

**Full Report**

# **Non-completion at the University of North London and London Guildhall University: a case study**

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## Executive summary

1. Most of the increasing attention paid to widening participation recently has been focused on issues concerned with attracting students from a wider range of backgrounds to enter higher education. There is also a focus on differences between the universities attended by those students from poor background who do enter higher education and those attended by better off students.
2. One aspect of widening participation that has not been given the attention it should receive concerns the outcomes of students once they have entered higher education, and in particular the question of non-completion. The level of non-completion in this country is low by international standards, and a recent OECD study<sup>1</sup> showed a non-completion rate in the UK of just 17 per cent compared to an average rate of nearly double that in the OECD as a whole. This is a clear indication of the success of many HEIs that have worked hard to widen participation in HE amongst students from non-traditional backgrounds, whilst maintaining low rates of non-completion.
3. Nevertheless, for most students who fail to complete their studies this represents a source of disappointment, and a reduction in their life chances. Indeed, there is research evidence (from the Wider Benefits of Education Group at the Institute of Education) which suggests that in many respects those who begin a higher education course and fail to complete are worse off than those who never go to university at all. Those who are concerned with widening participation need to be concerned about non-completion too, particularly as those who fail to complete their studies are disproportionately from poor backgrounds (although the most direct correlation is between non-completion and previous educational attainment, which is in turn correlated with social background).
4. London Metropolitan University, which was created as a result of the merger of the University of North London (UNL) and London Guildhall University (LGU) was concerned about the apparently very different rates of non-completion of its two constituent parts. London Metropolitan has a strong commitment to widening participation, and more generally to ensuring that students from the widest range of backgrounds have as good a prospect as possible of succeeding in their studies. The relatively large number of students apparently failing to complete was therefore of concern, to the extent that it might imply that the university was not providing the best possible experience for the students affected.
5. The apparent difference in non-completion of the two constituent universities suggested that if the performance of the new combined university could match the best practice and achievements of each then the student experience of the whole would be improved. This study was therefore commissioned to investigate what could be learned about the different non-completion rates of London Guildhall and the University of North London, with a view to learning lessons for the future. It represents an interesting case-study with the possibility of wider lessons for the sector as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> Education at a Glance, OECD 2004

6. The performance indicators published by HEFCE allow non-completion to be looked at from several points of view, and on most of these the overall student outcomes at the two institutions were more similar than might be apparent. For example, the study established that non-completion from the second year in the two universities was broadly the same. However, there was one important and significant respect in which the non-completion rates between the two universities differed, and where there did appear to be a real problem at UNL: the proportion of students who dropped out from UNL in their first year was very much higher.

7. Having established that there were indeed significant differences in non-completion between the two universities, the characteristics of the students of the two universities were considered. This was first to try and identify if there were significant differences between the student bodies that might explain the differences in non-completion. It is known, for example, that on a nation-wide basis, students with better prior educational achievements are less likely to drop-out than students with poorer previous educational achievements. Secondly it was to try and identify in more detail if there were particular characteristics that distinguished the students who dropped out, for example, those studying particular courses or routes of entry.

8. A large number of characteristics were therefore examined, beginning with those that form the basis of the published performance indicators, and their associated benchmarks. The PIs and benchmarks look at a limited number of student characteristics: age, subject, and qualifications on entry - those that account for the great majority of the differences between students at a national level. It was possible that other differences would be uncovered, however, that were not recognised in the performance indicators, and which might go some way towards explaining the variation in first year non-completion rates. The study therefore went on to look at other data, and carried out a number of analyses not previously performed through a more detailed look at age, subject, and qualifications on entry, and by looking at additional factors such as ethnicity, qualification aim, and application route.

9. Few significant differences were found in the characteristics of the two student populations. In fact, they were similar to a considerable extent, and differences of performance could not be attributed to this. The most important finding was that the entry qualifications of students were broadly similar. Previous qualifications on entry, despite being known to be the factor most closely correlated to non-completion, did not account for the variation in first year non-completion rates. The age and social profiles (as far as the data allowed conclusions in this area) of the student bodies were also similar. While there were differences in the academic profiles of the two student bodies, the differences in subjects studied did not explain the different first year drop-out rates. The minority groups that made up the student population were also similar, and non-completion rates were disproportionately high at UNL across students from all types of ethnic background.

10. Examples of two of these analyses are given below: The first considers whether differential drop-out rates might be explained by differences in the nature of the entry qualifications of the students attending the universities.

**Non-continuation of young, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by entry qualification**

	<b>LGU</b>		<b>UNL</b>		<b>Sector</b>
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue	% non-continue
A-level points 26 and above	13	<b>30</b>	12	<b>0</b>	3
A-level points 24	17	<b>6</b>	9	<b>0</b>	4
A-level points 22	20	<b>5</b>	13	<b>17</b>	5
A-level points 20	48	<b>19</b>	26	<b>12</b>	6
A-level points 18	70	<b>9</b>	37	<b>24</b>	6
A-level points 16	91	<b>10</b>	54	<b>28</b>	8
A-level points 14	99	<b>13</b>	79	<b>19</b>	8
A-level points 12	124	<b>8</b>	93	<b>16</b>	10
A-level points 10	122	<b>9</b>	105	<b>14</b>	11
A-level points 8	220	<b>11</b>	136	<b>16</b>	11
A-level points 4	115	<b>17</b>	97	<b>14</b>	12
A-level points not known	8	<b>25</b>	55	<b>15</b>	14
Access / foundation course	29	<b>10</b>	29	<b>18</b>	8
BTEC / ONC	52	<b>17</b>	109	<b>13</b>	15
GNVQ level 3	290	<b>16</b>	247	<b>21</b>	15
HE qualification	40	<b>13</b>	63	<b>17</b>	12
None	*	<b>50</b>	5	<b>40</b>	17
Others	32	<b>19</b>	64	<b>32</b>	18
unknown	30	<b>24</b>	--	<b>0</b>	18
All qualifications	1422	<b>13</b>	1237	<b>18</b>	8

Note: Where the number of students was less than 5, this is displayed as \*

11. This table demonstrates that the types of qualifications on entry of young students entering the two institutions were broadly similar. LGU had around 200 more A-level students, but this did not have a significant impact on the benchmark calculated for non-completion for young students in comparison to UNL. This was because the majority of these additional A-level students were entrants with low level A-level points where the sector average non-completion rate is not dissimilar to the non-completion rates for entrants with non-A-level qualifications. The data show that with few exception, non-completion rates were higher at UNL across all of the different types and levels of qualifications. The broad conclusion to be drawn from this table is that no one type of entry qualification caused the high levels of non-completion at UNL.

12. A similar analysis was carried out for the subjects studied by students at the two universities, with similar conclusions. The results are shown in the table below. The overall message from this table is that there was no one subject that caused the high rates of non-completion at UNL. Mathematical sciences and computer sciences stood out as a major subject area that had particularly high non-completion rates, and this was highlighted in the comparison with LGU (and the sector). However, each of the major subject areas, with the

one exception of biological sciences and physical sciences, had high non-completion rates that were considerably higher than at LGU and far from the sector averages (the two other subject areas where UNL matched or outperformed LGU – Engineering and Languages – were very small).

**Non-continuation of young, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by subject**

	LGU		UNL		Sector
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue	% non-continue
Medicine, dentistry and veterinary science	0		0		3
Subjects allied to medicine	0		52	<b>6</b>	6
Biological sciences and physical sciences	56	<b>13</b>	152	<b>14</b>	6
Agriculture and related subjects	0		0		8
Mathematical sciences and computer sciences	149	<b>13</b>	267	<b>23</b>	9
Engineering and technology	27	<b>15</b>	17	<b>12</b>	9
Architecture, building and planning	0		9	<b>22</b>	8
Social studies and law	232	<b>13</b>	115	<b>19</b>	7
Business and administrative studies and librarianship and information sciences	318	<b>11</b>	251	<b>16</b>	9
Languages and humanities	20	<b>20</b>	64	<b>20</b>	6
Creative arts and design	110	<b>14</b>	100	<b>18</b>	9
Education	0		41	<b>17</b>	8
Combined and Invalid subject of qualification aim	510	<b>15</b>	169	<b>19</b>	8
All subjects	1422	<b>13</b>	1237	<b>18</b>	8

13. So drop-out rates were higher at UNL than at LGU, and these differences were not accounted for by differences in the nature of the student body. The study then looked to see if there were particular groups of student at UNL whose drop-out rates were particularly high compared to LMU. If there were, then this would suggest where to focus attention in trying to deal with the problem. The variables examined included age, subject, qualification on entry, ethnicity, route of entry, and qualification aim. A number of groups were identified who appeared to have particularly high drop-out rates, in particular:

- Older 'young' entrants and mature entrants aged 21-23
- Some major subjects such as Business Studies, Business Administration, English, Applied Psychology, Computing, Environmental and Social Studies
- Young GNVQ entrants, entrants whose highest qualification recorded is GCSEs and mature entrants with an existing HE qualification

- Students on foundation years
- White and Black females and females from 'other' ethnic groups
- Male entrants, in particular Black males and males from 'other' ethnic groups
- Direct entrants, in particular mature direct entrants

14. Although these groups did have relatively high drop-out rate, they by no means accounted for the whole discrepancy. Even if all these students were excluded from the analysis, a substantial unexplained difference remained.

15. The analysis so far confirms that differences existed between the two universities and confirms that the differences were real and substantial, and not explained by any obvious factors revealed through data analysis. It appears that it was probably not differences in the characteristics of the two student bodies that gave rise to the different rates of drop-out, and this suggests that it was something about the way the two universities were organised or about their culture and direction that was the cause. In particular, because the very great majority of drop-out took place in the first year - and the entire difference between the two was accounted for by the difference in the first year<sup>2</sup> - further investigation probably ought to be focused on the differences in the provision made by the two universities for first-year students, including the admissions and induction processes. These are matters that the university has subsequently followed up.

