

Are current approaches to contextualised admissions enough?

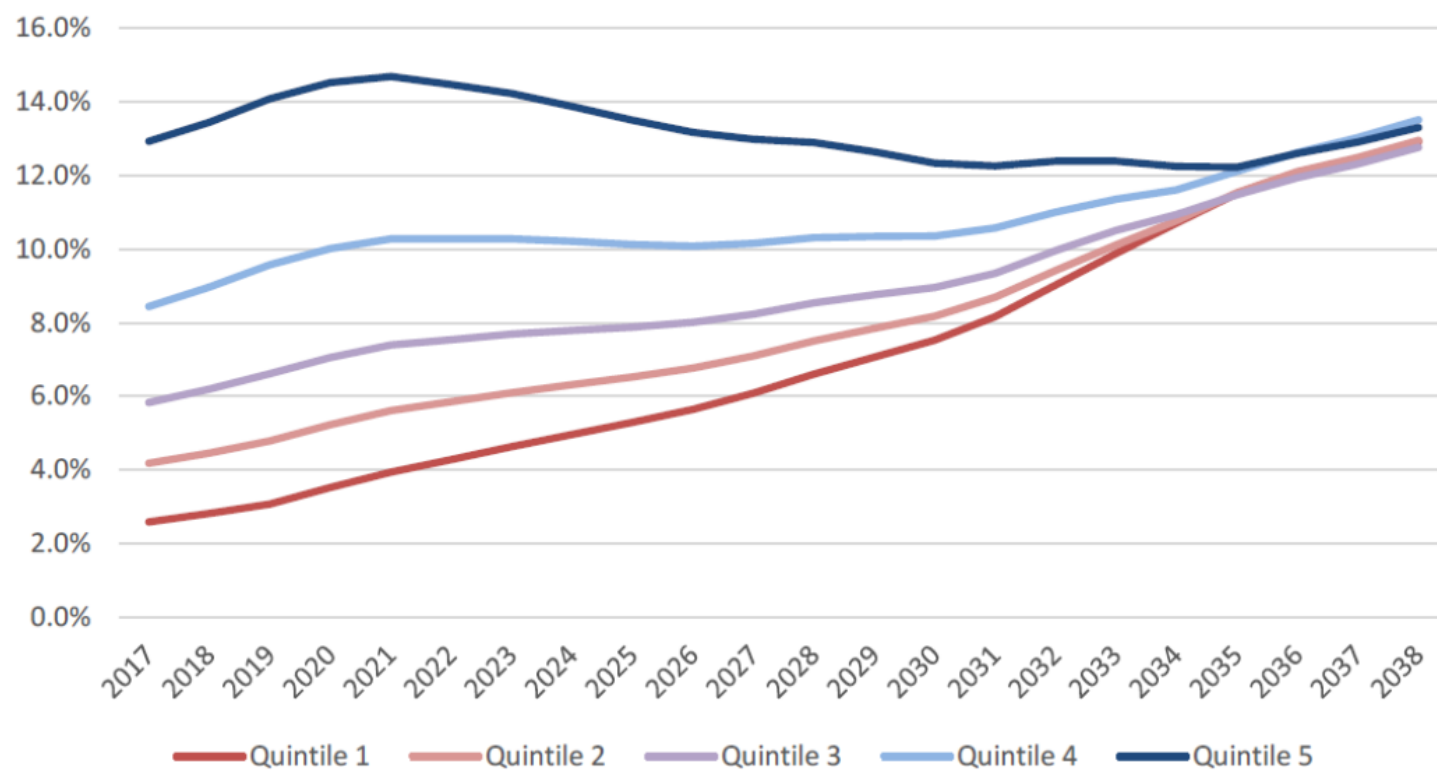
Vikki Boliver
Professor of Sociology
Durham University

