# Analysis of degree classifications over time

**Changes in graduate attainment from 2010-11 to 2021-22**

# Contents

# Summary

1. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22 the percentage of UK-domiciled, full-time first degree graduates attaining a first class or upper second class degree fell. In 2021-22, 79.6 per cent received a first or second class degree compared with 83.7 per cent in 2020-21. This decrease of 4.1 percentage points is the first time rates have fallen since 2010-11.

2. Despite this fall, the proportion of graduates attaining first or upper second class degrees remained higher in 2021-22 than in 2018-19 (before the effects of the coronavirus pandemic), when it stood at 78.1 per cent. Overall, between 2010-11 and 2021-22, there has been a 13.2 percentage point increase in the proportion of first and upper second class degrees awarded.

3. This report analyses these graduate attainment rates and uses statistical modelling to assess to what extent the increases and decreases in these rates could be statistically accounted for by changes in the prior attainment of, and distribution of subjects studied by, the graduate populations.

4. Across the 144  providers included in this analysis, 32.8 per cent of students were awarded a first class degree in 2021-22. This is an increase from 15.5 per cent in 2010-11 but a decrease from 2020-21, when it stood at 37.4 per cent. Half of the 32.8 per cent in 2021-22 (16.4 percentage points) was not statistically explained when compared with 2010-11. First and upper second class degree attainment increased from 66.4 per cent in 2010-11 to 79.6 per cent in 2021-22. Of this, 10.7 percentage points were not statistically explained by the characteristics included in our modelling.

5. The report also examines unexplained attainment at the provider level. We compared each provider's attainment with the mean across the 144 providers included in this analysis in 2010-11 and also with their own awarding in 2010-11.

6. Throughout this report we refer to the proportion of first or first and upper second class degrees awarded as 'graduate attainment'. In other OfS publications we refer to this measure as 'degree outcomes'. We consider that these terms are equivalent and use them interchangeably.

# Introduction

7. In May 2022, the Office for Students (OfS) published 'Analysis of degree classifications over time: Changes in graduate attainment from 2010-11 to 2020-21' (OfS 2022.22), which used statistical modelling to investigate changes in the proportions of graduates attaining first or upper second class degrees over the academic years from 2010-11 to 2020-21.[1] This new report builds on our analysis from last year by expanding the time series to include academic years from 2010-11 to 2021-22.

8. We report not only on how graduate attainment has changed over this period, but also on the extent to which these changes can be statistically accounted for by changes in certain characteristics of the graduate population.[2] This analysis has been undertaken at both the sector-level and the provider-level. The sector-level analysis and a summary of the provider-level analysis are in the main body of this report, with detailed results of the provider-level analysis available separately in Annex A.[3]

9. The graduate population considered in this report comprises UK-domiciled, first-degree graduates who:

   - studied full-time

   - were registered at higher education providers in England

   - graduated in the academic years from 2010-11 to 2021-22

   - attained a classified honours degree.

10. We also only include those who qualified from English providers that awarded classified honours degrees to at least 10 students in each of the academic years considered. We therefore use data from 144 providers. These providers awarded 260,110 graduates a classified degree in 2021-22. In the rest of the report we refer to these providers as 'the sector', for the purposes of this analysis only.

11. The total number of graduates, the number studying in each subject area and the number entering higher education with each type of entry qualification from providers included in this analysis are shown in Annex A, Table 3. Definitions of our graduate populations are presented in Annex B.

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[1] Available at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/analysis-of-degree-classifications-over-time-changes-in-graduate-attainment-from-2010-11-to-2020-21/.

[2] These are student and course characteristics associated with graduate attainment, which are derived and available from administrative data for the whole sector.

[3] Available to download alongside this document at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/analysis-of-degree-classifications-over-time-changes-in-graduate-attainment-from-2010-11-to-2021-22/.

## Using statistical modelling to estimate unexplained attainment

12. We have used statistical modelling of individual-level graduate data to estimate the extent to which changes in degree classification attainment between 2010-11 to 2021-22[4] can be accounted for by the following graduate characteristics (explanatory variables):

    - the provider at which the graduate was registered

    - year of graduation

    - subject of study

    - qualifications on entry into higher education

    - age.

13. To simplify the modelling, we have chosen not to include disability, ethnicity, sex and TUNDRA (tracking underrepresentation by area) as explanatory variables in this update to the analysis. Instead we have reverted to the approach adopted in a previous publication and have verified that this approach does not impact the overall results in any way.

14. In the May 2022 report, we added 'year' interaction terms to better capture year-on-year sector changes in attainment for age, qualifications on entry and subject of study. This followed the changes in attainment of particular groups of students during the coronavirus pandemic. We have retained these changes in this year's analysis.

15. In 2010-11 the proportion of students awarded a first class degree was 15.5 per cent. Using the explanatory variables in paragraph 12, we estimated that the proportion in 2021-22 would be 16.4 per cent, a 0.9 percentage point increase. However, we observed 32.8 per cent of students attaining a first class degree in 2021-22, an increase of 17.3 percentage points (see Table 3).

