

Evidencing the impact of your institution's financial support

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Evidencing the impact of your institution's financial support

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Outline

- Background of the wider project
- Dual purpose of the research
- Research questions
- Instruments and purpose
- Model - outcome measures and variables
- Survey - method and purpose

Bursary rationale - reminder

- Basis for the existence of bursaries is that financial disadvantage (i.e. HI) leads to educational disadvantage
- Bursaries therefore intended to ameliorate financial disadvantage to the point that poorest students compete on equal terms with richer students

Background to the project

- OFFA's and other system-wide research consistently shows no impact of financial support on decision to enter HE or choice of institution
- Also no system-wide evidence that financial support helps with retention and successful outcomes
- But institutional evidence suggests it does help retention and success

Project team: five partner organisations

Colin McCaig (SHU), Neil Harrison (UWE), Anna Mountford-Zimdars (KCL), Den Moore (Oxford), Uvanney Maylor (UoB)

Data management team

Ravinder Ubhi-Adams (SHU), Gosia Turner (Oxford)
Ahmad Alhusan (UoB), Graham Parsons (UWE), Paula Webster (KCL)



Dual purpose of the research

- Firstly we all want to know whether financial support for students from non-traditional backgrounds *can* work. Comparing institutional datasets from multiple institutions can provide us with useful meta analysis.
- Secondly - and more importantly - we were designing tools for individual institutions to evaluate the *effectiveness of their own support* and to enable ongoing Access Agreement benchmarking.

OFFA guidance for 2018-19

5. We want you to review and develop your access agreement so that it sets out clearly what you are doing and/or plan to do, to

evaluate your financial support to determine its impact (see paragraphs 32 to 36)

33. If you have committed significant resource to financial support, we require you to provide strong evidence in your access agreement of how your financial support will help to improve outcomes for under-represented and disadvantaged students.

34. You must demonstrate that the methods by which you evaluate the impact of your financial support are appropriately robust and focused on impact in terms of demonstrable changes in behaviour (such as improved access, retention and attainment rates) rather than, for example, solely gathering reactions or opinions from students. We have **published a set of online resources** to help universities better evaluate the financial support they provide through access agreements and we strongly encourage you to use these, although you may use other methods if you can provide evidence that these methods are robust.

Key research questions

- Do financial bursaries for disadvantaged students improve their academic outcomes relative to other students? - do they 'close the gap'?
- Do bursaries improve student outcomes relative to what they would have been without the bursary?
- Do students feel that the bursaries help to support them through; and if so how?

Project outputs

Report '***Closing the gap: using institutional financial support to support poorer students in Higher Education***'

<https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Closing-the-gap-understanding-the-impact-of-institutional-financial-support-on-student-success.pdf>

- A list of important control/mediating variables
- A specification for the dataset and a recommended regression model; including a manual of practical advice about how to get the most from the institutional dataset
- An 'off-the-shelf' online questionnaire and generic qualitative interview questions

Testing the statistical model: approach

- Conceptualised as a quasi-experimental study
 - use of bursary and comparison groups
- Two cohorts - 2009 and 2012 starters
- Four dichotomous outcome measures
- 17 control variables + variable allocating students to groups based on HI and bursary
- Analysis - binary logistic regression

Outcome measures of the two cohorts

1. Retention into second year of study (2009 and 2012 cohorts)
2. Completion of degree within five years (2009 cohort)
3. Attainment of 'good' degree (2009)
4. The DLHE 'successful outcome' metric – in graduate level work or future study six months after graduation (2009 cohort)

Variables

- Bursary type(s)
- Residual Household Income (RHI)
- Entry quals
- Course aggregated (JACs)
- Course fine (KIS)
- Sex
- Disability
- Age on entry
- Ethnicity
- Area disadvantage POLAR 3
- Distance home to HEI
- Programme size
- Home domicile (fee status)
- Accommodation type
- Partnership / franchise course
- Placement / study abroad
- NSS rating

Reminder - hypotheses

When comparing bursary and comparator groups, three possible results:

1. No statistical difference: suggests bursary successful in levelling the playing field (if we assume poorer students will do worse)
2. Bursary group does significantly better: suggests bursary very successful (or other factors)
3. Bursary group does significantly worse: suggests bursary unsuccessful and/or insufficient