16. The culture and ethos of a university are difficult to capture in data. However, there were some clues which the study identified, which suggested that despite the apparent similarities of their student bodies the two universities were in fact very different in their philosophy and academic approach, to an extent which may be significant in explaining the differences in non-continuation. In particular, although both institutions had a clear commitment to widening participation, UNL showed some highly distinctive attributes in this respect. In particular:

- a. A much higher proportion of students were admitted without formal qualifications – for example 113 were admitted to UNL on the basis of GCSE as their highest qualifications, compared to 26 at LGU; and 70 were admitted to UNL on the basis of experience, without formal Accreditation of Prior Learning, compared to 42 at LGU.
- b. A much higher proportion of enrolments resulted from direct application, and did not go through the central UCAS process (18 per cent at UNL, compared to 7 per cent at LGU), suggesting a more active outreach programme.
- c. A remarkably high proportion of students were drawn from the immediate locality. 13 of the 15 most important recruitment postcode areas were immediately contiguous to UNL, whereas the 15 most important postcodes for LGU were dispersed around London and the South East. UNL was much more of a neighbourhood university.

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, UNL's drop-out rate in year 2 is slightly lower than LGU's.

17. This suggests that UNL might have been taking on a higher proportion of entrants who might not have applied elsewhere – and indeed might not have been accepted had they applied - and might have a higher propensity not to complete. At this stage, this is speculation and needs further investigation.

18. An earlier HEPI report<sup>3</sup> looked at differences in non-completion in the UK and the USA and concluded that the higher non-completion rates in the USA were explained in part at least by the much greater open access ethos that existed there, where students are admitted to university who almost certainly would not be admitted in the UK. It appears that similar differences in philosophy may have been at work between UNL and LGU, which would go a long way to explaining the otherwise unexplained differences in non-completion. Open access has a price which is paid by those institutions with the greatest commitment to widening participation, and we need to recognise this in interpreting non-completion rates.

19. There may be a relationship between non-completion and the motivation and commitment levels of the student. These factors could not be measured in this analysis – two students that look the same in terms of their entry qualifications, age, subject studied etc, could have very different levels of commitment and motivation. In theory, it is possible that this could be the significant difference between the two groups of students that otherwise look very similar. It is possible that if the open access philosophy at UNL is allowing students to enter with lower levels of commitment and motivation, this could be contributing to the higher rates of first year non-completion at UNL. At this stage, this remains speculation.

20. The study did not consider pedagogic issues, but identified a number of these that would also warrant further investigation to establish if these may have contributed to the different non-completion. In particular, the Departmental structure at LGU was much stronger than at UNL, and there was a close relationship between courses and departments. There is no suggestion at this stage that these differences caused different rates of drop-out, but they are differences that were observed and ought to be investigated in any follow-up. One approach ought to be to identify which parts of the two universities performed most similarly, and which most differently, and to explore in qualitative terms how behaviour and practices differed in these areas between the two universities.

21. The specific analysis contained in this report, and the tentative conclusions, are particular to UNL, LGU and London Metropolitan University. However, the overall approach is one which should be adopted by any institution concerned about non-completion. In particular, plentiful data are available in this country to allow detailed analysis of whether non-completion is particularly high in respect of certain categories of student or provision made by the university. And if such analysis does not provide explanations, this study has provided pointers of the sorts of further aspects of a university's approach and provision that might be examined.

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<sup>3</sup> New Dogs and Old Tricks: What Can the UK Teach the US about University Education in -- HEPI 2004

## Part 1: Introduction and clarification of problem

22. The Higher Education Policy Institute was asked by London Metropolitan University to investigate the discrepancy in retention of students between the City Campus (previously London Guildhall University (LGU)) and the North Campus (previously University of North London (UNL)).

23. This note begins by establishing the dimensions of the issue by reference to the HEFCE performance indicators. It then looks at the characteristics of the student bodies of the two universities, first by looking at the data that underpin the performance indicators and then by analysing these in more detail, using HESA data. Finally, it looks at a number of dimensions of the student populations – by qualification aim, ethnicity and social/demographic variables - not previously available.

24. According to the benchmarks calculated by the HEFCE for Performance Indicators, the two institutions have very similar benchmarks for retention and therefore should have similar levels of non-completion. Indeed, taking into account students, staff, research, finance, and size, the analysis shows that the University of North London is more similar to London Guildhall University than any other university and vice versa<sup>4</sup>. They are what would be described as brothers within a family.

25. The PIs provide two ways of looking at the question of non-completion. Table 1 below is an extract from Table 5 of the Performance Indicators (HEFCE 2003) and shows the projected learning outcomes of full-time<sup>5</sup> students starting first degree courses in 2000-2001. This performance indicator demonstrates that both institutions have performed poorly against their benchmarks for learning outcomes with LGU performing just a little better than UNL. The benchmarks for the percentage of full-time students starting first degree courses in 2000-2001 that will gain neither an award nor transfer are 25% and 26% at LGU and UNL respectively, whereas the projected outcomes are 35% at LGU compared to 39% at UNL. This discrepancy has existed for the last 5 years of publications, and these results are a significant improvement on last year's results for UNL.

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<sup>4</sup> Internal analysis by HEFCE.

<sup>5</sup> The PIs that give rise to this study are concerned with non-completion only of full-time students. Non-completion of part-time students is a more complex notion, for which good data are not available.



**Table 1: Projected learning outcomes of full-time students starting first degree courses 2000-2001**

Institution	Number of starters	Starters who are mature %	Projected outcomes (%)				
			Degree		Neither award nor transfer		
			Projected	Bench-mark	Projected	Bench-mark	Std dev
All English institutions	233,171	23	78		15		
London Guildhall University	2,556	44	52	67	35	25	0.9
University of North London <sup>6</sup>	2,561	51	48	66	39	26	0.9

Source: HEFCE (03/59), Performance indicators in HE in the UK. Table 5.

26. The second, and more focussed view of non-completion is given in Table 2 below, which is an extract from Table 3a of the PIs publications and shows non-continuation following year of entry for full-time first degree entrants. Where Table 1 looked at overall outcomes of full-time students over 3 years of study, Table 2 looks more specifically at non-continuation rates of first year entrants after their first year. Table 2 clearly illustrates the extent of the problem with regard to first year non-completion at UNL. It shows that LGU has performed close to its benchmarks from 1996-1997 to 1999-2000, whereas at UNL the first year non-completion rate has moved progressively further away from its constant benchmark of 16% to reach 24% in 1999-2000 (although there was an improvement in 2000-01, its benchmark also lowered). This study is concerned with the difference in performance revealed in Table 2<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> For some institutions, including UNL, the profile of outcomes for the institution is markedly different from the profile of its benchmark. In most cases this is due to higher than expected percentages in the 'other award', 'transfer' and 'not known' categories. In such cases, particular care is needed in interpreting the figures, as the significance levels may be misleading.

<sup>7</sup> However, the apparent discrepancy in the pictures painted in tables 1 and 2 is something that should be investigated. It is not obvious why LGU should perform so apparently well in terms of dropout of first-year students, but apparently so badly in terms of their projected outcomes – it may, for example, have something to do with success rates in final examinations. This has not been investigated here.

**Table 2: Non-continuation following year of entry for full-time first degree entrants 1996-1997 to 1999-2000**

		Percent not in HE	Bench- mark
<b>London Guildhall University</b>	1996-1997	13	14
	1997-1998	15	14
	1998-1999	14	15
	1999-2000	14	15
	<b>2000-2001</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>University of North London</b>	1996-1997	18	16
	1997-1998	20	16
	1998-1999	22	16
	1999-2000	24	16
	<b>2000-2001</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>13</b>

Source: HEFCE (03/51 (02/52) (01/69) (00/40) and (99/66), Performance indicators in HE in the UK. Table 3a.

27. Table 2 is reproduced from the PI publication, and is familiar. The transition matrix (which is produced as part of the work on PIs) examines progression rates across each year for full-time first degree students. Tables 3-6 are drawn from the transition matrix, and give a slightly different, but more detailed view of the picture<sup>8</sup>.

28. The first thing that is apparent is that the discrepancy of non-completion rates occurs with regard to *first year* non-completion rates. Table 3 shows this quite clearly, and Table 4 shows on the other hand that the percentage of full-time first degree students that become 'inactive' after the *second* year of a course at the two institutions is very similar. For a student to be termed inactive means that they are not registered at any UK HEI that year. There is the possibility that they might return to HE, but around 85% of inactive students from UNL (around 80% from LGU) do not return to HE the following year after which they are termed 'absent'. After 2 years of inactivity HESA records show that it is very unlikely that a student will return to HE within the next 5 years. It is possible that they may return after a longer period of time, but this has not yet been shown. It is worth noting that UNL has a slightly lower percentage of second year students becoming inactive.

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<sup>8</sup> One difference between Table 2 and Table 3 is that Table 2 includes students entering the university for the first time in all years of a course, not just year 1. Table 3 include only students on year 1 of a course, but includes students not new to the university (e.g. including those transferring from a foundation course, those retaking year 1, as well as those changing course).

**Table 3: Percentage of 1st year full-time first degree students that become inactive**

	<b>LGU</b>	<b>UNL</b>
<b>1997-98</b>	16	22
<b>1998-99</b>	16	23
<b>1999-00</b>	16	26
<b>2000-01</b>	18	23

**Table 4: Percentage of 2<sup>nd</sup> year full-time first degree students that become inactive**

	<b>LGU</b>	<b>UNL</b>
<b>1997-98</b>	13	11
<b>1998-99</b>	10	11
<b>1999-00</b>	13	10
<b>2000-01</b>	13	11

29. The transition matrix highlights the discrepancy between the progression rates of first year full-time first degree students into second year full-time first degree students. Table 5 shows that this specific progression rate has declined at both institutions from 1997-98 to 2000-01. The discrepancy between the two institutions has remained.

