

**Higher Education in Northern Ireland:
A Report on Factors Associated with Participation and
Migration**

**Bob Osborne and Alayne Smith with Amanda Hayes
University of Ulster, Social & Policy Research Institute**

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Disclaimer: Any views expressed in this report are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders of the research

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¹ We would like to extend our thanks to the principals and teachers who helped facilitate our visits to the schools, and to the pupils who kindly gave up their time to participate in the research. Any views put forward are the responsibility of the authors alone.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This project is designed to examine the views of school pupils towards progressing towards further and higher education. The study is divided into four main sections.

Section A

The first section sets out some of the main characteristics of participation in higher education in Northern Ireland. In particular it is noted that Northern Ireland has a relatively high Age Participation Index (API) in the UK context. The representation of those from less well-off backgrounds in higher education in Northern Ireland is also relatively high compared with the rest of the UK. However, the high representation of those from less well-off backgrounds in local institutions is at least in part a function of the migration of Northern Ireland domiciled entrants to institutions of higher education in Britain. The migration of those from comparatively well-off backgrounds creates the 'space' in Northern Ireland institutions for those from less-well-off backgrounds. The number of funded full-time higher education places in Northern Ireland is capped by the government – the Maximum Aggregate Student Number (MASN) and as a result the demand for places exceeds the supply of places. In these circumstances the asking grades in some instances are higher in Northern Ireland and especially at the University of Ulster than in comparable courses in some universities in Britain. Migrants however have been found to be classifiable into two groups – those who wish to leave, the '*determined leaver*' and those who would rather stay but whose behaviour is determined by the belief that their grades will be inadequate for local entry - the '*reluctant leaver*'.

Analysis of data from the School Leavers Survey (SLS) suggests that those from less well-off backgrounds are more likely to achieve the qualifications necessary to enter higher education in Catholic grammar and secondary schools. The data also suggest that the progression into higher education of those with A levels or equivalent from less well off backgrounds is higher in Catholic grammar and secondary schools. Those with qualification enabling higher education entry from less-well-off backgrounds in non-Catholic schools are more likely to enter further education institutions. These observations, however, must be viewed in the light of the apparent evidence that a

smaller proportion of controlled secondary schools have post-16 provision than maintained secondary schools.

Finally in the introductory section the literature is reviewed in relation to student finance and attitudes to debt and the equality policy framework in Northern Ireland.

Section B

The second section is divided up into a consideration of methodological issues in general and the general benefits of using qualitative techniques to explore the processes young people go through as they make decisions about continuing in education or taking an alternative path. Additionally, the specific methodological issues for the study of attitudes and perceptions of pupils in year 12 in secondary schools are outlined. The choice of a focus group methodology for the interview of year 12 pupils and the choice of in-depth interviews for teachers and community leaders is outlined. The main part of section B relates to the extensive reporting of the focus group interviews with year 12 pupils in secondary schools. This is followed by the reporting of the in-depth interviews with teachers and community leaders.

Section C reports on a linked study of Year 14 pupils about their attitudes and perceptions about participating in higher education. Once again this part of the study relies upon a qualitative approach to data collection with a focus group methodology used to assess the attitudes and perceptions of students mainly from grammar schools.

Section D draws the findings together and considers what the main findings of the two studies are. In summary:

- There are substantial differences between girls and boys in their attitudes to continuing in education and also in their intention to seek entry to further or higher education especially in secondary schools. Girls are significantly more likely to want and to plan to go on to further and higher education.

- These gender differences are reflected across the religion divide as reflected in the contrasting attitudes in controlled and maintained schools. In general, girls in both the maintained and controlled sector were more focused on further and higher education than boys in either sector. However, girls in maintained schools were more likely to have the aim of going to university than girls in controlled schools. Similarly, boys in maintained schools regarded progressing to higher education as a goal to a greater extent than boys in controlled schools.
- In part, there are two structural components to this difference in aspirations. The first relates to the fact that Catholic maintained secondary schools do better for educational outcomes for students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds than controlled secondary schools. The second factor relates to the apparent higher provision of post 16 provision in maintained schools than controlled schools. Having significant post 16 provision may well lead to raising expectations of progressing into further and especially higher education.
- There was also evidence expressed strongly in interviews with teachers and community leaders that working class Protestant communities had still to adjust to the fact that access to manufacturing jobs through informal networks such as through family and friends was no longer available. The restructuring of the economy has changed the nature of jobs and fair employment policy had increased the importance of having the right qualifications and training to secure access to employment. As the interviews with pupils also demonstrated, there seemed to be more emphasis from Catholic parents than Protestant parents on the need to go on and enter higher education if at all possible. Catholics, probably because of past experiences in the labour market, were far more likely to see securing educational qualifications as the route to securing a job and a job with good prospects. Both focus group and survey evidence tended to suggest that parents were more likely to be very supportive towards continuing in further and higher education for girls and boys in maintained schools, whereas this was less the case especially for boys in controlled schools.
- Community representatives, especially in Protestant working class areas, also talked of the negative influence of paramilitary organisations, the 'drugs' culture and the lack of 'anyone caring' about young people if they drifted out of school with

mediocre qualifications. Some lamented the absence of any effective outreach activities by either the further or higher education sectors in their areas.