Office for Students Insight Event
Fairer access and participation
1st May 2019



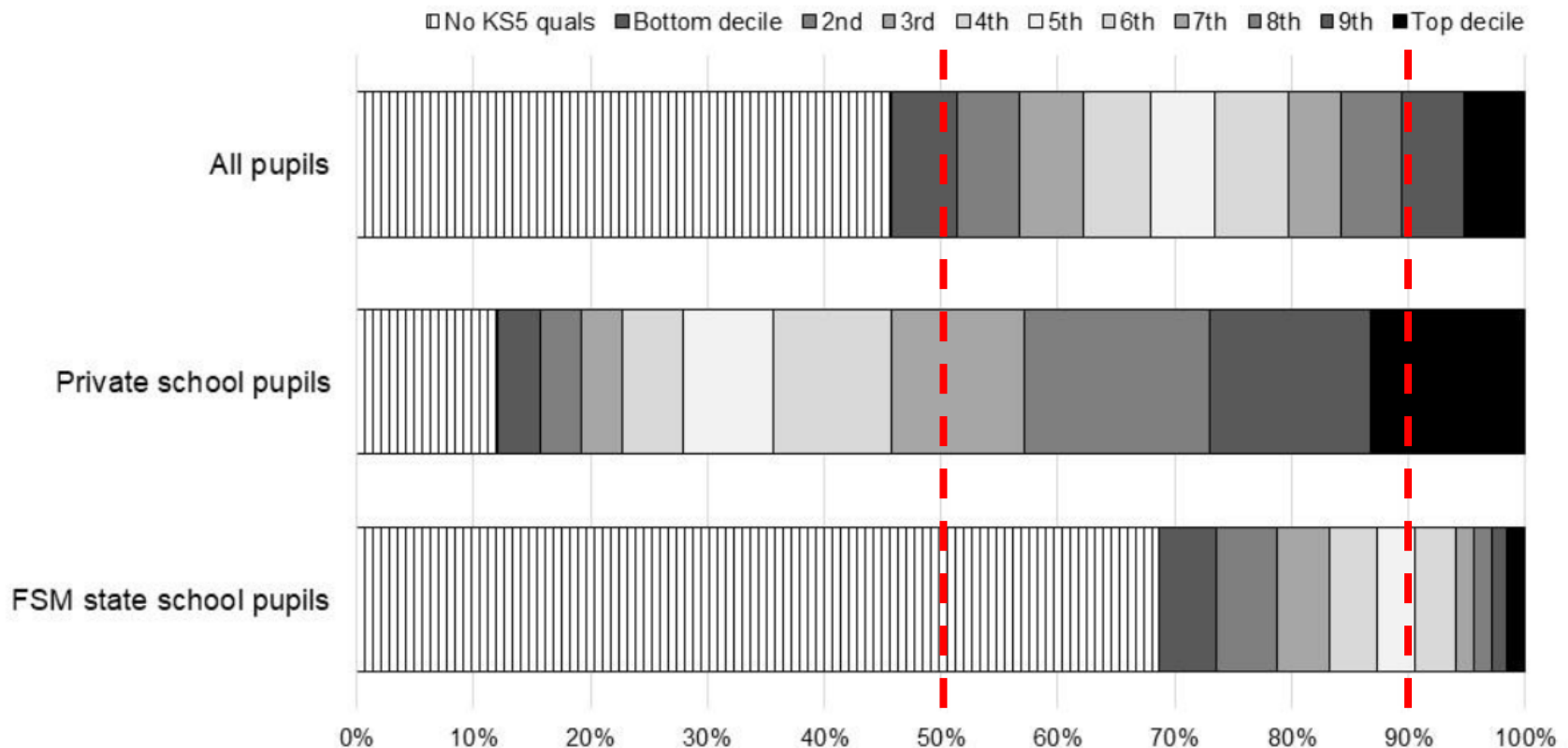
Ambitious new widening access targets

Figure 1. Projected rates of entry to higher-tariff providers in England for UK-domiciled 18 and 19 year olds from areas with the highest (quintile 5) and lowest (quintile 1) rates of young participation in higher education²