Findings

Outcome measure	Sheffield Hallam
Retention to second year	Significant positive difference both for means-tested bursary (relative to low and low-middle income groups) and bursary for students from partnership schools.
Completion within five years	Significant positive difference for partnership school bursary and approaching positive difference for means-tested bursary (relative to middle income group); positive relationship relative to low income group.
Achievement of a first class degree	No difference for either means-tested or partnership school bursaries – i.e. comparable outcomes to middle income group.
Achievement of a first or upper second class degree	No difference for either means-tested or partnership school bursaries – i.e. comparable outcomes to middle income group.
Positive graduate outcome	No difference for either means-tested or partnership school bursaries – i.e. comparable outcomes to middle income group.

Activity

Thinking about your own institution:

- any other variables?
- any other outcomes of interest?

Survey of bursary recipients

Tested in 4 institutions (piloted in 2 more):

When live BOS linked to student data

Y2, 3 and 4 students

Retrospective - Key Q what difference did the bursary make to their ability to financially continue at university last year

Variables:

- bursary level

- hours paid work

- activities bursary enabled

- sense of belonging and ability to participate

<https://admin.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/accounts/login/>

Year of study

Q1 Which year of study are you currently in?	Frequency	Valid Percent
Y2	304	44.8
Y3	199	29.4
Y4	153	22.6
Other	22	3.2
Total	678	100.0

Q2 Did you receive financial support from your university last year? (2014/15)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	594	87.5
No	62	9.1
Don't know	23	3.4
Total	679	100.0

Paid work

Q5 Did you undertake any paid work during 2014/15? (not counting work placements that were part of your course requirement)

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	437	64.7
No	238	35.3
Total	675	100

Hours of paid work

Q5b How much time (on average) did you spend during academic year 2014/15 on paid work (in term time only)?	Frequency	Valid Percent
1-4 hrs	27	14.8
5-8 hrs	38	20.8
8+ hrs	118	64.5
Total	183	100.0

Q5c Did you work throughout the vacation periods? (e.g. Christmas, Easter)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	353	64.2
No	197	35.8
Total	550	100.0

Reasons for paid work

Q5d Reasons for doing paid work (tick as many as apply)	N Responses	Percent	% of Cases
to pay for essential living costs (rent, fuel bills etc)	297	22.0%	63.3%
to have more comfortable life while studying	259	19.2%	55.2%
to enable you to do other things outside of university life (e.g. travel, have hobbies etc)	249	18.4%	53.1%
to help pay the costs of books, study materials, field trips etc	208	15.4%	44.3%
to gain employment experience in your field of study	107	7.9%	22.8%
to save for a specific purpose (e.g. a holiday or a car)	103	7.6%	22.0%
to avoid student debt (if you have any debt)	62	4.6%	13.2%
Other (please specify)	33	2.4%	7.0%
to support family (e.g. your children)	32	2.4%	6.8%
Total	1350	100.0%	287.8%

Importance of paid work

Q5e How important is having a paid job in helping you to financially continue at University?	Frequency	Valid Percent
Not at all important	114	19.7
2	97	16.7
3	118	20.3
4	100	17.2
Very important	151	26.0
Total	580	100.0

Financial support - eligibility

Q6 Prior to starting your course, did you know you would be eligible for financial support?	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	124	40.8
No	127	41.8
Unsure	53	17.4
Total	304	100.0

Financial support - prior knowledge

Q7 Prior to starting your course, did you know how much financial support you would receive?	Frequency	Valid Percent
Yes	182	27.1
No	394	58.7
Unsure	95	14.2
Total	671	100.0

Amount of financial support

Q8 How much university/college financial support did you receive in 2014/15?	Frequency	Valid Percent
£500-£1000	151	54.9
£1001-£1500	35	12.7
£1501-£2000	32	11.6
£2001-£3000	15	5.5
£3001-£4000	14	5.1
over £4000	28	10.2
Total	275	100.0

Importance of FS for continuation

Q9 How important do you think the bursary or scholarship has been for your ability to financially continue with your studies?

