intakes from the next academic year.
- 5 further new courses have been validated in the course of this academic year.
- At the time of writing (June 2020) discussions are in place with one other course.

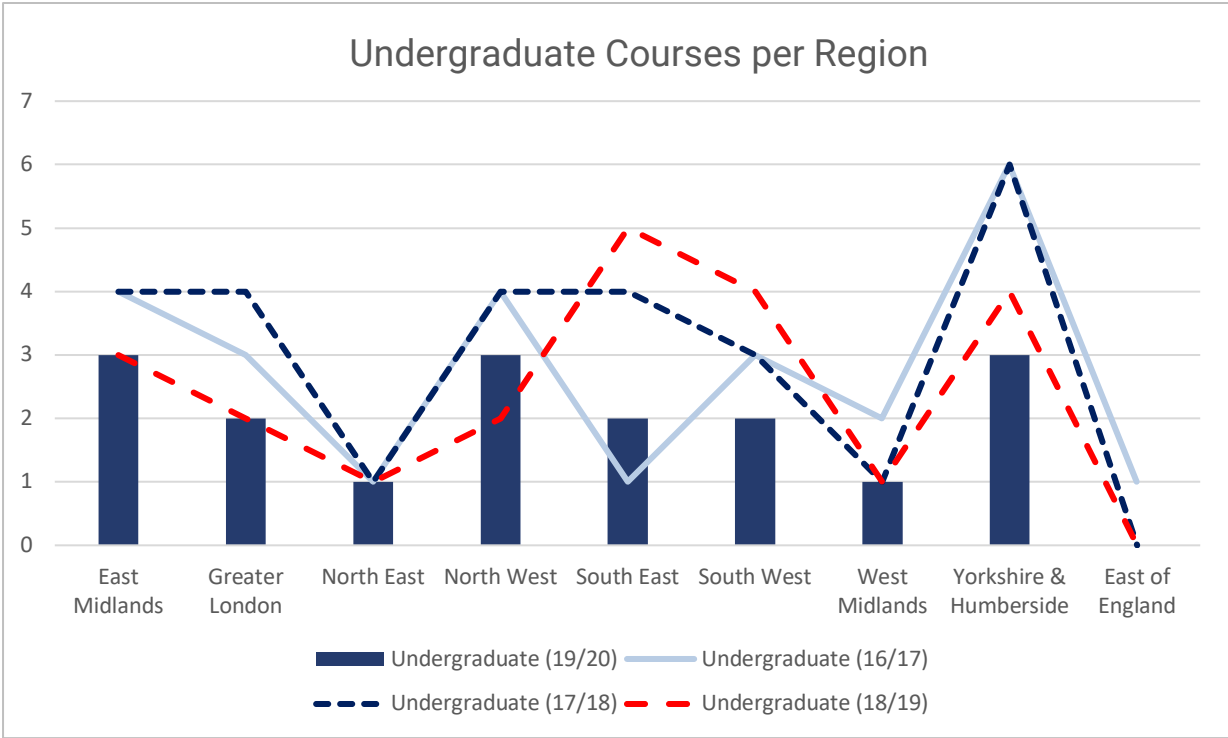
5.0.2 Regional Distribution of Courses

Most notable is that there has been no undergraduate course in the East of England since 2016/17.

None of the newly validated, or planned, undergraduate courses are located in the East of England either. There is, however, a distance learning option available.

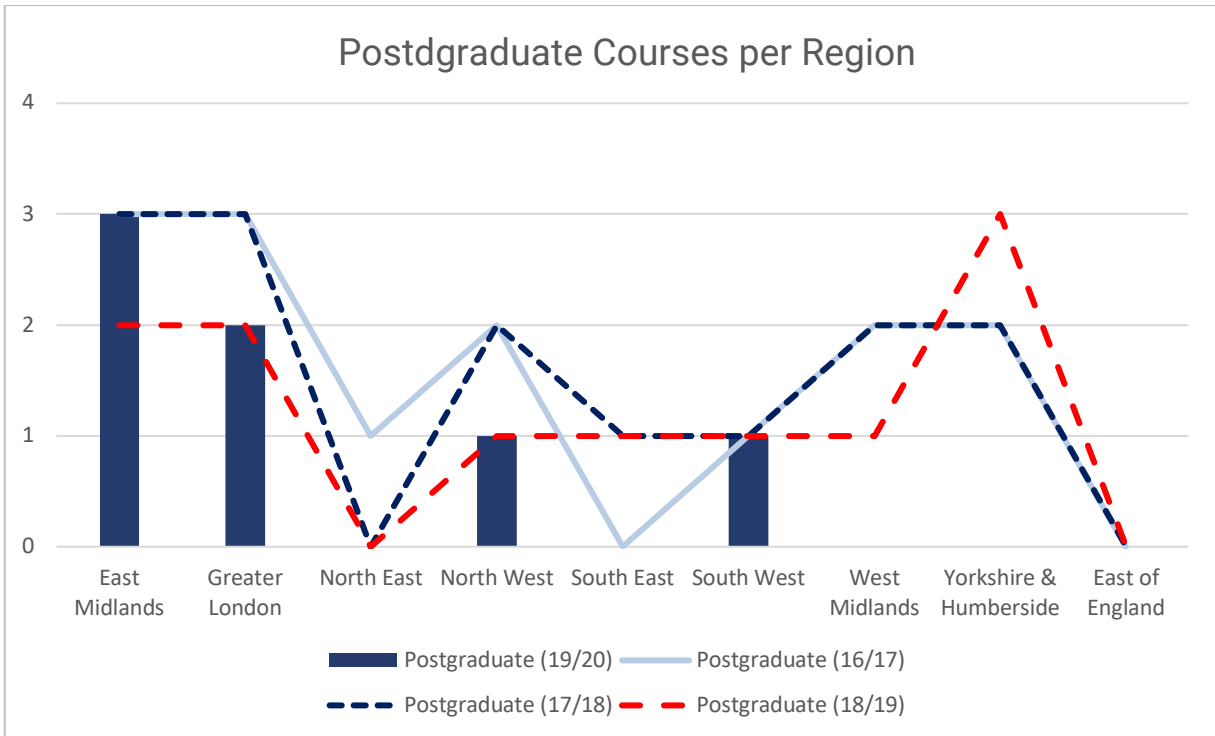
All other regions continue to have at least one undergraduate course available.