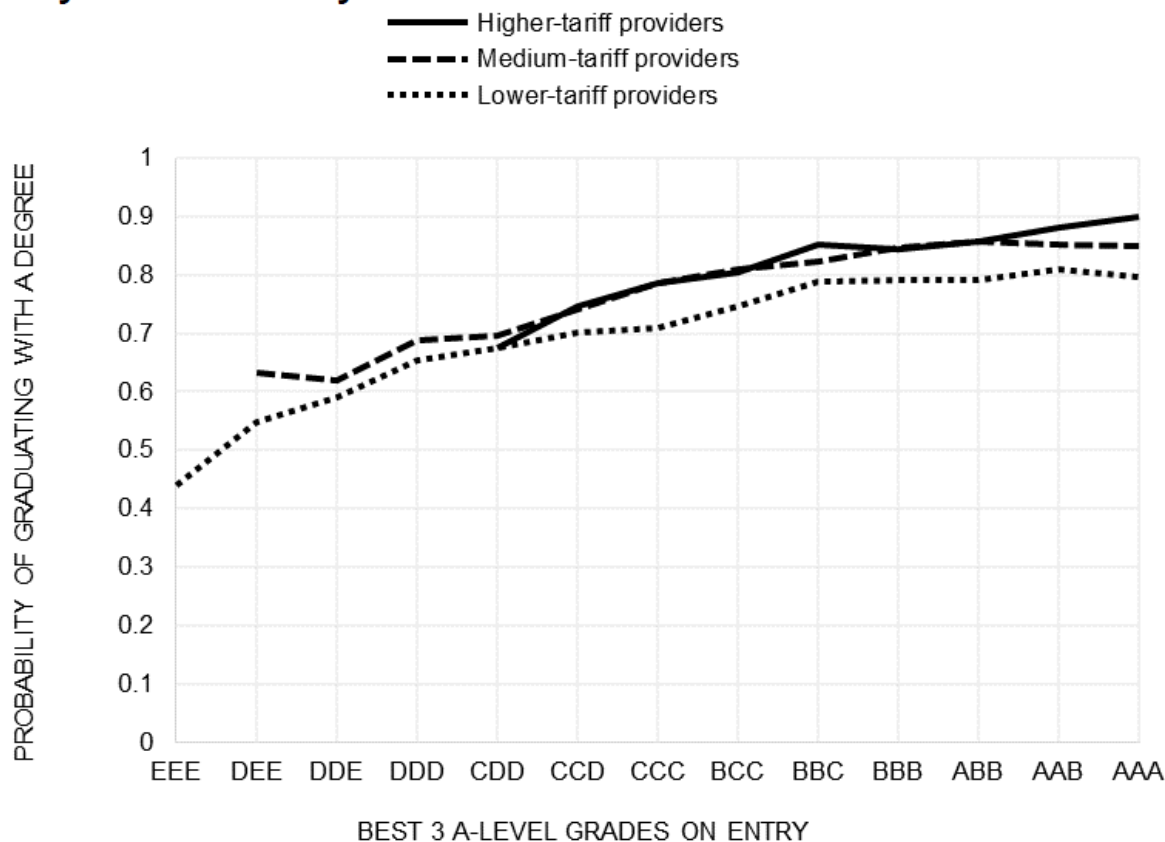
The need to contextualise attainment

Figure 2. Distribution of key stage 5 (A-level and equivalent) achievement for pupils from socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds⁶