**Table 5: Percentage of 1st year full-time first degree students that become 2<sup>nd</sup> year full-time first degree students**

	<b>LGU</b>	<b>UNL</b>
<b>1997-98</b>	69	55
<b>1998-99</b>	67	47
<b>1999-00</b>	62	40
<b>2000-01</b>	61	44

30. Students do not necessarily fail to complete when they do not progress from being first year full-time first degree students to being second year full-time first degree students. Indeed, alternative methods and modes of progression are an important element in flexible modes of delivery. Table 6 shows that when account is taken of the percentage of students that are re-taking their first year or become part-time then the discrepancy between the two institutions reduces. UNL and LGU have a similar percentage of first year FT FD students that convert to part-time courses (6% and 4% respectively in 2000-01). However UNL has nearly twice as many first year FT FD students that re-join as first year FT FD students (19%

at UNL compared to 10% at LGU)<sup>9</sup>. Whilst the discrepancy reduces, table 6 shows that there is still a considerable difference between the two institutions.

**Table 6: Percentage of 1st year full-time first degree students that become 2<sup>nd</sup> year full-time first degree students, 1<sup>st</sup> year full-time first degree students, or part-time first degree students**

	<b>LGU</b>	<b>UNL</b>
<b>1997-98</b>	79	72
<b>1998-99</b>	78	70
<b>1999-00</b>	77	66
<b>2000-01</b>	75	69

31. This analysis of the performance indicators gives a strong indication that there is an issue about which to be concerned, and that it relates to non-completion after the first year. If this issue were to have been addressed successfully, then dropout rates at UNL would have reduced to match or even improve on those at LGU. The next section looks at the PI data in more detail.

## **Part 2: Close investigation of the PI data**

**Table 7: Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time first degree entrants**

	<b>London Guildhall University</b>			<b>University of North London</b>		
	Total entrants	% not in HE	Bench-mark %	Total entrants	% not in HE	Bench-mark %
2000-01 All entrants	2,409	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	2,430	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>
young	1,421	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	1,236	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>
mature	984	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	1,190	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>

32. Table 7 (taken from Table T3a of the PIs) shows the results in Table 2 above in more detail. The first thing to note is that the number of full-time first degree entrants is very similar at the two institutions and that the proportion of young and mature students within these groups is also very similar. This means that when looking at all entrants, a high proportion of young or mature students at one institution does not skew the comparison between the two institutions.

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<sup>9</sup> This is something that might be worth investigating. The very high proportion of first-year students at UNL who retake the first year is on the face of it a remarkable phenomenon and could be an indication of something unique to the first year of UNL.

33. LGU performs close to its benchmarks – and is meeting benchmark targets for mature entrants. UNL however is considerably above its benchmarks for non-continuation, which are the same benchmarks as for LGU for all entrants and young entrants and UNL is actually benchmarked lower for mature entrants. UNL is 6 percentage points above its benchmark for non-continuation of young entrants, and 10 percentage points above its benchmark for non-continuation of mature entrants. This clarifies the extent to which the non-continuation of full-time first degree entrants, both young and mature, is a problem at UNL.

**Table 8: Non-continuation following year of entry: full-time other undergraduate entrants**

2000-01	London Guildhall University			University of North London		
	Total entrants	% not in HE	Bench-mark %	Total entrants	% not in HE	Bench-mark %
All entrants	436	<b>33</b>	<b>26</b>	424	<b>26</b>	<b>22</b>
young	230	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>	236	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>
mature	204	<b>46</b>	<b>34</b>	188	<b>32</b>	<b>25</b>

34. Table 8 (derived from the data underlying the PIs) shows non continuation rates for non first degree full-time undergraduates. Again, the numbers of such entrants are very similar at the two institutions and the proportion of young and mature students within these groups is also very similar. The benchmark for young entrants is the same at both institutions, but LGU has a considerably higher benchmark for mature entrants which increases its benchmark for all entrants in comparison to UNL.

35. In terms of other undergraduate entrants UNL is performing closer to its benchmarks than LGU. UNL is performing relatively close to its benchmark for young entrants, but is 7 percentage points above its benchmark for mature entrants. This is not as high as LGU which is 12 percentage points above its benchmark for mature entrants<sup>10</sup>, but it is nevertheless still a problem area for UNL.

36. Both institutions have high benchmarks in comparison to national averages. Benchmarks take into account the age, subject of study, and entry qualifications of the student. The PI data allow us to look at each of these factors in more detail. Age has been considered in tables 7 and 8. Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12 consider what the PIs can tell us about subject of study and entry qualification of student for both young and mature students.

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<sup>10</sup> This is a surprising finding which merits closer examination. Although the numbers are relatively small, they are not insignificant, and the non-continuation of mature non first degree undergraduates is the one area where LGU performs significantly less well than UNL.

## SUBJECT

**Table 9: Non-continuation of young, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by subject<sup>11</sup>**

	LGU		UNL		Sector
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue	% non-continue
Medicine, dentistry and veterinary science	0		0		3
Subjects allied to medicine	0		52	<b>6</b>	6
Biological sciences and physical sciences	56	<b>13</b>	152	<b>14</b>	6
Agriculture and related subjects	0		0		8
Mathematical sciences and computer sciences	149	<b>13</b>	267	<b>23</b>	9
Engineering and technology	27	<b>15</b>	17	<b>12</b>	9
Architecture, building and planning	0		9	<b>22</b>	8
Social studies and law	232	<b>13</b>	115	<b>19</b>	7
Business and administrative studies and librarianship and information sciences	318	<b>11</b>	251	<b>16</b>	9
Languages and humanities	20	<b>20</b>	64	<b>20</b>	6
Creative arts and design	110	<b>14</b>	100	<b>18</b>	9
Education	0		41	<b>17</b>	8
Combined and Invalid subject of qualification aim	510	<b>15</b>	169	<b>19</b>	8
All subjects	1422	<b>13</b>	1237	<b>18</b>	8

37. The overall message from table 9 is that there is no one subject that is causing the high rates of non-completion at UNL. Mathematical sciences and computer sciences stands out as a major subject area that has particularly high non-completion rates, and this is highlighted in the comparison with LGU (and the sector). However, each of the major subject areas, with the one exception of biological sciences and physical sciences, has high non-completion rates that are considerably higher than at LGU and far from the sector averages (the two other subject areas where UNL matches or outperforms LGU – Engineering and Languages – are very small).

38. Non-completion rates for biological sciences and physical sciences are similar at UNL to LGU. Both institutions still have non-completion rates of more than double the sector average in this subject area, but this may not be a very fair comparison as the benchmarks

<sup>11</sup> Note the data for Table 9 and all the tables that follow, as well as figure 1, are taken from the underlying data for UNL and LGU, used in the calculation of the PIs.

for these two institutions are always above the sector average. Even though this is not one of the larger subject areas in terms of student numbers, it is worth noting that UNL meets sector average rates of non-completion for subjects allied to medicine.

**Table 10: Non-continuation of mature, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by subject**

	LGU		UNL		Sector
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue	% non-continue
Medicine, dentistry and veterinary science	0		0		3
Subjects allied to medicine	0		63	<b>19</b>	12
Biological sciences and physical sciences	24	<b>21</b>	82	<b>29</b>	16
Agriculture and related subjects	0		0		12
Mathematical sciences and computer sciences	131	<b>21</b>	200	<b>35</b>	19
Engineering and technology	25	<b>20</b>	40	<b>30</b>	19
Architecture, building and planning	0		19	<b>16</b>	18
Social studies and law	172	<b>18</b>	141	<b>29</b>	16
Business and administrative studies and librarianship and information sciences	182	<b>19</b>	232	<b>30</b>	17
Languages and humanities	12	<b>42</b>	102	<b>25</b>	15
Creative arts and design	81	<b>12</b>	81	<b>15</b>	12
Education	0		59	<b>16</b>	11
Combined and Invalid subject of qualification aim	357	<b>19</b>	173	<b>26</b>	19
All subjects	984	<b>19</b>	1192	<b>27</b>	15

39. Table 10 demonstrates a similar pattern in terms of mature students: no one subject area is responsible for the higher levels of non-completion at UNL with high levels of non-completion demonstrated across each of the major subject areas. The situation for LGU is quite different for mature students with LGU performing very close to or meeting the sector average in each of the major subject areas. Mathematical sciences and computer sciences stand out again at UNL as a particular problem area, but non-completion rates at UNL are considerably higher in each major subject area with no exceptions (the comparison for Languages and Humanities is not really meaningful, given the very small numbers at LGU).

## ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

**Table 11<sup>12</sup>: Non-continuation of young, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by entry qualification**

	LGU		UNL		Sector
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue	% non-continue
A-level points 26 and above	13	<b>30</b>	12	<b>0</b>	3
A-level points 24	17	<b>6</b>	9	<b>0</b>	4
A-level points 22	20	<b>5</b>	13	<b>17</b>	5
A-level points 20	48	<b>19</b>	26	<b>12</b>	6
A-level points 18	70	<b>9</b>	37	<b>24</b>	6
A-level points 16	91	<b>10</b>	54	<b>28</b>	8
A-level points 14	99	<b>13</b>	79	<b>19</b>	8
A-level points 12	124	<b>8</b>	93	<b>16</b>	10
A-level points 10	122	<b>9</b>	105	<b>14</b>	11
A-level points 8	220	<b>11</b>	136	<b>16</b>	11
A-level points 4	115	<b>17</b>	97	<b>14</b>	12
A-level points not known	8	<b>25</b>	55	<b>15</b>	14
Access / foundation course	29	<b>10</b>	29	<b>18</b>	8
BTEC / ONC	52	<b>17</b>	109	<b>13</b>	15
GNVQ level 3	290	<b>16</b>	247	<b>21</b>	15
HE qualification	40	<b>13</b>	63	<b>17</b>	12
None	*	<b>50</b>	5	<b>40</b>	17
Others	32	<b>19</b>	64	<b>32</b>	18
unknown	30	<b>24</b>	*	<b>0</b>	18
All qualifications	1422	<b>13</b>	1237	<b>18</b>	8

40. Table 11 demonstrates that the types of qualifications on entry of young students entering the two institutions are broadly similar. LGU has around 200 more A-level students, but this does not have a significant impact on the benchmark calculated for non-completion for young students in comparison to UNL. This is because the majority of these additional A-level students are entrants with low level A-level points where the sector average non-completion rate is not dissimilar to the non-completion rates for entrants with non-A-level qualifications. The broad conclusion to be drawn from Table 11 is that no one type of entry qualification is causing the high levels of non-completion at UNL.