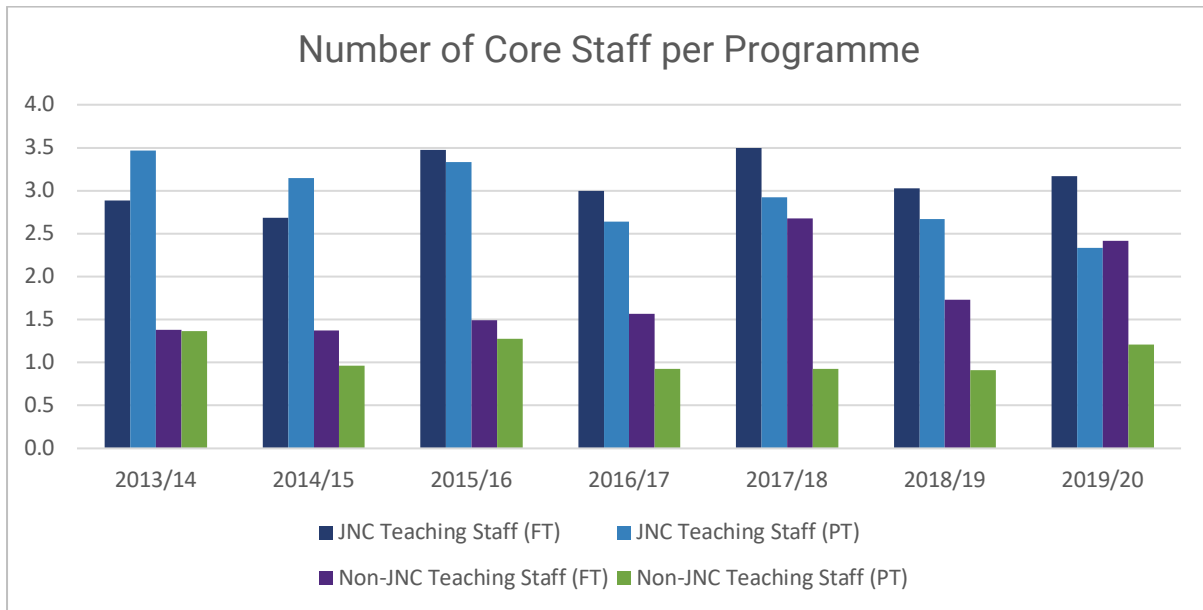


This year saw the number of regions offering postgraduate courses reduce from 7 to 4, with courses ending in the South East, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside. There are distance learning options available but only at post-graduate level.

Further postgraduate courses are planned in London, East Midlands and the North East.



5.0.3 Staffing Levels



Over a 7 year period there has been a noticeable upward trend in the number of FT teaching staff used per course, and a noticeable downward trend in the number of PT teaching staff used per course.

Students on each course retain access to JNC teaching staff (only one smaller college did not have a full-time JNC member of teaching staff, but they did have part-time JNC teaching staff).

5.0.4 Fieldwork Placements

The way in which fieldwork is being undertaken and supervised is changing.

- More students are undertaking placements in a wider variety of non-traditional settings and multi-agency settings, especially across schools and social care.¹
- A reduction in the number of statutory funded youth services affects both the number of available placements and geographical proximity.
- The reduced number of JNC qualified staff in youth services makes it more difficult to find a JNC-qualified supervisor as per requirements.

Alongside changes to the make-up of the workforce in remaining traditional settings, this has meant that there are fewer JNC-qualified supervisors per placement setting.

However, despite challenges course providers have maintained a commitment towards offering JNC qualified support across the supervision element to students either by:

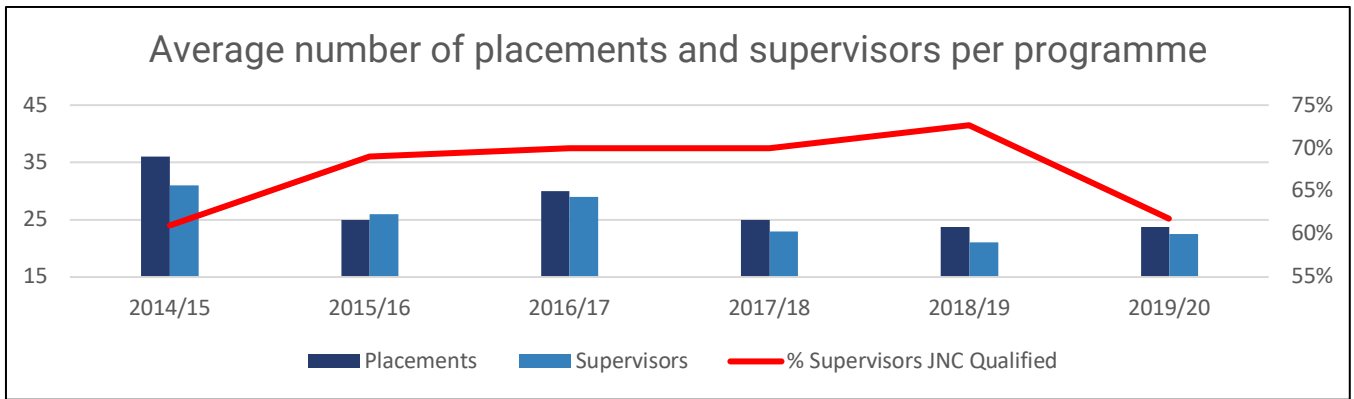
- Contracting with external 'pools' of supervisors to work across numerous settings
- Providing placement settings through local networks or graduates
- Providing JNC supervision to work across numerous sites

¹ It is not clear if the increase this year is due to other settings being 'closed' for longer during parts of the pandemic.

Where this is not possible, course leaders told us that they are

- Providing support and guidance to on-site non-JNC supervisors to assure quality.

This has benefitted students who are able to undertake a wide variety of placements in non-traditional youth work settings (especially schools). Increasing the variety in placement experience and reflecting the increasing diversity of graduate employment destinations, whilst maintaining access to high quality JNC-qualified supervision.