- Some of the consequences of selection at 11 were also apparent. Teachers talked of the need to build self-esteem amongst pupils who had not even been entered for the transfer procedure and of the negative experience of many parents who had been labeled as educational failures when they too were not entered into the transfer procedure or failed to get into grammar schools. Moreover, grammar schools adjacent to Protestant working class areas were highlighted as sometimes being ‘unhelpful’ in responding to pupils from poorer backgrounds even if they had secured a good transfer grade.
- The pupils themselves all highlighted their wariness of how much debt that participation in higher education would entail. Little was known about the funding arrangements especially those coming in from 2006. Many boys from controlled schools just could not see any advantage in investing in education if it meant getting into substantial debt. Getting a trade and ‘big’ money in a couple of years after getting a trade, especially in the construction industry, seemed to be, for them, a far more rational choice. Many examples of friends or relatives either dropping out or completing higher education with large debts and then failing to secure a good job were cited. To some extent these views were also expressed by boys in maintained schools but at noticeably lower levels than for boys in controlled schools.
- All respondents agreed that the job opportunities for girls were fewer at 16 and that this in part underpinned the girls’ desire to stay on in education. Many also commented that girls were ‘just more serious at studying’ at school. A small number of boys in controlled schools claimed they were labelled as ‘thick’ by teachers who told them they had no chance of progressing to further or higher education.
- The government’s introduction of the educational maintenance allowance was well known about. Most welcomed its existence but there was a common view that the amount was too small to make a difference in the decision to stay on after 16. Many saw the money as helping to offset travel costs or to help out their families while others claimed to earn more than was available from the allowance over one or two nights of their part-time jobs.

- There was little evidence of the universities' widening access activities, funded by DEL, having any impact on the perceptions or aspirations towards higher education in the focus groups which made up this study. The scale of these focus groups are such that that they include relatively small numbers of pupils from the relevant backgrounds. It was also noted that widening access schemes which work with post-16 provision in schools would experience difficulties in engaging proportionately with controlled and maintained schools because of the apparent lower levels of post-16 provision in the controlled sector.
- Geographical mobility emerged as a major issue in two senses in this research. The first related to the observation by some teachers and community leaders of the narrow, confined areas from which disadvantaged pupils would be prepared to travel. Leaving the immediate area of home and school was regarded as very problematic thereby compounding the inaccessibility of educational resources. More specifically two very striking examples of the importance of sectarian geographical issues were found. The first related to a maintained school to the north of Belfast where both the teachers and pupils regarded the local further education college as effectively 'out of bounds' to the boys of the school as it was perceived to be a Protestant stronghold where the boys would be unsafe if attending the college. Pupils preferred to opt for a college in Belfast instead with the attendant extra travelling time and costs. The second example came from the city of Derry/Londonderry. Here the problem for controlled school pupils is that the post school resources in the city are mostly on the city-side. Pupils uniformly indicated that they would be very wary of travelling to these facilities under any circumstances – preferring to travel to another FEC some 20 miles away. All of these geographical issues thrown up by the sectarian nature of Northern Ireland's society (and there must be many other example in terms of access to further education colleges) really pose major questions to the providers of further and higher education. While it is not feasible to expect further and higher education colleges alone to overcome the more general difficulties of operating in a divided and sectarian society, whether it is through the *Shared Future* community relations initiative or through the responsibility all public authorities have to promote 'good relations' under Section 75, all those concerned with the development of policy in the

further and higher education sectors need to respond to sectarian issues especially as they influence access

The second study reported here deliberately focused on the grammar sector with only a small number of secondary and integrated schools. While a number of general issues concerning higher education participation were discussed, a number of specific matters are of interest. The first relates to finance. There is no doubt that for a significant number of potential students from the grammar sector, the question of how changes in student finance would impact on them was of major importance. It was quite striking however, that students from this sector, compared with those from the secondary sector, indicated that while they were confused about what the new system was going to be, and recognised that it would probably lead to much higher levels of debt they, by and large, continued to see participation in higher education as an investment with a guaranteed financial return. No real sense of the extent to which the graduate premium may be declining was evident amongst our cohort of interviewees. However, in the event that such evidence does become generally understood, there could be a significant impact on decisions to participate in higher education. Where the perception of greater personal debt arising from the new arrangements was starting to potentially have an impact was on the decision of whether to stay in Northern Ireland or to leave to study elsewhere. A minority of students did not see the finance issue of particular relevance to this decision but quite a significant proportion did so. Once again the particularities of the characteristics of higher education in Northern Ireland, as spelled out in Section A are important here. It may well be the case that some of those who are currently quite content to leave Northern Ireland for study will feel obliged to try and stay for cost reasons. In other words while some of the *determined leavers* may well not see cost as an issue others, perhaps drawn from the slightly less well-off groups compared to those from the highest income brackets, may well seek to stay as, in effect, *reluctant stayers*. In this instance, the likely increase in demand for places in Northern Ireland, unless the number of places is increased, will increase the asking grades sought by the universities which are already dealing with the upward drift of A level grades. In these circumstances, in the absence of special measures, it is quite possible that the intake into the two Northern Ireland institutions (and other higher education providers) could become more middle class