<sup>12</sup> Note: Values less than 5 are omitted and shown as \*



41. Taking young entrants with A-level qualifications, for both institutions the majority of A-level entrants enter with between 4 – 12 points (12 points is equivalent to 3 Ds or 2 Cs at A-level). For these entrants, LGU is generally not far from the sector average for non-completion. Although these students have some of the lowest levels of non-completion at UNL, the rate of non-completion for these students is still higher than at LGU and around 5 percentage points higher than the sector average. The exception seems to be students entering with just 4 A-level points for which non-completion at UNL is near sector average and much higher at LGU. However, it is probably misleading to look at a single A-level score because of the small numbers of entrants involved – it is preferable to look in bands<sup>13</sup>. In general, the bulk of A-level entrants have higher rates of non-completion at UNL.

42. Both institutions have a much higher rate of entrants with non- A-level qualifications than the sector as a whole. The majority of these entrants are BTEC/ ONC or GNVQ level 3 entrants. LGU is close to the sector average non-completion rate for each of the non A-level qualifications with significant numbers of students. UNL results are more mixed. UNL has a lower rate of non-completion than LGU and is below sector average for its BTEC / ONC entrants<sup>14</sup>. However, there are more than twice as many entrants with GNVQ level 3 (247 entrants) and these entrants have non-completion rates that are 5 percentage points above LGU and 6 percentage points above the sector average. The category of entrants with 'others' as their recorded qualification is also worth investigating further because it has a very high non-completion rate (32%) and not insignificant numbers at UNL (64 entrants).

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<sup>13</sup> Otherwise, we could spend a lot of time exploring why, for example, those with 20 points at LGU dropped out to such a greater extent than did those with 18 or 22 points.

<sup>14</sup> UNL also had good rates of continuation for BTEC / ONC/D students in 1999-2000, but before this time the non-continuation record for these entrants was not particularly good.

**Table 12<sup>15</sup>: Non-continuation of mature, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by entry qualification**

	<b>LGU</b>		<b>UNL</b>		<b>Sector</b>
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue	% non-continue
A-level points 30	*	<b>50</b>	*	<b>0</b>	10
A-level points 28	*	<b>0</b>	*	<b>0</b>	9
A-level points 26	0		*	<b>25</b>	10
A-level points 24	*	<b>50</b>	11	<b>18</b>	13
A-level points 22	*	<b>25</b>	9	<b>11</b>	10
A-level points 20	13	<b>15</b>	9	<b>44</b>	11
A-level points 18	8	<b>38</b>	16	<b>44</b>	10
A-level points 16	10	<b>0</b>	17	<b>47</b>	12
A-level points 14	16	<b>31</b>	18	<b>18</b>	12
A-level points 12	14	<b>29</b>	22	<b>45</b>	15
A-level points 10	16	<b>19</b>	16	<b>13</b>	11
A-level points 8	55	<b>16</b>	60	<b>37</b>	13
A-level points 4	41	<b>24</b>	56	<b>11</b>	13
A-level points not known	20	<b>35</b>	19	<b>58</b>	20
Access / foundation course	160	<b>12</b>	189	<b>20</b>	15
BTEC / ONC	50	<b>16</b>	93	<b>22</b>	15
GNVQ level 3	83	<b>24</b>	102	<b>31</b>	20
HE qualification	198	<b>11</b>	310	<b>24</b>	14
None	58	<b>31</b>	75	<b>31</b>	21
Others	150	<b>20</b>	154	<b>33</b>	20
unknown	81	<b>26</b>	9	<b>56</b>	20
All qualifications	984	<b>19</b>	1192	<b>27</b>	15

43. Table 12 demonstrates that the types of qualifications on entry of mature students entering the two institutions are broadly similar. UNL has around 200 more mature students, including approximately 100 more with an HE qualification. The broad conclusion to be drawn from Table 12 is that no one type of entry qualification is causing the high levels of non-completion amongst mature students at UNL.

44. Taking mature entrants with A-level qualifications first, for both institutions A-level entrants make up a minority of entrants, and the largest group of A-level entrants enter with between 4 – 8 points (8 points is equivalent to 2 Ds at A-level). For these entrants, non-completion rates show a mixed picture, which is likely to be largely a result of the small numbers being considered. LGU has much lower non-completion rates for entrants with 8 points and UNL has much lower non-completion rates for entrants with 4 points. Generally speaking, mature A-level entrants at both institutions have higher rates of non-completion than the sector average. The same comments apply here as were made above concerning

<sup>15</sup> Note: Values less than 5 are omitted and shown as \*

putting too much weight on the results for a single A-level points total – it is more meaningful to look in bands.

45. For both institutions the majority of mature entrants enter with non- A-level qualifications. LGU is close to the sector average non-completion rate for each of the major types of non A-level qualifications. Non-completion rates for mature entrants at UNL however, are significantly above the sector average for each of the major types of non A-level qualifications. For entrants with access or foundation courses, BTEC, ONC, GNVQ, 'none' and 'others', all of which have considerable numbers, non-completion at UNL is between 5 and 13 percentage points above the sector average. Mature entrants with HE qualifications are likely to be different types of entrants and have the lowest non-continuation rate amongst entrants with non-A-level qualifications at LGU and among the lowest at UNL. These are the largest group of mature entrants at each of the institutions. At LGU non-completion rates amongst this group are below sector average at 11 per cent, and at UNL this group's non-completion rate of 24 per cent is a little lower than its average of 27 per cent for all mature entrants to UNL, though more than double LGU's.

46. Although the picture seems reasonably consistent and clear, there could be underlying trends beneath these data that are hiding what is really going on at UNL – for example, non-completion could be much higher within a particular age-group of mature students, or amongst more specific subjects within subject areas, or within groups of qualifications. For this reason it is important to examine beneath the PI data.

### Part 3: Linking PI records to HESA data for a fuller investigation

#### AGE

**Table 13: Non-continuation of young, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by age**

Age	London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
17	13	15.4%	12.9%	7	14.3%	9.0%	8,152	7.8%	6.3%
18	576	<b>11.6%</b>	10.2%	454	<b>12.6%</b>	10.9%	127,644	<b>5.7%</b>	6.4%
19	570	<b>12.6%</b>	11.1%	487	<b>17.9%</b>	11.7%	64,778	<b>8.0%</b>	7.5%
20	285	<b>14.4%</b>	12.7%	312	<b>24.0%</b>	12.4%	21,855	<b>11.8%</b>	10.3%

47. Table 13 shows that young students tend to be older at UNL, and that it is the older young students that are more of a problem: there are more of them and they drop out at a higher rate. Across the sector as a whole, 10 per cent of young entrants are aged 20 when they enter whereas at UNL 25 per cent of young entrants are aged 20 (the figure is 20 per cent at LGU). The benchmarks in table 13 are calculated in an identical way to the PI

benchmarks in that they take account of subject, entry qualification, and age in terms of whether a student is young or mature<sup>16</sup>.

**Table 14: Non-continuation of mature, full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by age**

Age	London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
21	223	<b>19.7%</b>	16.7%	244	<b>25.4%</b>	16.1%	12,747	<b>13.4%</b>	14.5%
22	111	<b>21.6%</b>	17.5%	138	<b>26.8%</b>	15.8%	7,277	<b>14.6%</b>	14.6%
23	97	<b>23.7%</b>	17.8%	130	<b>33.1%</b>	16.3%	4,639	<b>16.7%</b>	14.7%
24	70	<b>7.1%</b>	17.8%	74	<b>32.4%</b>	15.7%	3,353	<b>16.3%</b>	14.9%
25	58	<b>17.2%</b>	17.3%	73	<b>31.5%</b>	16.5%	2,759	<b>17.4%</b>	14.8%
26	50	<b>24.0%</b>	19.4%	53	<b>20.8%</b>	15.9%	2,376	<b>15.3%</b>	14.8%
27	43	<b>9.3%</b>	19.1%	40	<b>22.5%</b>	15.0%	2,162	<b>16.2%</b>	14.7%
28	36	<b>13.9%</b>	19.1%	46	<b>21.7%</b>	15.7%	1,982	<b>13.6%</b>	14.5%
29	42	<b>23.8%</b>	16.6%	34	<b>29.4%</b>	15.9%	1,936	<b>14.8%</b>	14.7%
30	26	<b>23.1%</b>	17.2%	38	<b>34.2%</b>	16.1%	1,663	<b>14.7%</b>	14.5%
31	14	<b>21.4%</b>	17.0%	39	<b>28.2%</b>	16.8%	1,642	<b>13.9%</b>	14.6%
32	21	<b>19.0%</b>	19.0%	32	<b>6.3%</b>	15.1%	1,541	<b>15.5%</b>	14.4%
33	22	<b>31.8%</b>	19.9%	31	<b>29.0%</b>	16.1%	1,434	<b>13.6%</b>	14.6%
34-40	97	0-25%	16-19%	133	0-32%	14-16%	7,755	12-14%	14.0%
41-50	39	0-33%	12-21%	54	0-100%	13-24%	4,065	12-18%	14-15%
50+	12	0-100%	11-23%	7	0-100%	10-21%	1,030	0-67%	10-23%

48. Table 14 illustrates the high proportion of mature students at both institutions in comparison to the sector as a whole. 40 per cent and 50 per cent of entrants at LGU and UNL respectively are mature. This compares to a sector average of around 20 per cent. Table 14 shows that around 45 per cent of mature students at LGU and 52 per cent at UNL are 21-23 years old. Approximately another 25 per cent are 24-29 years old and less than 15 per cent at LGU and less than 10 per cent of entrants at UNL are 34 and over. This distribution of ages of mature entrants is very similar to the sector averages except that UNL especially has slightly higher proportions of 21-23 year-olds (sector average is 42 per cent).