	1 Not at all important	2	3	4	5 Very important	Total
N	14	28	53	123	452	670
%	2.1%	4.2%	7.9%	18.4%	67.5%	

Activities

Q9a Activities that would likely need to cut back without financial support (tick as many as apply)	N Responses	Percent	% of Cases
Socialising with friends (e.g. eating out, cinema, theatre,	545	19.2%	82.8%
Leisure (e.g. holidays for self and/or family)	412	14.5%	62.6%
Travelling between home and University when desired	398	14.0%	60.5%
Family treats (e.g. birthday presents)	369	13.0%	56.1%
Buying course books and materials	365	12.9%	55.5%
Buying social resources (e.g. phone and broadband contract)	252	8.9%	38.3%
Participation in a sport or other hobby	241	8.5%	36.6%
Participation in a University or Students' Union club or so	208	7.3%	31.6%
Other	47	1.7%	7.1%
Total	2837	100.0%	431.2%

Belonging

Q10 (aggregated) - Receiving financial support helps me to...		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total N
1. afford to participate along with my fellow students	N	344	241	58	19	8	670
	%	51.3	36.0	8.7	2.8	1.2	
2. concentrate on my studies without worrying about finances	N	451	157	34	16	12	670
	%	67.3	23.4	5.1	2.4	1.8	
3. balance commitments such as work, study and family relationships	N	311	228	92	33	6	670
	%	46.4	34.0	13.7	4.9	.9	
4. feel part of the university community	N	230	186	171	60	21	668
	%	34.4	27.8	25.6	9.0	3.1	
5. feel less anxious than I would have felt otherwise	N	383	205	49	19	13	669
	%	57.2	30.6	7.3	2.8	1.9	
6. be included on social and study trips	N	284	187	130	44	22	667
	%	42.6	28.0	19.5	6.6	3.3	
7. feel more satisfied with my life as a student	N	380	208	54	18	11	671
	%	56.6	31.0	8.0	2.7	1.6	

Cross-tabs - FS amount by employment/mode of employment

Did you undertake any paid work during 2014/15?	£500-£1000	£1001-£1500	£1501-£2000	£2001-£3000	£3001-£4000	over £4000	Total
Yes	68.2%	66.7%	69.2%	60.3%	56.5%	68.1%	65.5%
No	31.8%	33.3%	30.8%	39.7%	43.5%	31.9%	34.5%
N	195	78	78	73	92	119	635

If YES was this work.... (tick one only)	£500-£1000	£1001-£1500	£1501-£2000	£2001-£3000	£3001-£4000	over £4000	Total
Term time	10.5%	11.5%	10.9%	4.3%	1.9%	7.1%	8.3%
Non term time	39.1%	61.5%	65.5%	61.7%	66.0%	70.2%	57.3%
Both	50.4%	26.9%	23.6%	34.0%	32.1%	22.6%	34.4%
N	133	52	55	47	53	84	424

Cross-tab FS amount by hours of paid employment

How much time (on average) did you spend during academic year 2014/15 on paid work (in term time only)?	£500-£1000	£1001-£1500	£1501-£2000	£2001-£3000	£3001-£4000	over £4000	Total
1-4 hrs	20.0%	22.7%	27.3%	50.0%	40.0%	23.5%	26.3%
5-8 hrs	16.8%	13.6%	22.7%	25.0%	20.0%	26.5%	19.7%
8+ hrs	63.2%	63.6%	50.0%	25.0%	40.0%	50.0%	54.0%
N	95	22	22	20	20	34	213

Cross-tab importance of bursary by amount of paid work

How important do you think the bursary or scholarship has been for your ability to financially continue with your studies?	How much time (on average) did you spend during academic year 2014/15 on paid work (in term time only)?			
	1-4 hrs	5-8 hrs	8+ hrs	Total
Not at all important	3.3%	4.4%	3.2%	2.1%
2	0.0%	2.2%	3.2%	4.2%
3	11.7%	6.7%	6.3%	7.9%
4	16.7%	13.3%	11.9%	18.2%
Very important	68.3%	73.3%	75.4%	67.6%
N	60	45	126	231

Activity

- How do you think your institution may use the survey?
- how might you wish to reformulate your institutional support
- additional questions to add to the core...?
- additional analyses cross-tabs...?

Thanks/contacts

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