and the proportion of better-off Protestants could increase. Several groups could become losers in this scenario. First those Catholics from working class backgrounds, currently quite well represented in higher education in Northern Ireland, could increasingly find it more difficult for local study. Second, working class Protestants, especially males, already not very well represented in higher education could find themselves even less able to access universities on the basis of their qualifications held. It is already the case that those with the lowest qualifications tend to be from the lowest socio-economic groups and it these groups who could be forced to leave Northern Ireland to study usually at the post-1992 universities. Ironically, therefore, not only is it the least well-off who could become the direct major financial casualties of the policy of shifting the costs of higher education onto individual students and their families but they could also lose out additionally as a result of the changes in migration flows.

Thereafter, issues of importance included early information on the significance of AS and A level choices for future higher education courses of study, the importance of Open Days for choices concerning especially local institutions and the major need for information on student funding systems – especially the new system coming into effect in 2006. It was also notable that for some entry to higher education was seen as part of the process of growing up, leaving home and becoming more independent. Living away from home was often seen as an important part of this process.

Finally, the study did not identify the extent to which ‘political’ issues help determine the much larger flow of Protestants to study outside Northern Ireland and especially in Britain. In earlier research conducted in the mid-1990s the issue of the perceived sectarian nature of some aspects of local higher education provision and related matters was seen by those interviewed, including parents, to be a factor in young Protestants choosing institutions outside Northern Ireland. A distaste for the ‘sectarianism of Northern Ireland’ was expressed by a small number of interviewees in this study and this factor underpinned a desire to leave for study. Whether these ‘political’ factors do only play a limited role in how 18 year olds make their choices (in association with their parents) or whether they are deep rooted matters that do not get openly expressed to ‘strangers’ in a short interview period is not clear.

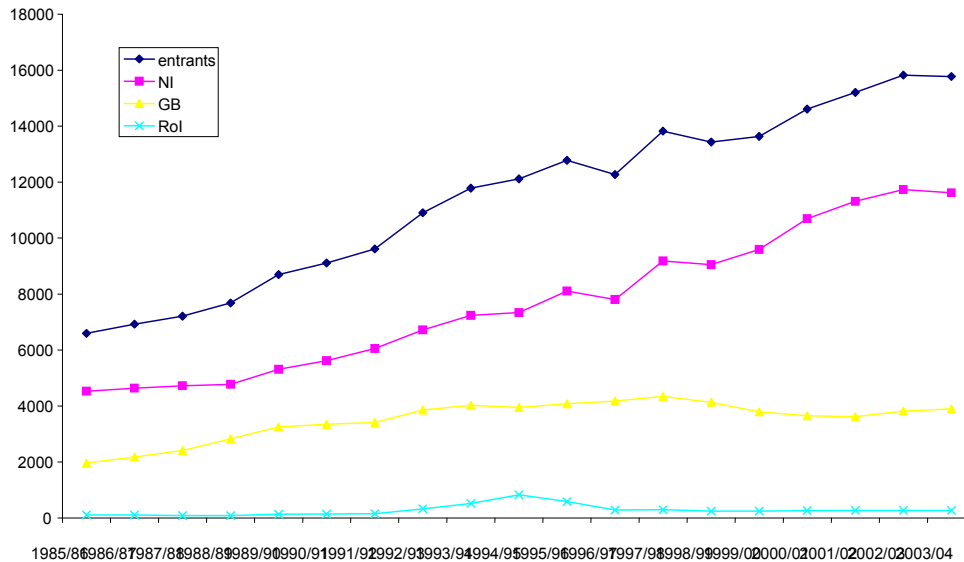
Section A: Higher Education in Northern Ireland: the General Context