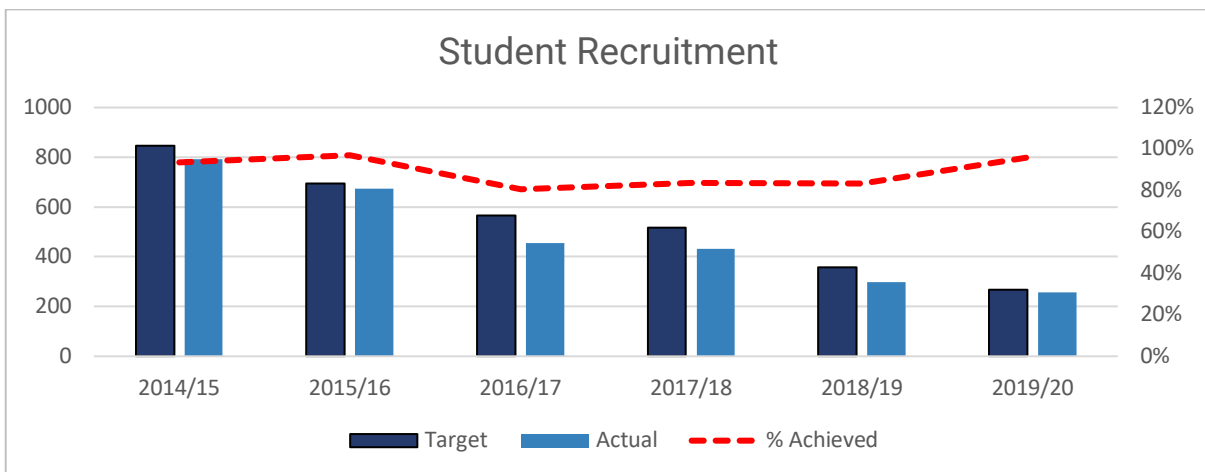


5.0.5 Recruitment and Student Numbers

The recruitment of student numbers continues to fall, with just under 260 being recorded as having been recruited this year.

Whilst an obvious reason may be the reduction in the number of courses being offered, HEIs have consistently attributed various other explanations, including:

- *Cuts and restricted funding leaving employers with limited or no staff development budgets*
- *Financial constraints continue to impact on the ability of students to afford fees*
- *The lack of job adverts asking for a degree in Youth Work, and wider perceptions that career options are limited*
- *A loss of 'pipeline' as the number of youth services reduces*
 - *This impacts on recruitment where courses stipulate the need for 'experience'*
- *A loss of 'pipeline' between Level 2 qualifications and Level 6*
- *A lower profile for youth work than in the past*

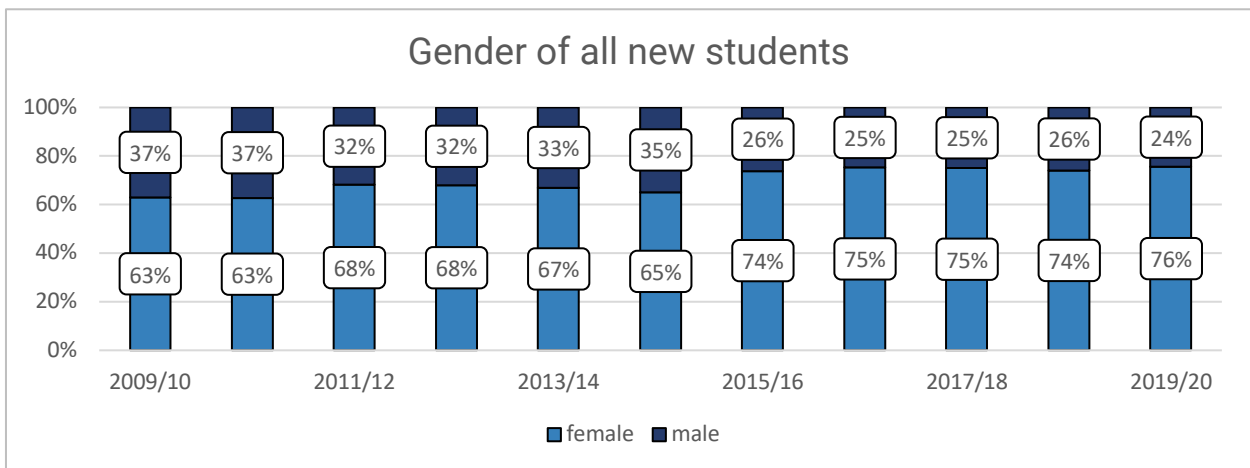


It is worth noting that:

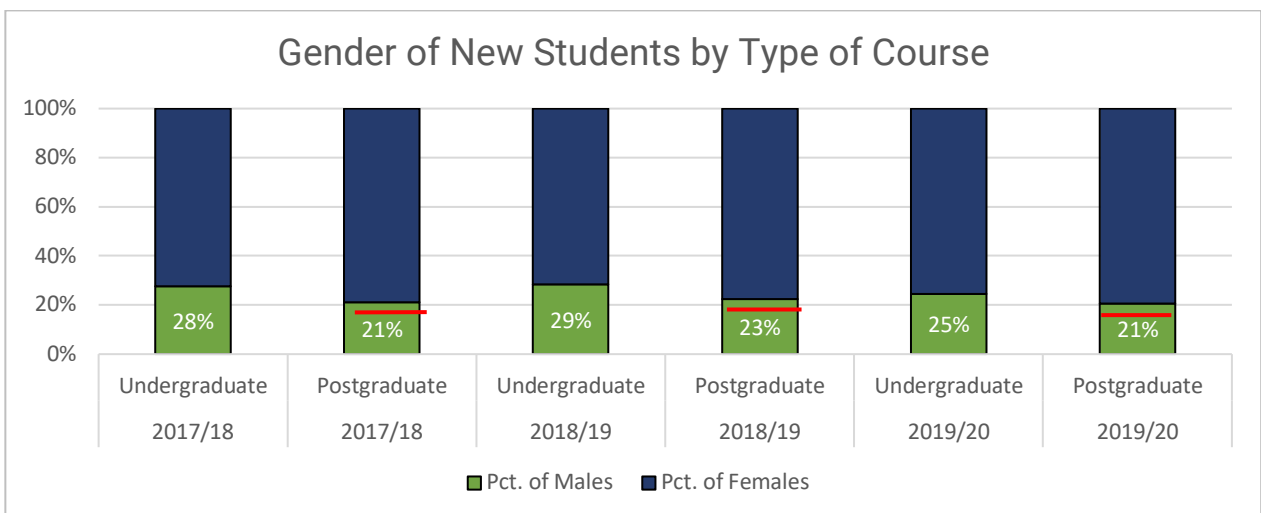
- The bursary scheme is increasing the number of learners achieving qualification at level 3, and this provides a market for moving on to level 6 eventually. The workforce strategy should take account of this.
- The level 3 apprenticeship will begin taking learners in the near future, and this is another potential pool of learners moving on the level 6 which must be planned for. The development of stand-alone units at levels 4 & 5 must take into account the development of the market at level 6, and where possible should support further recruitment.

5.0.6 New Student Demographics - Gender

There is continuing trend of a large gender imbalance in student recruitment. Whilst this has always been evident it has become increasingly divergent since 2015/16, with c. 75% of new students being female. This is above the national average for all courses of c. 57% of enrolled students being female.²



This is slightly more pronounced at postgraduate levels.

