

UWE Bristol Low-income Bursary Statistical Analysis

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Introduction

The current analysis measures the impact of UWE Bristol's low-income bursary on students' **continuation into second year, degree results, degree completion, and graduate outcomes**. The analysis compared the outcomes of bursary holders (Home students with a household income of <£25,000), to a comparison group of Home students with a household income just above the eligibility threshold for the bursary (£25,001 - £42,600).

The results provide strong evidence for our bursary's impact on levelling the playing field between bursary recipients and the comparison group regarding **attainment, progression, and retention**. The evidence suggests that the low-income bursary does not level the playing field with regards to **completion**.

The current analysis is based on the [OfS's Financial Support Evaluation Toolkit](#). The toolkit suggests using three methods to analyse the impact of financial support: a survey, a statistical tool, and a semi-structured interview. In the present analysis, we have used the [statistical tool](#) only to measure the impact of our financial support on the outcomes above. UWE Bristol has conducted this analysis thrice: 2017-18, 2020-21 and 2023-24.

According to OfS, the issue with using only the statistical tool, a binary logistic regression, is that "the statistical analysis alone will not provide enough information to evaluate your financial support package, as it only tells you whether financial support appears to be effective in equalising outcomes."

Although this tool may not be able to answer the hows and whys or give us a confident cause/effect statement, it provides us with a good understanding of the link between financial support and the outcome variables—completion, attainment, progression and retention.

This analysis used the HESA financial support impact analysis datasets, one for the longitudinal cohort and one for the continuation cohort. NSS, Clearing Entrants, and Bursary Recipients data were collected from the relevant teams within UWE Bristol. The data from all three sources were combined using three keys (student ID, HUSID, and SSN). There is limited room for data cleaning and manipulation as the analysis is conducted based on the guidance provided by OfS.

The analysis results indicate that:

1. Bursary holders are **as likely** to continue into second year as the comparison group.
2. Bursary holders are **as likely** to get a first or upper-second-class degree as the comparison group.
3. Bursary holders are **less likely** to complete their degree within four years and 15 days than the comparison group.
4. Bursary holders are **as likely** to get a job within 15 months after graduation as the comparison group.

UWE Bristol has been evaluating the impact of its financial support since 2017-18. The table below summarises our financial support impact in 2018, 2021 and 2024.

Table 1: Results of UWE's Low Income Bursary Statistical Analyses

Years	Retention	Attainment	Completion	Progression
2018	=	=	-	=
2021¹	-	=	=	=
2024	=	=	-	=

Bursary levels the playing field (=), Bursary recipients have worse outcomes (-)

The table provides strong evidence that UWE's low-income bursary levels the playing field between bursary and non-bursary groups regarding attainment, progression, and retention. The evidence suggests that the low-income bursary does not level the playing field with regards to completion.

Datasets Used in the Analysis

Longitudinal Cohort Dataset: This dataset was used to analyse the impact of our financial support on our students' degree results, degree completion and graduate outcomes. The data contained 4910 students from the 2017/18 cohort. This dataset included the following variables:

1. Degree Completion
2. Degree Result
3. Graduate outcome
4. Low-income Bursary Groups
5. Main Subjects of Study
6. Ethnicity Groups
7. Entry Qualification
8. Sex
9. Nationality
10. Age on Entry
11. Disability and DSA Receipt Group
12. Franchised degree marker
13. POLAR4 quintile
14. Cleaning Entrant
15. English IMD quintile
16. Accommodation type
17. Industrial placement marker
18. Distance travelled from home address to HE provider in km
19. Degree size

¹ It should be noted that creating a comparator group in the 2021 analysis was impossible because of the lack of income data. Therefore, the analysis has been run only with two groups: Bursary Recipients and Non-recipients. This might probably have shifted the results.

20. NSS score for degree

Continuation Cohort Dataset: This dataset included the following variables to analyse the impact of our financial support on our students' continuation into next year, that is, whether our low-income bursary improves retention. It included a sample of 5465 students from the 2020/21 cohort.

1. Continued into the second year of study
2. Ethnic Groups
3. Main subject of study
4. Entry Qualifications
5. Sex
6. Nationality
7. Age on entry
8. Disability and DSA receipt group
9. Employability bursary recipient groups
10. Clearing Entrant
11. Franchised degree marker
12. POLAR4 quintile
13. English IMD quintile
14. Accommodation type
15. Distance travelled from home address to HE provider in km
16. Tariff score for students with level 3, the highest qualification on entry
17. Degree Size
18. NSS Score for degree

In both data sets, ethnicity, primary study subjects, and qualifications on entry groups have been aggregated. This increases the sample size in each group and, thus, the reliability of the results. It enables us to draw a confident conclusion and increases the likelihood of getting significant results. In the case of the main study subjects, the aggregation, in some cases, also caused a shift in the direction of impact.

The R^2 value shows how well our model can explain the outcomes, such as whether a student completes their degree, based on the factors we've included (like gender, age, etc.). The model explains less than 20% of the outcomes in all four analyses. This means that over 80% of the factors affecting degree completion, degree results, graduate outcomes, and continuation are unknown or not included in the model.

Further breakdown of results

Continuation into second year - Retention

1. Bursary holders and students whose family income is above £42,600 are as likely to continue into next year as the comparison group.

2. Students whose family income is unknown but assumed high are 73% less likely to continue into the next year than students whose family income is just above the threshold (the comparison group).

Degree Result - Attainment

1. Bursary holders, students with a family income above £42,600 and students with unknown income status are as likely to get a first or upper-second-class degree as the comparison group.

Degree Completion

1. Bursary recipients are 32% less likely to complete their degree within four years and 15 days than those whose income is just above the threshold (comparison group).
2. Students whose income is above £42,600 are as likely to complete their degree within four years and 15 days as the comparison group.
3. Students whose income is unknown are 37% less likely to complete their degree within four years and 15 days than those whose income is just above the threshold (comparison group).

Graduate Outcome - Progression

1. Bursary holders and students with unknown family incomes are as likely as the comparison group to get a job within 15 months after graduation.
2. Students with family income above £42,600 are 2% less likely to get employed 15 months after graduation than the comparison group.

Note: The results concerning the impact of gender, ethnicity, travel distance, age, and other variables included in the model on the four outcome variables (continuation, attainment, completion, and progression) have been redacted from this report.