In order to provide a context for the two linked research projects contained in this report it is important to set out some of the main characteristics of higher education participation in Northern Ireland (NI) and Great Britain (GB) during the last few years. The last major UK-wide investigation of higher education participation was completed for the Dearing Committee that reported in 1997 (Dearing, 1997). At that time participation (defined as young entrants as a proportion of the age specific population) in Northern Ireland was second only to Scotland at 33% and significantly ahead of England at 28%. In the past few years, participation in higher education has begun to be measured in different ways within the countries of the UK. The most recent date for data on a common basis relates to 2001/02 when the API for Britain as a whole was 35% with Scotland recording a figure of 52% and Northern Ireland recorded a figure of 46%. In 2004/05 the Northern Ireland figure was 45% (DEL, 2006)

Two major characteristics of participation in higher education in Northern Ireland lie at the core of the research reported here. The first relates to destination for study. It has been a characteristic of higher education participation since the 1960s that a proportion of students from Northern Ireland entered institutions elsewhere for undergraduate study. The Lockwood Report of 1965, for example, noted the flow of people from Northern Ireland to Trinity College Dublin (TCD) where they made up a significant proportion of the undergraduate population. During the latter part of 1960s a common entry system to all UK universities was established together with the introduction of the maintenance grant. These measures, which facilitated the geographical mobility of undergraduate entrants, coincided with the outbreak of civil disturbances in Northern Ireland. Not surprisingly, data for the 1970s record a substantial increase in the migration of Northern Ireland students with between 40-45% of entrants being recorded as migrants during this decade (Osborne et al, 1983). In more recent times, the flow of those leaving Northern Ireland for their studies has dropped back to the current position of around 30%. The absolute figures are shown in Figure A1. The data reveal that most of the increase in participation in absolute terms has been accommodated within Northern Ireland with those leaving to study elsewhere in the UK or the Republic of Ireland remaining fairly static. Hence with increasing numbers participating in higher education and with absolute numbers of migrants remaining broadly the same, the migration rate has declined. In part,

this decline reflects the creation of additional places in Northern Ireland but earlier research has suggested that the leavers are made up of two different groups of migrants.

Figure A1: Full time Northern Ireland domiciled undergraduate entrants by destination for study.



Source: DENI and DEL statistical series

The first group of migrants has been referred to as the *determined leavers*. These students indicate an active desire to leave to go primarily to Britain. They tend to be from better-off backgrounds, to be well qualified in terms of ‘A’ levels, to attend Protestant grammar schools and to want to go to the older universities in Scotland and the north of England. Moreover, a number of universities in Scotland and the North of England specifically target these well-qualified students in recruitment exercises. On the other hand, in response to the pressure for places exceeding the supply of places due to the controlling of the full-time undergraduate numbers by the government², the ‘asking grades’ for particular courses in institutions in Northern Ireland, and especially at the University of Ulster, tend to be somewhat higher than for the same courses in comparable institutions in Britain (see Osborne and Shuttleworth, 2003). Hence, a second group of migrants identified in research undertaken in the mid-1990s could be described as *reluctant leavers*. These students would largely have preferred to stay but, in the light of their anticipated grades, did not believe they could secure entry to an institution in Northern

² This is known as the MASN cap. This issue is the subject of a discussion paper (DEL, 2005b).

Ireland. These students tended to be drawn more evenly from the two religious communities, not to be as well off, to be more modestly qualified and to attend a range of mainly post-1992 universities in Scotland and the North of England. From the data in Figure A1 it is likely that the expansion of provision in Northern Ireland has enabled more of these *reluctant leavers* to stay than was the case some years ago.

If the migration of students to study represents one important feature of higher education participation in Northern Ireland a linked second issue relates to the participation of those from less well-off backgrounds. In the 1990s, expansion of higher education in the UK incorporated a widening participation agenda focussed on the expansion of part-time provision and encouraging the participation of more mature students – a focus which eventually became known as ‘lifelong learning’ as it incorporated the idea that individuals would need to spend recurring periods in higher education in order to learn new skills and up-date knowledge. With the advent of a Labour government in 1997 a more explicit focus developed on the socio-economic characteristics of young students entering higher education together with a concern with ensuring that those with disabilities and those from particular ethnic backgrounds were participating proportionately in higher education relative to their representation in the general population. The new policy focus on those from lower socio-economic backgrounds represented a return to the issues identified in the Robbins Report of 1963 and the Labour governments of the 1970s. The question of gender participation, also a policy issue for the Robbins report, had become less an issue due to the considerable expansion of the numbers of women in higher education both in absolute and proportionate terms. The access of women to particular disciplines remains an issue (notably engineering and informatics/computing) but the lower participation of boys especially from less-well-off backgrounds began to become identified as a policy issue. The new policy focus on lower socio-economic groups resulted in the development of particular funding initiatives to encourage universities to provide innovative ways of attracting students from socially deprived backgrounds. With the volume of public money increasing to support widening participation initiatives the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) acting for all funding bodies developed a range of performance measures to capture evidence of progress which are now produced by HESA. We now turn to consider some of the relevant indicators.