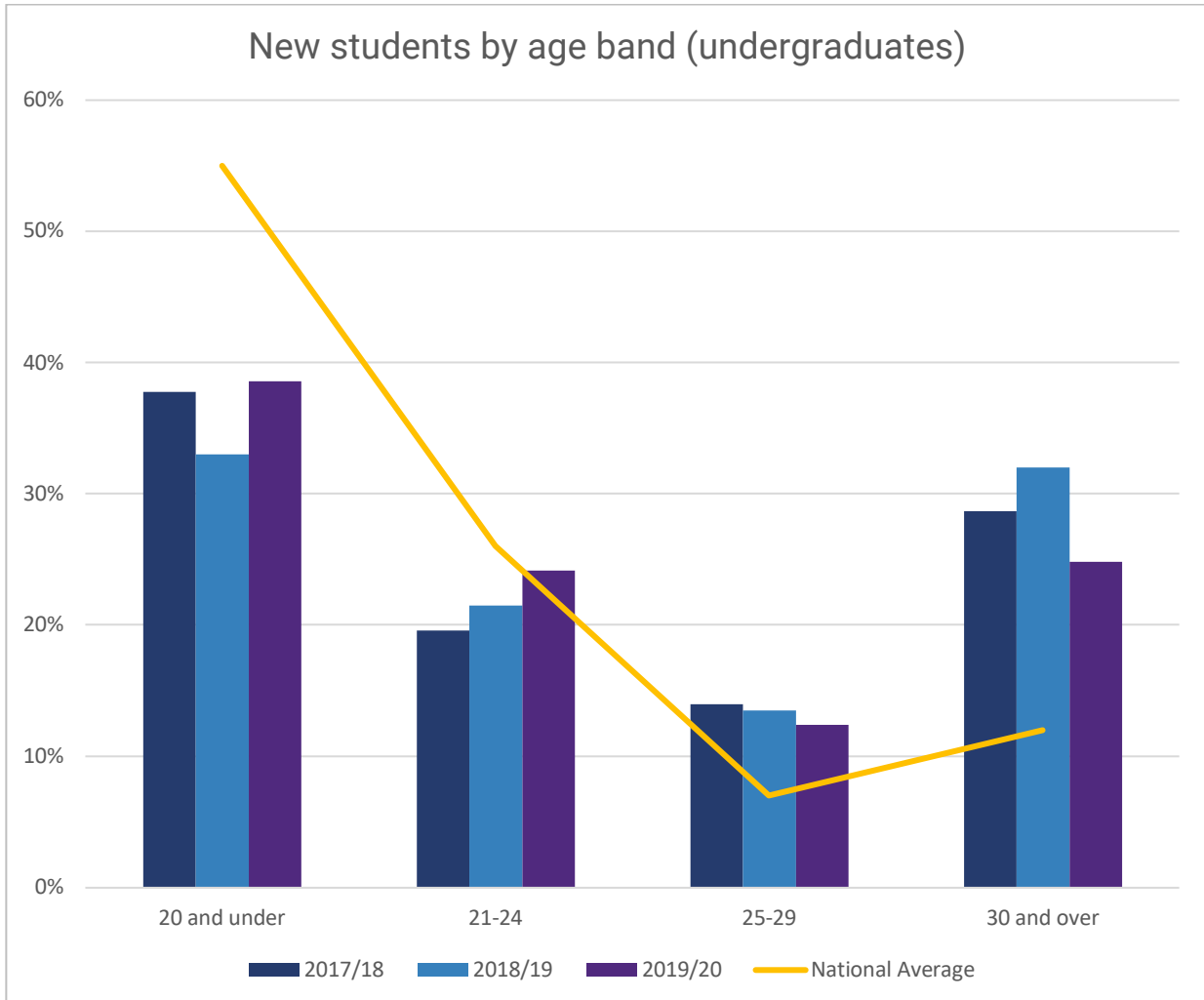


No potential reasons for this were given in the responses.

² Available at; <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-01-2020/sb255-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers>

5.0.7 New Student Demographics – Age

The age profile of undergraduates on Youth and Community Work courses is far older than the national average for other undergraduate entry.³



There are several possible reasons for this, but comments suggest that amongst younger students there is:

- A lack of confidence amongst school-leavers as to the usefulness of a youth and community work degree for career options.
- A lack of awareness as to the possibility of youth and community work as a viable degree or career option.
- A loss of 'pipeline' from youth services

Conversely, several older students undertake a JNC endorsed youth work degree as a part of CPD, or transfer into the career from related sectors.

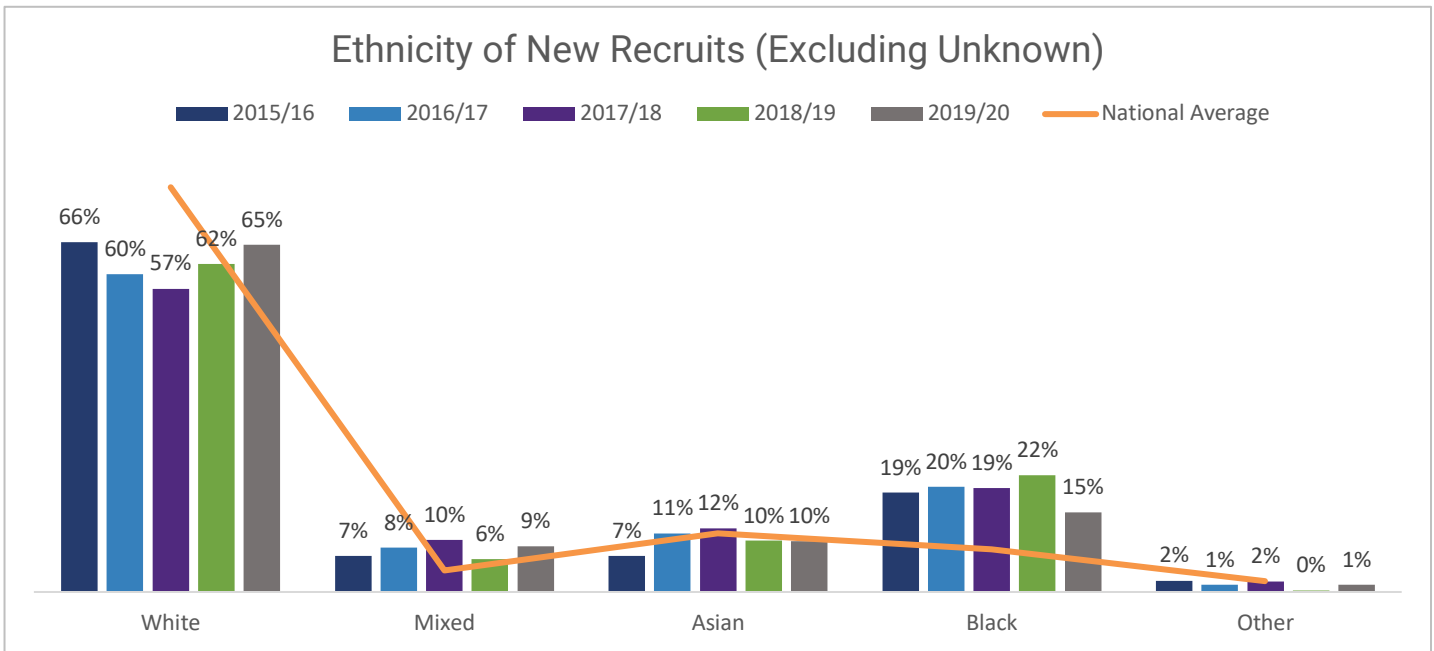
It follows that the age profile of postgraduates are older than the national average for postgraduate degrees.