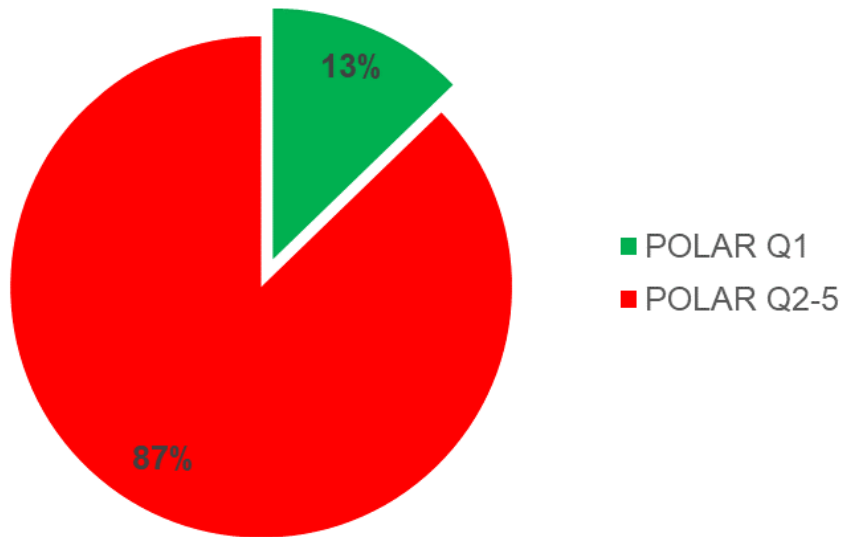
Degree success does not depend strongly on grades on entry

Figure 3. Statistical relationship between best three A-level grades on entry to higher education and probability of graduating with a bachelor's degree rather than non-completion, three years after entry⁸

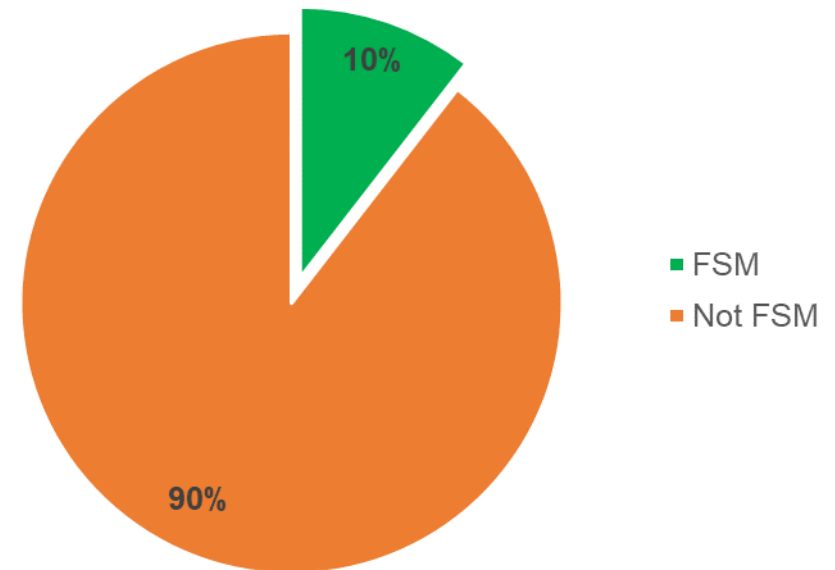


Must use individual-level indicators of contextual disadvantage

Percentage of free school meal recipients entering HE who were from POLAR quintile 1 areas



Percentage of POLAR quintile 1 residents entering HE who received free school meals



Scope for a much bolder approach

Academic entry requirements could and should be substantially reduced for contextually disadvantaged learners

- **Arithmetically necessary** if OfS targets are to be achieved
- **Key to a genuinely fairer system** which acknowledges the impact of socioeconomic inequality on attainment
- **Compatible with excellence** since most will succeed at university, especially if supported to realise their potential
- **Must be targeted accurately** using verifiable individual-level indicators of disadvantage

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Using contextualised admissions to widen access to higher education: a guide to the evidence base

Vikki Boliver, Stephen Gorard and Nadia Siddiqui
Durham University

vikki.boliver@durham.ac.uk
s.a.gorard@durham.ac.uk
nadia.siddiqui@durham.ac.uk

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