Table A1: Participation of underrepresented groups in higher education: Young full-time undergraduate entrants 2003/04

Region and Institution	Total Entrants	‘Working Class’ %*
UK	206525	29.2
England	168085	28.8
Wales	11845	30.0
Scotland	20475	27.5
Northern Ireland	6120	42.8
Queen’s University Belfast	2425	36.0
University of Ulster	3250	48.4
St Mary’s University College	220	46.6
Stranmillis University College	220	31.2

*defined as including socio-economic groups, 4-7.

Totals may not match as HESA rounds data to the nearest 5

Source: HESA (2005)

Table A1 shows the statistics for full-time young entrants to undergraduate programmes in 2003/04. It must be noted that these figures relate to institutions and not to the total number of students from each country. Hence, the Northern Ireland figures do not record Northern Ireland students enrolled elsewhere and similarly, Scottish figures both record the many non-Scots studying in Scottish institutions but do not record those studying higher education courses in the further education sector. A further point that must be taken into account is that the social structures of the countries of the UK vary – hence Northern Ireland and Wales record higher proportions of their populations in the lower socio-economic groups than in England and Scotland. An initial assessment of the data would suggest that Northern Ireland does exceptionally well in terms of the students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. However, such a view has to be tempered by the migration of the *determined leavers* who we have suggested are more likely to be from the better-off social groups.

Table A 2: Location of Northern Ireland domiciled accepted students (degree and HND), by socio-economic status, 2004.

Socio-economic Status	Studying in NI	Studying outside NI	% Migration
Higher Managerial and Professional	807	661	45.0
Lower Managerial and Professional	2056	1095	34.8
Intermediate	1327	605	31.3
Small Employers and Own Account Workers	1079	269	20.0
Lower Supervisory and Technical Occupations	516	215	29.4
Semi-routine Occupations	918	344	27.3
Routine Occupations	602	208	25.7

Source: UCAS special tabulation.

As table A2 reveals there is a significant outflow of migrants from all socio-economic groups but it is especially high for the Higher Professional and Managerial group where almost half leave Northern Ireland to study. Many of these leavers will be *determined leavers* as discussed above. On the other hand, the migration of a quarter of those from the lowest two socio-economic groups will include many of the less well qualified studying at the former polytechnics in Britain who are probably *reluctant leavers* (see also DEL, 2005) Perhaps the most interesting category, however, are those from backgrounds in the most numerous group, the Lower Managerial and Professional occupations. Many of the students from this background will include those with parents who are middle ranking public sector workers who may be particularly vulnerable to increasing costs not only arising from the new funding mechanism for undergraduates but also the increasing costs associated with the reform of rates, the introduction of water charges, shrinkage of employment in the school sector as a result of demographic decline and the implementation of the recommendations of the review of public administration where public sector employment as a whole is set to reduce. Many of the students from these backgrounds may well consider remaining in Northern Ireland rather than leaving on cost grounds and as such becoming *reluctant stayers*.

We also have to recognise that the formal widening access activities of the universities in Northern Ireland do not of themselves operate at a scale that would make significant differences to the entry data (NIHEC, 2004). As the widening participation issue has become better understood, a number of additional matters have become of greater concern. The first of these relates to widening participation being not just about securing the entry of more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to higher education but also

about retaining these students and progressing them to successful completion. As a result, the performance indicators now record some basic non-retention data. Unfortunately, as yet, these figures do not record the retention rates for students in terms of social socio-economic group. However, as table A3 suggests, the University of Ulster records a higher non-retention rate than other institutions and it would not be surprising if this was linked to the social class profile of that university. While making this point it should be emphasised that non-completion is a problem encountered throughout the UK especially in institutions with a high proportion of students from less well-off backgrounds. For example, Quinn et al (2004) have pointed out that in Scotland even though 50% of school leavers participate in higher education, drop-out is perceived as a serious problem. Some new universities, they state, with high working-class participation, experience drop-out rates of 23% or more.

**Table A3: Non-Continuation Following year of entry:
Full-time first degree entrants 2002/2003**

Region and Institution	Total Entrants	No longer in HE%
UK	239120	7.8
England	193535	7.3
Wales	13920	8.0
Scotland	24455	10.7
Northern Ireland	7205	9.7
Queen's University Belfast	2930	6.6
St Mary's University College	255	4.7
Stranmillis University College	240	1.7
University of Ulster	3780	12.9

Source: HESA (2005)