³ The 'average' was calculated over the age profile of 'all undergraduate' students in England over academic years 2016/17 to 2018/19. Available at; <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-01-2020/sb255-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers>

5.0.8 New Student Demographics – Ethnicity

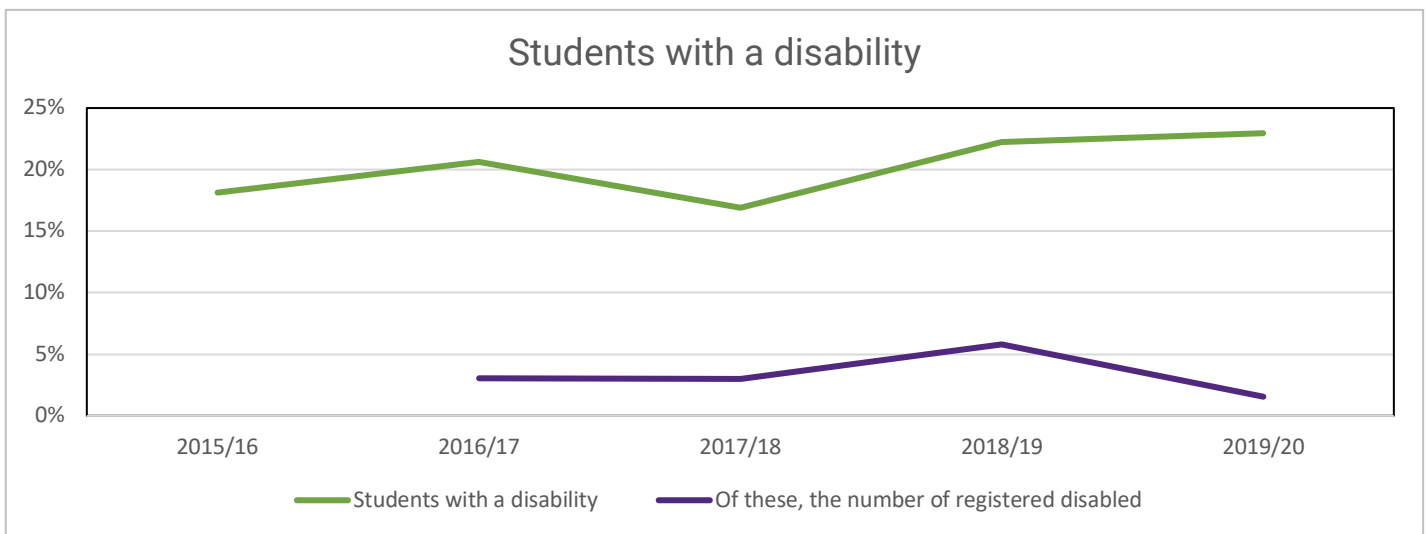
Data on ethnicity is collected in accordance with the categories recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality, based on the Census. Information is requested under sixteen categories of ethnic origin which are summarised into groupings as per below.

The intake of students continues to be increasingly more diverse than the UK average for all HE student enrolments with a greater proportion of people of colour enrolling than the average for all courses.