<sup>16</sup> It is interesting that the published PIs do not account for each age group – they just look at all young and all mature - and therefore the differences shown in table 13 would not be reflected in the PI benchmarks. The difference in the sector non-continuation rates for older young students suggests that a more sensitive PI benchmark would be higher for young students at UNL than for LGU. However this may be, it remains the fact that UNL is above its benchmark targets for non-continuation of young entrants – and significantly above these benchmarks for older young entrants. Altering the benchmarks slightly would not change this fact. Nor would it greatly affect its position vis a vis LGU, whose benchmarks would also have to rise.

49. LGU is above its benchmarks for non-completion rates for 21-23 year-olds but UNL is then 5 to 10 percentage points above LGU (and 9 to 15 percentage points above its own benchmarks for non-completion). These non-completion rates are a serious problem at UNL because of the large number of entrants in this age category. Non-completion rates are equally high up to 25 year-olds at UNL and for 29 to 33 year-olds. Fewer students are entering within these age groups but the numbers are not insignificant. Non-completion rates are best at UNL for entrants in their late 20s (26 to 29), although the non-completion rates of these age groups are still 5 percentage points above their benchmark. Non-continuation of mature students is high at every age group at UNL, but 21-23 year-olds stand out as a particular problem because of the large proportion of mature students within this age range.

## SUBJECT

50. The first thing that can be gathered by looking more closely at the subjects studied at the two institutions is that LGU lists 45 subject titles in comparison to UNL's 330 different subject titles. Although LGU does group nearly 1,000 as studying 'BA/BSC modular programmes', which will contain many different subject combinations, nevertheless, UNL has over 150 subject combinations with just 1 student entered as studying that particular subject title. 35 of these 150 students did not complete their first year of study (23 per cent – just a little more than the average).

**Table 15: Non-continuation of full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by subject (10 largest subject areas shown in order of non-continuation rate)<sup>17</sup>**

**London Guildhall University**

<b>Programme title (as recorded on HESA records)</b>	<b>no. of students</b>	<b>% non-continue</b>
BA/BSC MODULAR PROGRAMMES	973	<b>16.2%</b>
BSC COMPUTING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS	87	<b>16.1%</b>
BSC PSYCHOLOGY (NC)	80	<b>15.0%</b>
BA FILM AND BROADCASTING PRODUCTION STUDIES	85	<b>14.1%</b>
BACHELOR OF LAWS (LL.B.)	156	<b>14.1%</b>
BA BUSINESS STUDIES	140	<b>12.9%</b>
BA (HONS) FINE ART	95	<b>12.6%</b>
BSC MULTIMEDIA SYSTEMS	58	<b>12.1%</b>
BA ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE	143	<b>11.2%</b>
BA DESIGN STUDIES	59	<b>6.8%</b>

**University of North London**

<b>Programme title (as recorded on HESA records)</b>	<b>no. of students</b>	<b>% non-continue</b>
Computing and Maths Foundation	254	<b>40.2%</b>
Business Studies	69	<b>37.7%</b>
Biology and Chemistry Foundation	99	<b>26.3%</b>
Business Administration	58	<b>25.9%</b>
English	43	<b>23.3%</b>
Applied Psychology	50	<b>24.0%</b>
Computing	46	<b>21.7%</b>
Environment & Social Studies Undergraduate Degree	99	<b>20.2%</b>
Computer Science	43	<b>16.3%</b>
Primary Education	59	<b>15.3%</b>
Accounting and Finance	80	<b>12.5%</b>

51. Table 15 illustrates that non-completions are much higher in the 10 largest subject areas at UNL than they are in the 10 largest subject areas at LGU. Looking at the largest subject at each university, non-completion rates are 24 percentage points higher at UNL. The results at UNL highlight the fact that its two foundation year courses are both very large subject areas and both have very high non-completion rates. However, even if these two subjects were removed from the list, non-completion within UNL's largest subject areas is still significantly greater than at LGU. The impact of foundation years on non-completion rates at UNL will be considered more thoroughly in the next section of this paper. There are two exceptions worth noting – Sports Therapy and Fine Art, both with about 40 entrants and non-completion rates of just 7 per cent. It would be worth investigating these subjects to establish any possible causes of such relatively low non-continuation rates.

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<sup>17</sup> It did not make sense to list the top 10 subjects in terms of non-completion rate because many courses at UNL with only very few entrants had very high non-completion rates. This method of selection does exclude some subjects worth noting, for example Marketing and Film Studies at UNL, each with approximately 40 entrants and with non-completion rates of 31% and 28% respectively. 11 subjects are listed at UNL because English and Computer Science both had 43 entrants and were the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> largest subject areas.

52. Within the subjects with smaller numbers of entrants at UNL (between 15 and 40 entrants) non-continuation rates vary considerably from 0 to 60 per cent with over half of the 25 subject areas listed having non-completion rates of over 20 per cent (see appendix 1 for full list). It is difficult to gain a clear picture of non-completion rates for the courses with very few entrants because of the small numbers involved. The large subject areas listed in Table 15 are more a problem at UNL, not because their non-completion rates are higher than those for smaller subjects, but because the high non-completion rates impact a greater number of students.

## ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

53. Although still broadly similar, Table 16 highlights some differences in the highest qualification on entry of entrants to the two institutions that were not clear from the PI data. Table 16 is ordered by the number of entrants to UNL by each type of entry qualification. A-level and GNVQ entrants are by far the largest group at both institutions (approximately 50% of entrants). The benchmarks are almost identical at the two institutions. LGU is 2 percentage points above its benchmark for these entrants, but UNL is 8 percentage points above its benchmark. We know from Table 11 that non-completion at UNL for both A-level students and GNVQ students was high – it is not one or the other that causes this high rate of non-completion when they are grouped together.

**Table 16: Non-continuation of full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by highest qualification on entry**  
(note that any qualification type with less than 20 entrants at either institution has been excluded from this chart)

	London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
Highest qualification on entry	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
Any combination of GCE 'A'/SCE 'Higher' and GNVQ or NVQ at level 3	1,206	13.8%	11.6%	1,226	19.7%	11.7%	200,987	6.8%	6.8%
ONC or OND (including BTEC equivalent)	77	18.2%	15.7%	194	16.0%	14.8%	8,545	14.6%	14.2%
ACCESS course	125	11.2%	15.7%	159	19.5%	14.8%	8,973	14.2%	14.0%
HNC or HND (including BTEC equivalent)	94	12.8%	14.8%	154	20.8%	14.2%	12,853	13.0%	13.2%
GCSE / 'O' level qualifications only	26	19.2%	18.9%	113	33.6%	18.6%	1,818	20.2%	17.2%
other non-UK qualification, level not known	127	18.1%	20.2%	102	28.4%	19.3%	1,747	17.7%	18.2%
A' level equivalent qualification	316	15.5%	10.6%	74	31.1%	15.4%	6,945	9.9%	9.8%
Mature student admitted on basis of previous experience (without formal APEL)	42	26.2%	24.1%	70	28.6%	20.1%	2,479	18.7%	20.2%
Other credits from UK HE institution	33	9.1%	14.1%	64	21.9%	13.9%	2,242	12.0%	13.1%
Certificate or diploma of education (non-graduate ITT)	31	6.5%	15.1%	39	12.8%	13.4%	464	9.3%	12.7%
Graduate of other overseas institution	11	0.0%	15.0%	28	39.3%	15.2%	265	21.5%	13.5%
Professional qualifications	12	0.0%	14.7%	27	25.9%	13.5%	1,602	12.4%	11.3%
Foundation course at FE level	9	11.1%	11.9%	26	3.8%	11.4%	4,641	7.6%	7.7%
Baccalaureate	8	12.5%	12.8%	25	20.0%	12.4%	774	8.3%	11.5%
First degree of UK institution	13	23.1%	15.3%	21	33.3%	13.4%	2,491	10.2%	10.7%
Foundation course at HE level	22	4.5%	11.7%	19	10.5%	13.0%	1,750	9.9%	11.0%
not known	200	23.5%	21.3%	28	42.9%	17.4%	15,434	14.0%	13.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>2,430</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>281,214</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>



54. The next largest group of entrants at UNL are ONC / OND or BTEC equivalent entrants. UNL has a lower rate of non-continuation than LGU for these students and is only just over 1 percentage point above its benchmark<sup>18</sup>. However, for every other major group of entry qualification non-completion at UNL is significantly above both LGU and its benchmark. For entrants with Access courses, HNC / HND qualifications, or GCSEs as their highest qualifications non-completion at LGU is either very close to or lower than the benchmark level. For these entry qualifications UNL is 5, 6 and 15 percentage points over its benchmark level respectively. The 113 entrants with GCSEs recorded as their highest qualification on entry are a particular problem at UNL with non-completion rates of nearly 34 per cent whereas the benchmark level is around 19 per cent. The number of entrants and non-completion rate is similar for entrants with other non-UK qualifications where the level is unknown.

55. LGU has a large number of entrants with A-level equivalent qualifications as their highest qualification on entry (316). LGU is 5 percentage points above its benchmark for non-completion of these students, but non-completion rates at UNL are twice as high as at LGU at 31 per cent. Although UNL only has 74 of these entrants in comparison, this is still a very high rate of non-completion against a benchmark of 15 per cent.