Social Class and Religion/Community Background

A particular focus of the research reported here lies in the exploration of the differences between the two ethno-religious communities in Northern Ireland in participation in higher education in relation to social class. Earlier research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s had recorded a significant difference in the class profile of Protestant and Catholic higher education entrants (Osborne, 2001). The profile of Catholic entrants showed more than four out of 10 entrants from manual backgrounds compared with one in four Protestants from the same backgrounds. While some of this difference came from the

social class differences between Protestants and Catholics in the general population (Cormack and Osborne, 1983; 1991), it also demonstrated a much larger engagement by the Catholic manual or working classes with higher education than Protestants from the same backgrounds. The data on which this evidence was based, relied on major social surveys conducted in the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, with the support of the ESRC and DENI. The absence of major statistical series incorporating the key social variables of religion and class remains a major obstacle to the routine understanding of participation of higher education in Northern Ireland. However, DEL (2005) has recently produced an estimate of the recent (2001/02) migration rates for Protestant and Catholic based on the School Leavers Survey (SLS). These estimates suggest that 34% of Protestants study in Britain, while 17.5% of Catholics leave home. While these migration rates are a little lower than earlier measures, they are in line with the higher proportion of students overall remaining in Northern Ireland to study. Moreover, the Protestant: Catholic ratio is still 2:1 in favour of higher rates of Protestants migrating. In the absence of routine statistical series, however, some other data enables us to assess whether the greater engagement of Catholics than Protestants from less-well-off backgrounds with higher education is still a contemporary phenomenon. One source of data we can engage with is the School Leavers Survey (SLS) conducted regularly by the DE. The survey relies on returns from schools to measure both the qualifications of leavers and their immediate destinations. As such, as the recent external review of education statistics noted, releases of the data from the SLS should point out ‘that the quality of the data cannot be routinely confirmed’ (Allnutt, 2005). With this caveat in mind the results of the most recent SLS are utilised.

Table A4: School leavers achieving A-levels by type of school, 2003/04

	Catholic Grammar schools%	Other Grammar Schools%	Catholic Secondary Schools%	Other Secondary Schools%	Integrated Schools%
Male	76.6	76.4	14.7	8.4	22.9
Female	91.4	86.5	33.4	19.6	34.1
All	83.6	81.7	23.8	13.5	28.2

Source: DENI, SLS, 2005

In table A4 it can be seen that the overall output in terms of the proportion of pupils obtaining ‘A’ levels is broadly similar for those leaving grammar schools. However, the leavers from maintained secondary schools are significantly more likely to leave school

with 'A' levels compared with those from controlled or integrated schools. Further investigation with data from the Department of Education (DE) suggests that maintained secondary schools are more likely to have post-16 provision than controlled schools. Hence, at least to some extent, some of these differences may be attributable to this structural difference. This possibility should be borne in mind when the data in the following tables are considered further. It should also be noted that widening access schemes which work in schools in relationship with post-16 provision in schools (as does the Step Up programme at the University of Ulster) will find it difficult to engage with both controlled and maintained secondary schools proportionately.

We can continue this analysis further by taking entitlement to Free School Meals into account. Entitlement to FSM is recognised as a major indicator of deprivation and is routinely used in the analysis of educational outcomes as well as in school funding, (Shuttleworth, 1995). We can, therefore, examine the relative attainment levels of those entitled to FSM between the different school types. The relevant data are shown in table A5. Perhaps the most striking conclusion that can be drawn from this table relates to the clear evidence of 'added value' which takes place in the Catholic school system. Taking the grammar sector first, it is clear that the proportion of those entitled to FSM is significantly higher (12.2%) than in the 'Other' sector (4.9%) but it is also clear that Catholic grammar schools deliver significantly higher 'added value' for those students relative to 'Other' grammar with those entitled significantly more likely to leave schools with 'A' levels (72.9%) compared with (60.7%). This 'added value' characteristic also extends to the secondary schools where the proportions of those entitled to FSM in Catholic secondary schools is well over one in three compared with one in five in the 'Other Secondary' Schools. However, notwithstanding this difference, 14.8% of leavers from Catholic schools have 'A' levels compared with 5.1% of leavers from 'Other Secondary schools'.

Table A5: Qualifications of leavers by school sector and FSM entitlement, 2003/04

	Catholic Grammar schools%	Other Grammar Schools%	Catholic Secondary Schools%	Other Secondary Schools%	Integrated Schools%
% A Levels with FSM	72.9	60.7	14.8	5.1	13.4
% A levels without FSM	85.0	82.3	29.5	19.6	32.5
All	83.6	81.7	23.8	13.5	28.2
% FSM in school sector	12.2	4.9	37.7	21.3	22.4

Source: DE, SLS

We can continue this analysis by considering the data in terms of destinations. In table A6 we can see that the progression of school leavers into Institutions of higher education from grammar schools is very similar but that the progression from ‘Other secondary’ schools is significantly lower than from Catholic secondary schools. Indeed, taking gender into account less than 5% of boys enter Institutions of higher education from ‘Other secondary’ schools. Putting it another way, while boys from ‘Other secondary’ schools represent 13.2% of all leavers, they represent only 1.7% of those whose destinations are Institutions of Higher Education.