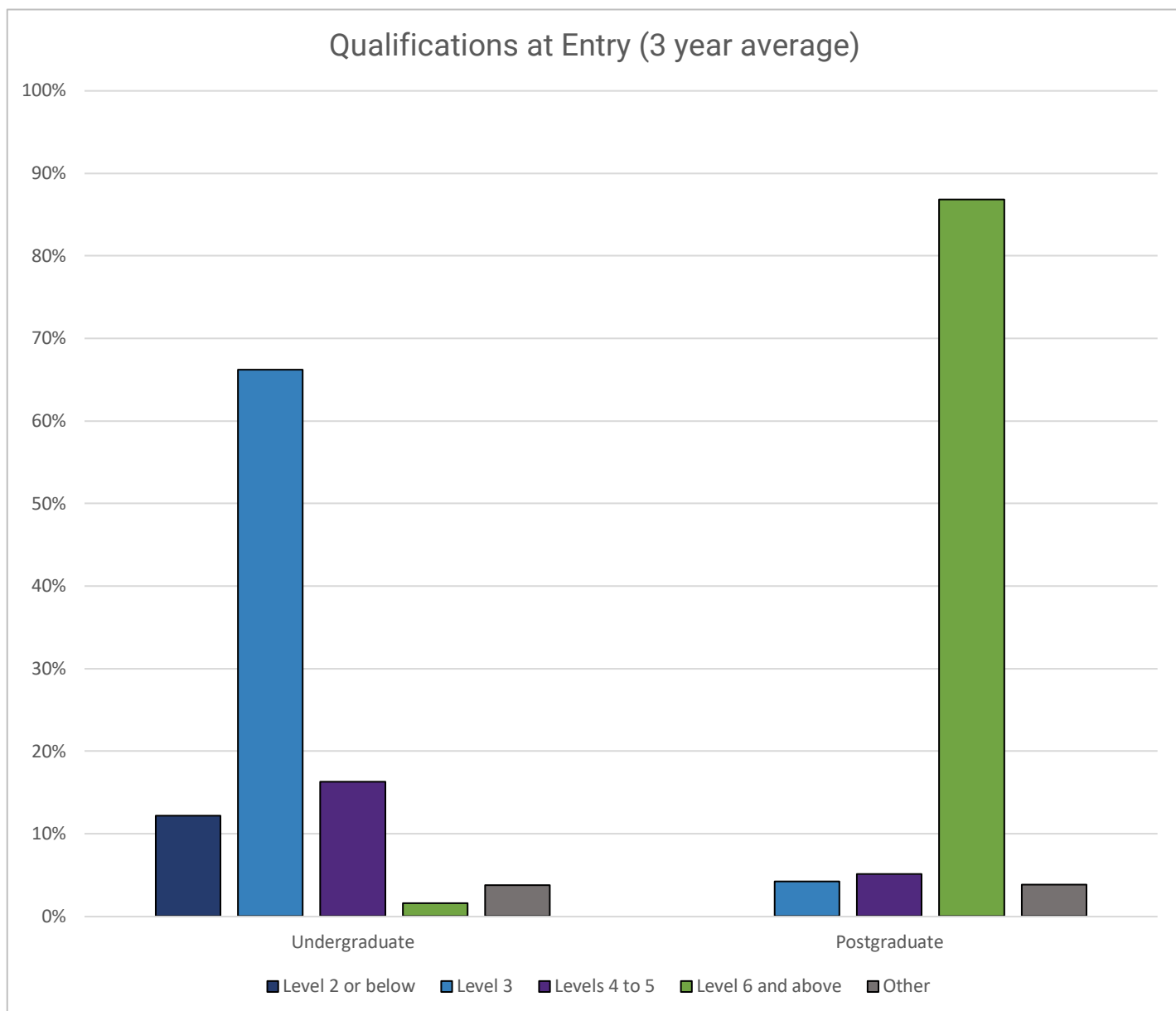


5.0.9 New Student Demographics – Disability

Over the past five years the percentage of new recruits with a disability has consistently been near the 20% mark, with 3% to 6% of all students registered disabled. There is no further breakdown available regarding the types of disability, but the figure of 20% is higher than the UK average across all HE courses for the same period which stands at c. 12%.



5.1.0 New Student Demographics – Qualifications at Entry



Postgraduate courses are naturally well populated with students who have at least a degree level qualification. Over the last 3 years 87% of all postgraduate students hold a degree.

Of concern is a steady trend downwards in the amount of new undergraduate recruits who have at least a Level 3 (A-Level equivalent) as their highest qualification upon entry. This, combined with a smaller proportion of undergraduate students being 21 or under, suggests that youth work is not a favoured route for those leaving formal education, and may be a contributory reason to students failing due 'academic failure'.

5.1.1 Current students – Attendance

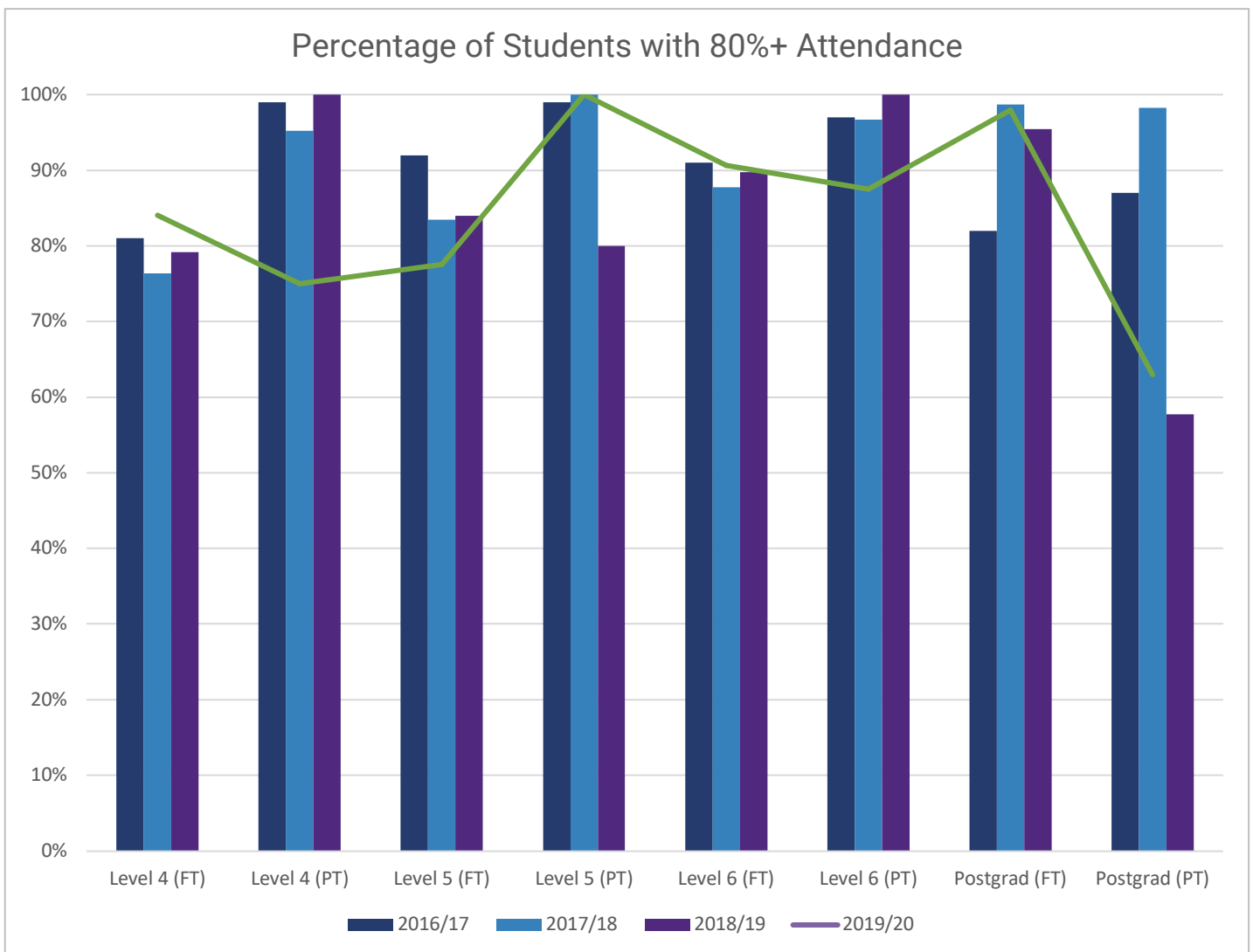
Attendance rates remain broadly consistent with previous years except for a decline in the percentage of part-time Level 4 students achieving at least 80% attendance rates.

Within the comments provided, the reasons for low attendance were not attributed to the pandemic, but rather reflect personal circumstances (a theme evident in previous years), which may have been exacerbated due to the effects of the pandemic:

- Demands on a caring role
- Childcare issues (particularly child illness)
- Other family / household barriers
- This year there were multiple pregnancies

Aside from part-time postgraduate students, 75% of students at all other levels achieved at least 80% attendance.

Promisingly the attendance rate of full-time Level 4 students was at 84%, the highest since at least 2014/15 despite the pandemic and a switch to online-learning.