56. UNL(70 entrants) takes nearly twice as many mature students based on previous experience without formal APEL than LGU. Non-completion rates at UNL are similar to those at LGU for this group, but nearly 8 percentage points above UNL's benchmark. UNL also takes twice as many students with other credits from UK HE institutions (64 entrants) and non-completion rates are 8 percentage points higher than UNL's benchmark. UNL does perform under its benchmark for non-completion for its 39 non-graduate ITT entrants, and its 26 entrants with foundation courses at the FE level (these students have the lowest non-completion rate of just 3.8% against a benchmark of 11.4%), and its 19 entrants with foundation courses at the HE level. Non-completion is particularly high against benchmark levels at UNL for entrants that are graduates of other overseas institutions (28 entrants), entrants with professional qualifications (27 entrants), and entrants with a first degree from a UK institution (21 entrants).

57. The main conclusion, following further investigation of entry qualifications of students, is that non-completion rates are high at UNL across all of the major types of entry qualifications with the exception of ONC / OND or BTEC equivalent entrants. There are some larger groups of entrants for whom non-completion is particularly high, for example entrants with GCSEs listed as their highest qualification on entry. In the smaller groups of entry qualifications there are some that perform particularly badly, but also some that perform particularly well. Nevertheless, the main conclusion is that each of the major types of entry qualifications has high rates of non-completion, and that none is particularly responsible for the university's overall high non-completion and non-continuation rates.

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<sup>18</sup> UNL also had good rates of continuation for BTEC / ONC/D student in 1999-2000, but before this time the non-continuation record for these entrants was not particularly good.

58. Having investigated entrants by age, subject of study, and highest qualification on entry, it is possible to conclude that, whilst there is variation in non-completion rates across each of these factors, there are no particular age groups, subjects, or entry qualifications that can fully account for the high levels of non-completion at UNL. Whilst there are some areas that stand out as having particularly high rates of non-completion, nevertheless non-completion seems to be high right across the board with a few exceptions of small groups of entrants. However, there are other factors – beyond those that are captured in the PIs - which might be causing the high rates of non-completion and need investigating further. These include qualification aim, ethnicity and social / demographic variables all of which are examined in the following section, part 4.

#### **Part 4: Investigation of other factors using generated benchmarks**

##### **QUALIFICATION AIM**

59. So far, this paper has mostly focussed on first degree entrants. Table 8 did consider 'other undergraduates' and demonstrated that UNL was performing reasonably close to its benchmark in relation to young entrants, but was 7 percentage points above its benchmark for mature students (although still performing better than LGU in this area). Looking at the qualification aim of 'other undergraduates' more closely, the vast majority of these at both institutions are HND students. Non-continuation of HND students is at benchmark level at LGU and 3 percentage points above at UNL.

60. Table 17 demonstrates that the non-continuation rate of HND students largely determines the non-continuation rate of all 'other undergraduates' at UNL. However, at LGU the 84 undergraduates studying for a professional qualification at the undergraduate level, with recorded non-continuation rates of nearly 80%, are skewing the overall rate of non-continuation for 'other undergraduates'. It is important to note that the non-continuation data for 'other undergraduates' are less reliable than those relating to first degree entrants as a result of non-standard entry, course length and other factors. HND students are the only group large enough to be sure that the results being shown are not a one-off discrepancy.

**Table 17<sup>19</sup> Non-continuation of full time 'other undergraduate' entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by qualification aim**

Qualification aim	London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
Professional qualification at UG level	84	<b>79%</b>	44%				425	<b>38%</b>	30%
Diploma of HE				31	<b>19%</b>	17%	18,987	<b>10%</b>	10%
Foundation course at HE level				21	<b>52%</b>	30%	1,646	<b>25%</b>	24%
Other UG diploma				*	<b>0%</b>	19%	4,838	<b>13%</b>	13%
HND	347	<b>22%</b>	22%	370	<b>25%</b>	22%	21,461	<b>20%</b>	21%
HNC	*	<b>0%</b>	34%				269	<b>38%</b>	26%
Institutional undergraduate credit	*	<b>50%</b>	30%	*	<b>0%</b>	36%	1,091	<b>34%</b>	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>33%</b>		<b>424</b>	<b>26%</b>		<b>50,370</b>	<b>16%</b>	

61. Included within the category of first degree entrants are entrants on foundation years that are recorded as on year 0 of program. Foundation years allow a student to follow a year long program to prepare them for the first degree course and therefore entrants to foundation year courses are generally different to entrants that enter straight onto the first year of first degree courses. Table 18 shows the non-completion rates for students entering for the first time in different years of a programme, and demonstrates the very high rate of non-completion amongst foundation year entrants (year of program = 0) in comparison to entrants to the first and subsequent years of a course<sup>20</sup>.

**Table 18: Non-continuation of full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by year of program**

Year of program	London Guildhall University		University of North London	
	No. of students	% non-continue	No. of students	% non-continue
<b>0</b>			351	<b>36%</b>
<b>1</b>	2203	<b>15%</b>	1823	<b>20%</b>
<b>2</b>	170	<b>15%</b>	188	<b>19%</b>
<b>3</b>	36	<b>17%</b>	68	<b>26%</b>

62. Although there are a large number of foundation year students at UNL with high non-completion rates and none at LGU, the extent of their impact on overall non-completion rates should not be exaggerated. Table 18 also illustrates that non-completion rates for entrants to year 1 of programme are 5 percentage points higher at UNL than at LGU. If all foundation year students are removed from the PI in Table 7 above (Table 3a of the PI publication), UNL's non-completion rate for young entrants reduces by 3 percentage points to 19 per cent. This is still 5 percentage points above its benchmark of 14 per cent and 4 percentage points

<sup>19</sup> Note: Values less than 5 are omitted and shown as \*

<sup>20</sup> Only a small number of entrants enter in Year 2 or 3 of programme – these are likely to be HND/C entrants or entrants that have transferred from other HEIs.

above non-completion at LGU.

#### ETHNICITY

63. Table 19 uses the same principles as the PIs to generate benchmarks for non-completion by ethnic group, benchmarked for age, subject, and entry qualification of the students. Generating these benchmarks for each ethnic group makes a powerful tool for analysis. However, care needs to be taken where the number of students is quite small.

**Table 19: Non-continuation of full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by ethnic group**

Ethnic group		London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
		No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
Female	White	354	15%	12%	507	18%	12%	120,902	7%	8%
	Black or Black British - Caribbean	80	8%	14%	107	18%	14%	1,870	11%	12%
	Black or Black British - African	180	12%	16%	184	20%	14%	2,770	10%	12%
	Other Black background	51	16%	15%	58	22%	14%	1,149	11%	12%
	Asian or Asian British - Indian	135	7%	12%	111	11%	13%	6,395	5%	9%
	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	72	4%	13%	68	15%	13%	2,952	8%	10%
	Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	60	18%	12%	51	10%	13%	944	10%	10%
	Chinese	24	8%	12%	16	19%	11%	1,501	5%	8%
	Other Asian background	48	8%	11%	48	10%	13%	1,764	6%	9%
	Other Ethnic background	69	16%	13%	108	25%	12%	3,037	9%	9%
	Not known				19	5%	13%	2,545	13%	11%
	Information refused	221	16%	15%	12	25%	20%	3,106	13%	12%
<b>Total female</b>		1,294			1,289			148,935		
Male	White	312	16%	12%	408	19%	13%	101,927	9%	8%
	Black or Black British - Caribbean	48	8%	15%	49	45%	16%	1,038	16%	13%
	Black or Black British - African	155	16%	18%	221	33%	16%	2,531	17%	14%
	Other Black background	23	9%	16%	38	37%	16%	735	17%	13%
	Asian or Asian British - Indian	108	18%	14%	121	21%	14%	6,506	9%	10%
	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	64	19%	14%	90	24%	14%	3,811	13%	12%
	Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	59	14%	14%	52	27%	14%	1,168	14%	11%
	Chinese	21	14%	12%	14	43%	16%	1,491	9%	9%
	Other Asian background	35	14%	14%	47	30%	15%	1,787	11%	10%
	Other Ethnic background	67	18%	13%	79	27%	14%	2,424	13%	10%
	Not known				6	50%	13%	2,573	15%	12%
	Information refused	223	25%	16%	15	53%	17%	2,969	19%	13%
<b>Total male</b>		1,115			1,140			128,960		
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,409</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>2,429</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>277,895</b>	<b>8.6%</b>	<b>8.6%</b>

64. Table 19 illustrates the extent of ethnic diversity at both institutions in comparison to the rest of the sector. 80 per cent of students across the whole sector are White whereas at UNL and LGU White students make up between 35 and 40 per cent of the student population. LGU appears to have the lowest proportion of White students of the two institutions, but LGU has over 400 students that did not give information regarding their ethnic group in comparison to just 30 such students at UNL so this conclusion cannot be drawn for certain. In terms of female students, the number of entrants from each ethnic group is broadly similar with the exception of UNL having 150 more White females recorded and LGU with 209 more female students that did not give information. In terms of male students, again the number of entrants from each ethnic group is broadly similar. The exception is that UNL had 100 more White males recorded, 70 more Black African males recorded, and 50 more Black Asian males recorded, and that LGU had 208 more students that did not give information.

65. The overall picture at LGU is that it performs very close to, and often below its benchmarks for non-completion amongst all ethnic groups except for White students – although there are some exceptions. In terms of females at LGU, non-completion is either very close to or below benchmark levels with the exception of White females, Bangladeshi females, and females from 'other' ethnic backgrounds (between 3 and 6 percentage points above their benchmark level). In terms of males at LGU, non-completion is also very close to or below benchmark levels for most groups, this time with the exception of White, Indian and Pakistani males, and males from 'other' ethnic backgrounds (all between 4 and 5 percentage points above their benchmark level). Non-completion rates for males that did not give information on their ethnic group, at 25 per cent, are also nearly 10 percentage points above their benchmark.