Table A6: School Leavers progressing to institutions of higher education by type of school, 2003/2004

	Catholic grammar schools%	Other Grammar Schools%	Catholic Secondary Schools%	Other Secondary Schools%	Integrated schools %
Male	66.7	65.9	10.5	4.7	12.0
Female	80.4	75.9	24.2	10.9	23.7
All	73.6	71.1	17.1	7.6	17.6

Source: DE, SLS, 2005

We can take this analysis one stage further by taking those who are entitled to FSM in terms of the qualifications they have attained and their destinations. Thus, reflecting the concerns of this research, we can examine those entitled to FSM and with ‘A’ levels to explore whether those from modest backgrounds with similar qualifications go on to higher education in similar proportions. The data are shown in table A7. Here it can be seen that Catholic school leavers whether from grammar or secondary schools who are entitled to FSM and have ‘A’ levels are more likely to go into higher education than leavers from ‘Other’ grammar or secondary schools. There are smaller differences amongst those going to further education.

Table A8: Proportions and numbers of those attaining A grades by FSM entitlement by school type, 2001/02

%FSM	Schools Under Catholic Management	Schools Under Other Management	Schools Under Catholic Management	Schools Under Other Management
<11%	52.7	47.4	858	2336
11-20%	40.6	35.6	699	715
21-30%	38.6	32.2	791	315
31- 40%	31.2	21.1	365	77
41 – 50%	28.8	17.8	142	36
51%	20.2	9.8	218	31

Source: DE 2002

Further Education

In terms of further education, there are currently 16 colleges located throughout Northern Ireland. These have a dominant role in vocational education and training for 16-19 year olds, providing the skills necessary for entry into the labour market and ‘A’ levels. They also provide an alternative route to higher education other than school for those aged 16-19 and to adults through access and other courses (McAleavy et al., 2004). The full-time students, who enter at age 16, are drawn predominantly from those with average to poor GCSE performance, including a proportion with no qualifications at all (DEL, 2004).

In contrast to the figures in table A8 on school leavers progressing to higher education, table A9 shows that there is a higher progression for those from controlled secondary schools than Catholic secondary schools to further education.

Table A9: School leavers entering Institutes of Further Education by School type

Entering Further Education Colleges	Catholic Grammar Schools%	Other Grammar Schools%	Catholic Secondary Schools%	Other Secondary Schools%	Integrated schools %
Male	18.7	21.0	20.9	29.5	39.8
Female	13.7	17.0	33.5	44.3	39.5
All	16.2	18.9	27.0	36.4	39.7

Source: SLS, 2005

Research conducted by Collins et al. (2001) have shown that in Belfast the characteristic non-progressor to further education is likely to be the Protestant male who attends a secondary school which itself has low rates of progression.

Table B1: Which do you think is most important for getting a good job with good pay?

	Controlled		Total	Maintained		Total
	Female	Male		Female	Male	
Staying in Education	351 87.1%	242 60.3%	593 73.8%	85 85.0%	215 68.3%	300 72.3%
Skilled Trade	44 10.9%	152 37.9%	196 24.4%	14 14.0%	96 30.5%	110 26.5%
None of These	8 2.0%	7 1.7%	15 1.9%	1 1.0%	4 1.3%	5 1.2%
Total	403 100.0%	401 100.0%	804 100.0%	100 100.0%	315 100.0%	415 100.0%

Missing N=52 (4.1%)

Beliefs about the best way to get a good job with good pay were mirrored in pupils' ideas about what they intended to do once they were 16 years old. Table B2 shows that there was a much higher proportion of females than males in both the controlled and maintained sector who intended to go on with their education. Inversely there were higher proportions of males in both sectors who planned to find a paid job or join a training scheme. There were no major differences between the controlled and maintained sectors on this issue.

Table B2: What do you want to do when you are 16 years old?

	Controlled		Total	Maintained		Total
	Female	Male		Female	Male	
Stay in Education	303 74.6%	208 52.1%	511 63.5%	79 77.5%	178 54.6%	257 60.0%
Paid Job	26 6.4%	61 15.3%	87 10.8%	6 5.9%	33 10.1%	39 9.1%
Training Scheme	38 9.4%	77 19.3%	115 14.3%	9 8.8%	68 20.9%	77 18.0%
Don't Know	21 5.2%	25 6.3%	46 5.7%	4 3.9%	25 7.7%	29 6.8%
Other	18 4.4%	28 7.0%	46 5.7%	4 3.9%	22 6.7%	26 6.1%
Total	406 100.0%	399 100.0%	805 100.0%	102 100.0%	326 100.0%	428 100.0%

Missing N=38 (3.0%)

It is worth noting that whilst the majority believed that staying in education was the best way to get a good job and good money, this was not accompanied by a similarly high proportion who wanted to go to university. Table B3 shows that less than half of those

Intentions

Tell us your first name and what you are studying at the moment at school

What do you want to do after you've finished your GCSEs- (A-levels, Job, FE?)
What might you study?