5.1.2 Current students – Retention and completion

Completion rates were down across all levels this year. However, there were several mitigating circumstances related to Covid-19. The pandemic delayed completion for all students on various courses and exacerbated existing difficulties for those who have further commitments outside of study.

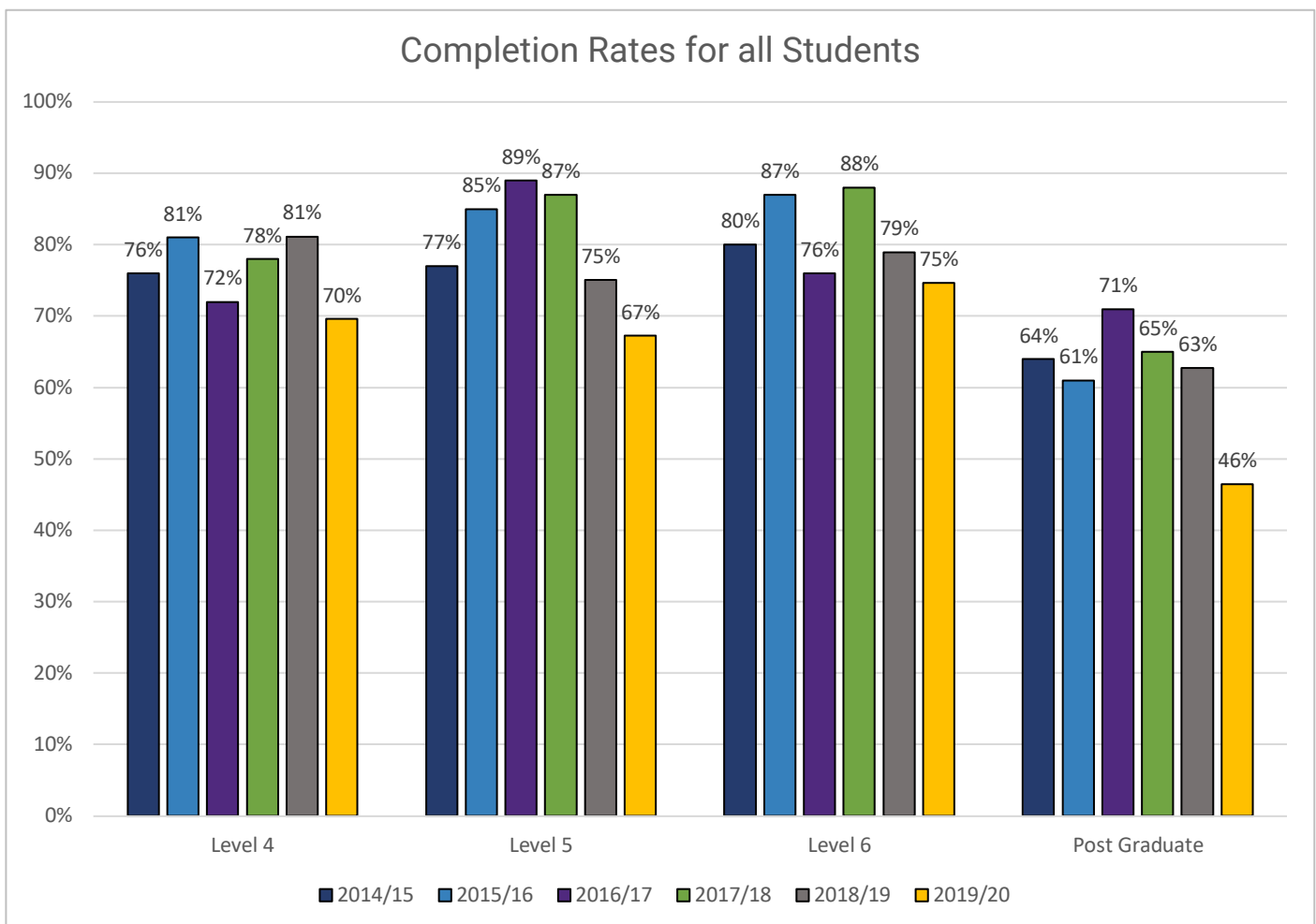
... very difficult for many students ... to continue with paid employment and manage a household with children, which has been curtailed by Covid restrictions.

The 2019-20 cohort have had placements disrupted due to the pandemic so we have extended the submission dates ... final grades are not available yet

The pandemic resulted in students being unable to complete their second placement module and their research projects.

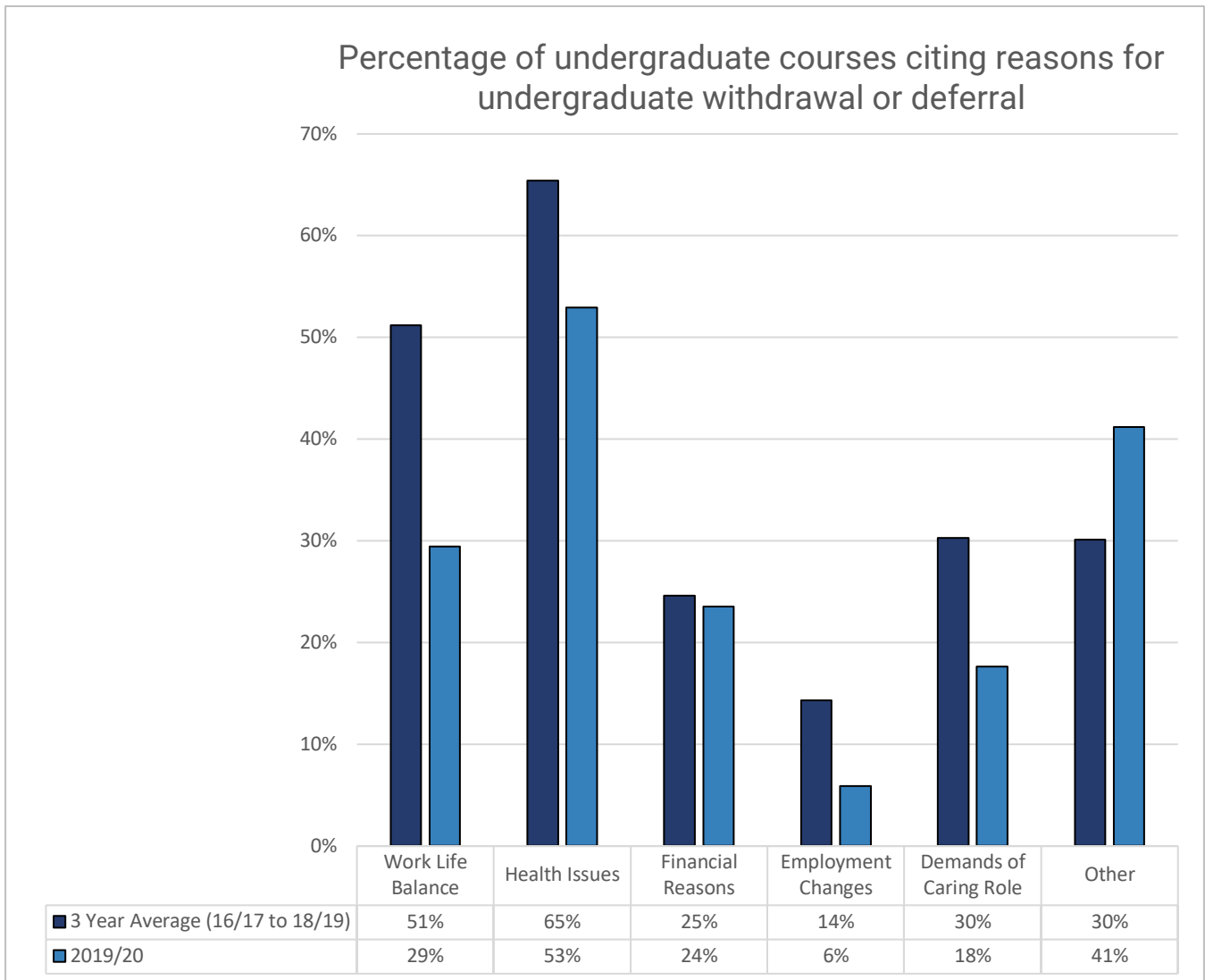
Expected Postgraduate completion rates were also hit by a continued combination of the below:

- Not wishing to progress beyond a PgDip qualification
- Not able to fund themselves beyond a PgDip, whilst the first part is sponsored by employers
- Being unable to match the increased academic requirements that a step up to Masters level necessitates.



5.1.3 Current students – Withdrawal

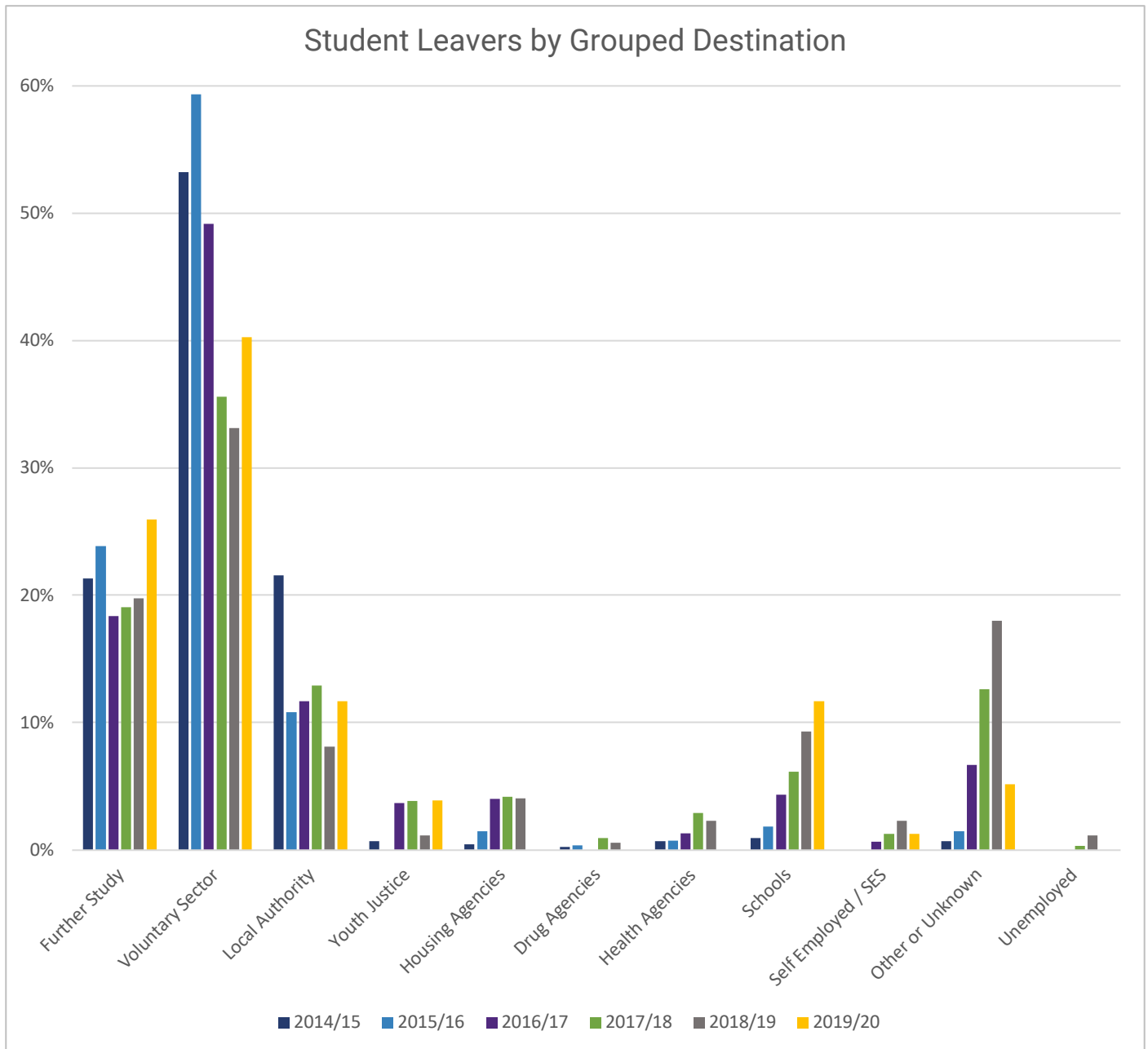
In a similar vein, student withdrawal or deferral rates were impacted by the pandemic with more courses citing withdrawal or deferral for ‘other’ reasons, of which the comments consistently mentioned Covid-19 as a contributory factor.



With more students on youth and community work courses being from an older age-profile or being already employed there are generally more responsibilities and commitments outside of studies which affect students’ ability to complete (such as childcare, child-birth, and employment).

Mental health also continues to be an oft-mentioned reason for non-completion, despite the increased pastoral care and closer tailored support offered by HEIs in recent years.

5.1.4 – Destination of Graduates



There is more complete data for student-leaver destinations this year than in previous.

This continues to show that, where known, there are high employment rates amongst graduates, with increasing diversity in the sectors welcoming the skills and qualifications that a JNC-validated course provides.

Notable this year is a continued upward trend in the proportion of leavers entering employment in education settings, and the halting of continued decline in employment in the voluntary sector.