66. At UNL only some of the Asian female ethnic groups perform close to or under benchmark level. None of the male ethnic groups comes close to their benchmark levels with some non-completion rates as high as 50 per cent. In terms of female students, non-completion is 6 percentage points above the benchmark for the large group of White female entrants. UNL performs close to or under its benchmark for each of the Asian female ethnic groups, but, despite having very similar benchmarks, non-completion rates for the Black female ethnic groups are as high as 22 per cent – more than double the rate for Bangladeshi females. Non-completion is also more than twice its benchmark level for females from 'other' ethnic backgrounds at 25 per cent.

67. Table 19 demonstrates very clearly that UNL has a significant problem with non-completion rates of male entrants, ranging from 19 to 53 per cent (benchmark levels are 13 to 17 per cent). The lowest rate of non-completion is for White males at 19 per cent, though this is 6 percentage points above its benchmark level. Following White males, Asian males then have the next lowest levels of non-completion of between 21 and 30 per cent (benchmark between 14 and 15 per cent – therefore non-completion rates are still as much as twice their benchmark level). Black males and males from 'other' ethnic backgrounds record the highest rates of non-completion of up to 45 per cent with benchmarks of around 16 per cent – and nearly 400 entrants are within these ethnic groups – more than the total number of foundation year students.

SOCIAL / DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

**Table 20: Participation of under-represented groups in HE:**

**Young full-time undergraduate entrants 2001-02**

	<b>First degree entrants</b>			<b>Undergraduate entrants</b>		
	All UK institutions	LGU	UNL	All UK institutions	LGU	UNL
% young entrants	78	56	47	73	55	48
<b>% from state schools or colleges</b>						
% with data known	84	68	56	80	67	53
% from group	<b>86</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>98</b>
benchmark		92	93		93	94
<b>% from social class IIIM, IV, and V</b>						
% with data known	87	71	56	83	69	53
% from group	<b>26</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>
benchmark		34	35		34	35
<b>% from low participation neighbourhood</b>						
% with data known	94	98	96	94	98	96
% from group	<b>13</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>
benchmark		12	12		12	12

**Mature full-time undergraduate entrants 2001-02**

	<b>First degree entrants</b>			<b>All undergraduate entrants</b>		
	% mature entrant	% with no previous HE and from LPN	Bench-mark	% mature entrant	% with no previous HE and from LPN	Bench-mark
All UK institutions	22	<b>14</b>		27	<b>16</b>	
<b>London Guildhall</b>	44	<b>10</b>	12	45	<b>10</b>	12
<b>North London</b>	53	<b>10</b>	11	52	<b>10</b>	11

## Part-time undergraduate entrants 2001-02

		London Guildhall	North London	All UK institutions
<b>Young entrants</b>	% of part-time entrants that are young	6	5	5
	<b>% with no prev HE and from lpn</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>
	Benchmark	12	14	
<b>Mature entrants</b>	% of part-time entrants that are mature	94	95	95
	<b>% with no prev HE and from lpn</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
	Benchmark	3	7	
<b>All entrants</b>	<b>% with no prev HE and from lpn</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>
	benchmark	4	7	

68. Table 20 suggests that the proportion of students from groups under-represented in HE is high at both of the institutions, but particularly at UNL. However, in terms of young entrants, these conclusions cannot be made with any certainty because of the high proportion of young entrants whose social class and school type is recorded as “unknown”. Around 45 per cent of young students at UNL have an unknown social class and school type, and around 30-35 per cent at LGU – these are both very high proportions in comparison to the national average.

69. For those young students for whom data are available, in terms of young full-time undergraduate entrants, at both LGU and UNL nearly all students come from state schools, putting the institutions above their benchmarks and around 10 percentage points above the sector average. Both LGU and UNL are 7 or 8 percentage points above their benchmark for the proportion of entrants from the lowest three social classes and around 15 percentage points above the sector average. For both of these indicators, the representation of these students at UNL is 1 or 2 percentage points above LGU. Finally, whilst LGU meets its benchmarks for recruiting students from low participation neighbourhoods, UNL recruits at around 2 or 3 percentage points above its benchmark.

70. In terms of mature full-time undergraduate entrants, both institutions recruit a very high proportion of these, and the percentage for whom data are available is very good at both institutions. LGU recruits double the sector average and UNL another 10 per cent on top of that. Both institutions are close to recruiting their benchmark level of mature entrants without previous HE experience and from a low-participation neighbourhood. In terms of part-time undergraduate entrants the percentage for whom data are available is also very good. For all entrants both institutions meet their benchmarks for the proportion without previous HE experience and from low participation neighbourhoods.



71. These tables suggest there is a significant difference between these two institutions on the one hand and the average sector performance on the other in terms of recruiting students from under-represented groups. However, whilst this is likely to be the case, it cannot be known for certain because of the very high proportion of young students for whom the information is returned as “unknown”. In terms of this study, the question of the extent to which the students from under-represented groups contribute to the higher rates of non-completion at UNL than at LGU is an important question, but this cannot be answered without taking steps to improve the percentage for whom data concerning social class are available.

72. In an attempt to go beyond the PI data the HESA data on social class and non-continuation were examined to see if this would increase the percentage of known data (PIs use UCAS data for social class but HESA records are completed by the institution and social class information can be added for example for direct entrants). Table 21 is the result. As with the PI tables, the first striking thing about this table is the very high proportion of students whose social class is “unknown” – particularly for UNL. The second remarkable point is that on the basis of these data both universities have no more than the sector average proportion of students from the lowest social groups, and UNL actually has less than the sector average – a totally implausible statistic. Conclusions cannot therefore be drawn from these data, and almost certainly the cause of the apparently low percentage of social classes IIIm-V lies in the high number of “unknowns”.

**Table 21: Non-continuation of full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by social class - grouped**

	London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
	% of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	% of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	% of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
Social class I, II, III	41%	<b>12%</b>	12.4%	34%	<b>18%</b>	12.7%	60%	<b>6.6%</b>	7.3%
Social class IIIIM, IV, V	22%	<b>12%</b>	12.4%	20%	<b>18%</b>	13.1%	22%	<b>8.9%</b>	9.0%
Unknown	38%	<b>19%</b>	15.9%	46%	<b>26%</b>	14.6%	19%	<b>14.9%</b>	12.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>2,430</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>281,214</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>

73. Table 22 was originally produced to allow a more detailed look at the social class of entrants to the two institutions. As is explained above, it would be misleading to draw any firm conclusions in this respect. Nevertheless, it is of interest in particular in its breakdown of the “unknowns” of Table 21. First it is important to explain the difference between ‘missing type 0’ and ‘missing type .’. Missing type . means that the entrant applied directly to the institution and not through UCAS - and it is UCAS that usually completes the social class information from the occupation information it gathers either about the entrant or the parents of the entrant if the entrant is young. Missing type 0 means that either the social class could not be derived from the occupation code, or social class was recorded as not known.

**Table 22: Non-continuation of full time first degree entrants 2000-01 following year of entry by social class and age**

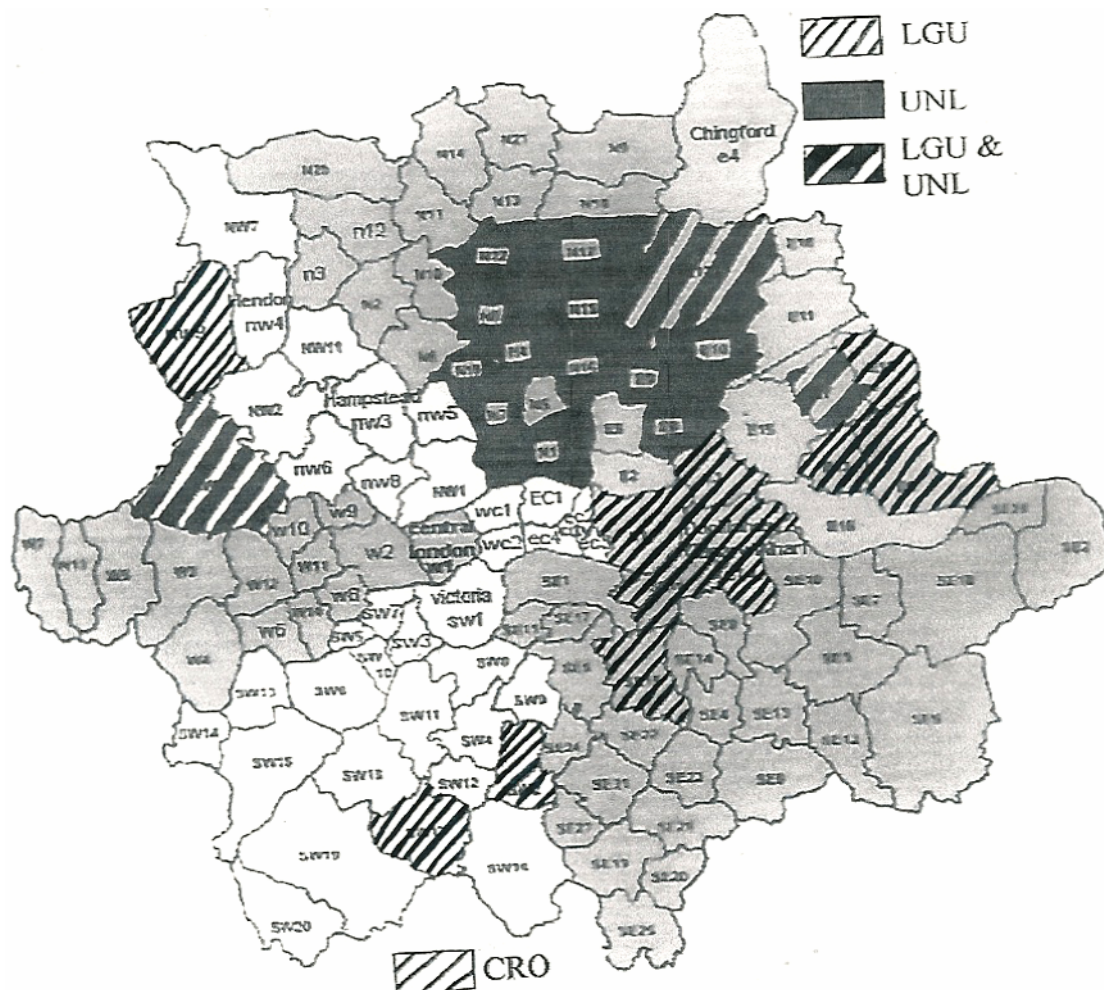
	London Guildhall			North London			Sector		
	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark	No. of students	% non-continue	Bench-mark
<b>Young entrants</b>									
Social Class I	107	<b>6.5%</b>	9.5%	77	<b>14.3%</b>	10.4%	32,895	<b>4.8%</b>	5.5%
II	394	<b>11.9%</b>	10.5%	283	<b>14.5%</b>	10.8%	89,081	<b>6.0%</b>	6.4%
III	167	<b>10.2%</b>	10.9%	120	<b>18.3%</b>	10.7%	23,575	<b>6.9%</b>	6.9%
IIIM	225	<b>12.0%</b>	10.8%	193	<b>16.1%</b>	11.5%	31,311	<b>7.6%</b>	7.7%
IV	99	<b>17.2%</b>	10.7%	92	<b>19.6%</b>	11.7%	14,559	<b>8.0%</b>	7.8%
Social Class V	46	<b>8.7%</b>	11.5%	26	<b>11.5%</b>	11.1%	3,548	<b>8.9%</b>	8.5%
Missing type 0	304	<b>15.8%</b>	11.4%	191	<b>18.3%</b>	12.0%	15,583	<b>10.7%</b>	8.9%
Missing type .	79	<b>15.2%</b>	15.3%	254	<b>20.1%</b>	12.4%	10,552	<b>14.8%</b>	11.3%
<b>Mature entrants</b>									
Social Class I	13	<b>7.7%</b>	15.8%	21	<b>28.6%</b>	14.5%	1,767	<b>11.7%</b>	13.1%
II	136	<b>15.4%</b>	16.6%	187	<b>20.3%</b>	15.3%	11,321	<b>11.4%</b>	13.9%
III	131	<b>16.0%</b>	16.6%	125	<b>22.4%</b>	16.1%	7,589	<b>11.7%</b>	14.3%
IIIM	59	<b>10.2%</b>	16.9%	74	<b>16.2%</b>	15.1%	4,918	<b>13.7%</b>	14.8%
IV	62	<b>14.5%</b>	16.5%	89	<b>25.8%</b>	16.1%	4,758	<b>13.3%</b>	14.2%
Social Class V	7	<b>14.3%</b>	17.1%	13	<b>23.1%</b>	16.3%	759	<b>14.6%</b>	14.9%
Missing type 0	409	<b>21.0%</b>	17.1%	246	<b>21.1%</b>	15.8%	13,244	<b>16.4%</b>	14.6%
Missing type .	167	<b>20.4%</b>	20.9%	435	<b>34.7%</b>	16.2%	15,660	<b>17.5%</b>	15.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,409</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>2,430</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>281,214</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>