What do your parents want you to do?

Have any of you been thinking about whether you might go to University or College?
(What might you do?)

Influences

Do you feel that going to University or FEC is a choice open to you?

Do you feel that they would make a difference to your future?

Do your parents encourage you to go on with your education? What about other people- friends, other members of your family, teachers. (Do you have brothers or sisters that went to university?)

Do you get any information or advice here in school about going on to college or university after school- is it enough?

Obstacles

Is there anything stopping you from going on to college or university? (probe: qualifications, money, locations)

Are there any Colleges or Campuses you would not feel able to go to?

What would encourage you to go to FEC or University?

Finances

Can you afford to keep studying?

Would the EMA make a difference?

Would money be an issue for you if you're thinking about going to university?
(prompt: borrowing?)

How much do you think you would owe at the end of a course?

Would you borrow money so you could study at university?

Anything to add?

Please write here any other GCSE subjects which you are studying but are not listed above.

Are you studying for any other exams as well as GCSEs?

- 1 Yes 2 No

(If yes, please give the names of the subjects and qualifications you hope to get)

What do you want to do when you are 16 years old?

- 1 Stay in education (school or further education college)
2 Get a paid job
3 Join a training scheme
4 Don't know yet
5 Other

If you have other plans please say what they are.

If you plan to stay on in education after 16, which of the following do you want to do?

- 1 NVQs
2 AS Levels
3 A-Levels
4 Other

If other please tell us

The government has just started giving money to pupils who stay in education after 16, depending on their family circumstances. Have you heard about this Education Maintenance Allowance?

- 1 Yes, I have heard of it and understand what it means.*
- 2 Yes, I have heard of it but I don't know what it is about.*
- 3 No, I haven't heard of it.*

If you were given an allowance like this every two weeks and a cash bonus every so often would you stay on at school or go to Further Education College?

- 1 Yes, I would stay on at school
- 2 Yes, I would go to Further Education College
- 3 No, I would do neither
- 4 I would have to think about it
- 5 Don't know

Do you want to do a course at university?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 I'm thinking about it
- 4 Don't know

Which do you think is the most important for getting a good job with good pay?

- 1 Staying on in education and getting as many qualifications as possible
- 2 Leaving school and getting a skilled trade
- 3 None of these

If you plan to go to Further Education College or University what University Campus or Further Education College would you like to go to? **(Name your first and second choices)**

Are all Further Education Colleges and University campuses open and friendly to all sections of the community? If not, which colleges or universities would you not feel able to go to?

As you know it has become more expensive to study for some courses. If you are intending to go to University or Further Education College how much do you think you will owe at the end of a three year course?

£ _____

To do a course at Further Education College or University it may be necessary to borrow money that you will have to pay back once you start to work.

It is worth borrowing money that I will have to pay back later so I can get good qualifications?

(Please tick one box to show how much you agree or disagree with this sentence)

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree
- 5 Don't know

Have any of the following groups of people encouraged you to think of going to Further Education College or University? (Tick one box on each line)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Your Friends	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Parents	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
The Rest of your Family	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

What else could be done to encourage you to go to University or Further Education College?

Are there any other reasons which would make it difficult for you to go to University or Further Education College?

**Finally, we just need to ask you some questions about yourself
so we can see how different people feel about the topics about
which you've answered questions**

Are you: Female OR Male

Does your mother work outside the home?

Yes No

If yes, what does she work as?

Does your mother work:

(please tick the box that best describes how much she works)

Part-time (part of the day a few days a week)

Full-time (Monday to Friday, all day)

Does your father work outside the home?

Yes No

If yes, what does he work as?

Does your father work:

(please tick the box that best describes how much he works)

Part-time (part of the day a few days a week)

Full-time (Monday to Friday, all day)

Have any of your family been to university or are at university now?
(tick all the boxes that best answer the question)

- Parents
- Brothers or sisters
- Other family members
- None of the above

**Thank-you for completing the questionnaire. Please check that
you have answered all the questions**

APPENDIX C

Number of Focus Groups Conducted

Location	Number
North Belfast	6
Newtownabbey	5
East Belfast	6
Londonderry	4
Strabane	3
Cookstown	4
Total	28

Questionnaire Response Rate

Sex of Respondent		School Type			Total
		Controlled	Maintained	Integrated	
Female	Count	409	103	42	554
	Row %	73.8%	18.6%	7.6%	100.0%
	Col %	49.8%	23.8%	56.8%	41.7%
Male	Count	412	330	32	774
	Row %	53.2%	42.6%	4.1%	100.0%
	Col %	50.2%	76.2%	43.2%	58.3%
Total	Count	821	433	74	1328
	Row %	61.8%	32.6%	5.6%	100.0%
	Col %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%□