74. Table 22 shows that a high proportion of students entered UNL– both young and mature – as direct entrants who did not enter through the UCAS system. For LGU the proportion entering this way was not much more than the sector average, whereas for UNL it was very much higher. And given the nature of its neighbourhood, and the fact that these direct entry students are quite likely to have been local, it is more than possible that these students would increase the proportion of students at UNL from the lowest social groups.

75. In order to investigate this hypothesis further the postcode areas that the two institutions recruit from were examined using the front part of the postcode. Figure 1 illustrates the top 15 recruitment postcode areas<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> These capture 25 per cent of UNL's entrants and 20 per cent of LGU's – a further illustration of the higher concentration of local recruitment at UNL

**Figure 1: Top 15 recruitment postcode areas for full-time first degree entrants**



76. In terms of the major recruitment areas it is striking the extent to which UNL recruits locally, whereas LGU recruits more widely, though still heavily from the Greater London area. Although Table 21 suggested a broadly similar socio-economic mix of students at the two institutions, for those for whom data were available, if it is the case that UNL's main recruitment areas are very different to LGU's this could result in a greater socio-economic diversity in a way that has not so far been apparent. This could point towards some possible explanations for the higher rates of non-continuation being observed. However, to know whether or not this is so would require a detailed analysis of the postcode areas concerned.

77. The new social class classifications might help to highlight a difference in entrants that has not been identified so far. It would also be interesting to compare the number of fee-paying students at each of the institutions and see if there is a connection between this and non-completion rates. Current information on the HESA record is not of sufficient quality to allow such an analysis. Reliable and accurate fee-paying information would be required from both institutions - and this information would have to include the individual student identifier so that this could be mapped onto HESA records to ascertain the relationship with non-completion rates.

## Part 5: Removing outliers

78. There are some areas that stand out as having particularly high rates of non-completion at UNL.

- Older 'young' entrants and mature entrants aged 21-23
- Some major subjects such as Business Studies, Business Administration, English, Applied Psychology, Computing, Environmental and Social Studies
- Young GNVQ entrants, entrants whose highest qualification recorded is GCSEs and mature entrants with an existing HE qualification
- Students on foundation years
- White and Black females and females from 'other' ethnic groups
- Male entrants, in particular Black males and males from 'other ethnic groups
- Direct entrants, in particular mature direct entrants

79. Whilst, these groups stand out as having particularly high rates of non-completion, the hypothesis of this paper is that these groups are not able to account for the extent of the non-completion rates observed. In an attempt to ascertain whether this hypothesis is correct or not, we have attempted to remove these groups with very high non-completion rates and observe the impact this has on non-completion rates at UNL in comparison to adjusted benchmarks<sup>22</sup>.

80. The results in Table 23 below demonstrate that the actual non-completion rate reduces by 5 percentage points from 21.7 per cent to 16.8 per cent. The benchmark reduces by just 1 percentage point from 13.6 per cent to 12.5 per cent. So when the groups with the highest rates of non-completion are removed, UNL does perform closer to its benchmark. However, its non-completion rate is still as high as 16.8 per cent and it is still more than 4 percentage points above its benchmark. Therefore, whilst these groups stand out as having particularly high rates of non-completion, it is reasonable to conclude that they are not able to account for the extent of the non-completion rates observed. Accordingly, it is important to attempt to understand why non-completion is so high across all groups and all types of entrants in their first year.

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<sup>22</sup> A judgement had to be made about the size of the group involved as well as the non-completion rates e.g. all mature entrants aged 21-23 could not be removed – because the size of this group would render meaningless any calculation that excluded them.

**Table 23**

<b>Groups removed</b>	<b>Number of students considered in calculation</b>	<b>Actual % non-complete</b>	<b>Benchmark non-complete (%)</b>
None	2430	21.7	13.6
Foundation year	2079	19.8	13.2
Male, Black and Other Ethnic Background entrants	1810	17.8	12.8
Subjects (listed paragraph 65)	1582	16.7	12.7
Entrants whose highest qualification on entry is GCSE	1544	16.7	12.6
Young entrants whose highest qualification on entry is GNVQ	1406	16.8	12.5

**Part 6: Conclusions from analysis so far**

81. On the basis of the analysis of the data so far the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 2<sup>nd</sup> year students at UNL have very similar non-completion rates to those at LGU – the very high rates of non-completion are taking place amongst 1<sup>st</sup> year entrants.
- If UNL's higher first year non-completion rates could have been addressed, and all else remained equal, the two institutions would have been rather similar in terms of student outcomes. This study has focussed on the differences in first year non-completion.
- There is no obvious cause of the high levels of non-completion being observed. Above average non-completion rates have been found to exist right across the board no matter how the data are broken down.

- There are some areas that stand out as having particularly high rates of non-completion at UNL:
  - Older 'young' entrants and mature entrants aged 21-23
  - Some major subjects such as Business Studies, Business Administration, English, Applied Psychology, Computing, Environmental and Social Studies
  - Young GNVQ entrants, entrants whose highest qualification recorded is GCSEs and mature entrants with an existing HE qualification
  - Students on foundation years
  - White and Black females and females from 'other' ethnic groups
  - Male entrants, in particular Black males and males from 'other ethnic groups
  - Direct entrants, in particular mature direct entrants
- Whilst, these groups stand out as having particularly high rates of non-completion, these groups are not able to account for the extent of the non-completion rates observed. Therefore it is important to attempt to understand why non-completion is so high across all groups and all types of entrants in their first year.

82. The above conclusions are based on analysis of the data and are reasonably firm. Some further, more tentative, conclusions can also be drawn:

- Throughout the study so far, there have been indications that while the student bodies may have been very similar, UNL and LGU you were in fact very different institutions. UNL clearly saw itself very much as a neighbourhood institution, with a very open access policy – the relatively high number of students with GCSEs as their highest qualification, the large numbers on foundation years, the numbers with non-accredited APEL and the high number of direct and local recruits are all indications of this. Students were admitted who might not have applied to other institutions including LGU, and the higher dropout rates may have been one consequence.
- An analysis of the postcode areas of entrants has demonstrated UNL's higher concentration of local recruitment. However, not enough is known about these postcode areas to draw significant conclusions about the characteristics of these entrants without further analysis being required. This does indicate, however, that UNL was very much a 'neighbourhood' university.
- A further significant difference between the institutions lies in their academic organisation. Students at LGU appear to have been much more focused in discipline terms, and this is reflected in part in the much greater range of combinations and options available to students at UNL. This may have had an impact on dropout.

83. These last conclusions are just speculation at this stage – there has not been time to examine these possible differences in detail, but they are impressions that have arisen from the study of the data. The next stage of the review ought to investigate these in greater depth, and to draw on what is known from experience about these issues across the sector. In particular, it might be instructive to identify which parts of the two universities performed

most similarly, and which most differently, and to explore in qualitative terms how behaviour and practices differed in these areas between the two universities.