16. In 2010-11 the proportion of students awarded a first or upper second class degree was 66.4 per cent. Using these explanatory variables we also estimated that the proportion in 2021-22 would be 68.8 per cent, an increase of 2.4 percentage points. However, we observed 79.6 per cent of students attaining a first or upper second class degree in 2021-22, an increase of 13.2 percentage points (see Table 2).

17. Therefore the observed sector-level increases in rates of firsts and firsts and upper seconds combined over this period are considered unexplained by the factors listed in paragraph 12 alone.

18. The term 'unexplained' in this context means that changes in the characteristics of the graduating cohort included in our modelling cannot explain statistically the changes in attainment over the period. We are not seeking to understand what other factors might be

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[4] In support of our regulation work related to the principle that 'qualifications granted to students are credible and hold their value', we use 2010-11 as the base year in our modelling, as this approach allows us to observe both historical and recent changes in unexplained attainment. Starting in 2010-11, rates of firsts started to increase by around two percentage points a year, but prior to 2010-11 yearly increases tended to be much smaller.

driving the observed changes. We acknowledge that elements such as improvements in teaching quality could account for them. Our modelling can also not account for increases in awarding as a result of changes made in response to the coronavirus pandemic. For this reason we also classify these changes as 'unexplained'.

## Context and background

19. This report follows on from the previous OfS publication 'Analysis of degree classifications over time: Changes in graduate attainment from 2010-11 to 2020-21 (OfS 2022.22) published in May 2022. As well as adding the latest year of student data, for 2021-22, this latest report incorporates some other changes.

20. Following the consultation on constructing student outcome and experience indicators for use in OfS regulation, we have published a revised definition of the degree outcomes population.[5] The main change is that a student's mode is now defined by the mode they were studying when they started their course, whereas it was previously based on the mode at which they qualified.

21. We have carried out some analysis to understand what affect these changes have made. It showed that, at the sector-level, the proportion of first and upper second class degrees awarded was slightly lower across the time series when using the revised population, but overall trends were unchanged.

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**Summary of changes to the methodology**

In addition to including data for students graduating in 2021-22, we have made the following data changes since the analysis of degree classifications published in May 2022, which may have resulted in changes to previously published numbers:

1. Changes to the definition of mode used for defining the student population when calculating degree outcome indicators.

2. Removal of the following graduate characteristics from the statistical modelling: disability, ethnicity, sex and TUNDRA.

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[5] See Instructions for rebuilding OfS datasets at www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/student-outcomes-and-teaching-excellence-consultations/outcome-and-experience-data/.

# Results

## Sector-level analysis

### Sector overview

22. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the numbers and proportions of graduates attaining different classified degrees in the academic years 2010-11 and 2018-19 to 2021-22.

**Table 1: Degree classifications for academic years 2010-11 and 2018-19 to 2021-22**

| Degree classification | 2010-11 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number** | | | | | |
| First | 34,845 | 77,230 | 93,870 | 100,850 | 85,285 |
| Upper second | 114,125 | 130,115 | 125,085 | 125,000 | 121,680 |
| First and upper second combined | 148,965 | 207,345 | 218,955 | 225,850 | 206,965 |
| Other classifications | 75,295 | 58,245 | 45,105 | 44,095 | 53,145 |
| Total | 224,265 | 265,590 | 264,060 | 269,945 | 260,110 |
| **Proportions** | | | | | |
| First | 15.5% | 29.1% | 35.5% | 37.4% | 32.8% |
| Upper second | 50.9% | 49.0% | 47.4% | 46.3% | 46.8% |
| First and upper second combined | 66.4% | 78.1% | 82.9% | 83.7% | 79.6% |
| Other classifications | 33.6% | 21.9% | 17.1% | 16.3% | 20.4% |

23. Figure 1 shows the changes in the proportions of all classified honours degrees awarded as first and upper second class from 2010-11 to 2021-22, for providers included in this analysis. The proportion of graduates attaining a first or upper second class degree over the period has increased by 13.2 percentage points, from 66.4 per cent in 2010-11 to 79.6 per cent in 2021-22. Although this is lower than the 2020-21 proportion, which was 83.7 per cent, it remains higher than it was before the coronavirus pandemic in 2018-19, when it was 78.1 per cent. This is despite the fact that the proportion attaining upper second class degrees alone has gradually fallen across the period.

24. The proportion of students attaining a first class degree increased every year between 2010-11 and 2020-21, from 15.5 per cent in 2010-11 to 37.4 per cent in 2020-21, with the largest increase between 2018-19 and 2019-20, of 6.4 percentage points. However, between 2020-21 and 2021-22 it fell by 4.6 percentage points, to 32.8 per cent in 2021-22. This was still above the level in 2018-19, before the coronavirus pandemic, when it was 29.1 per cent.
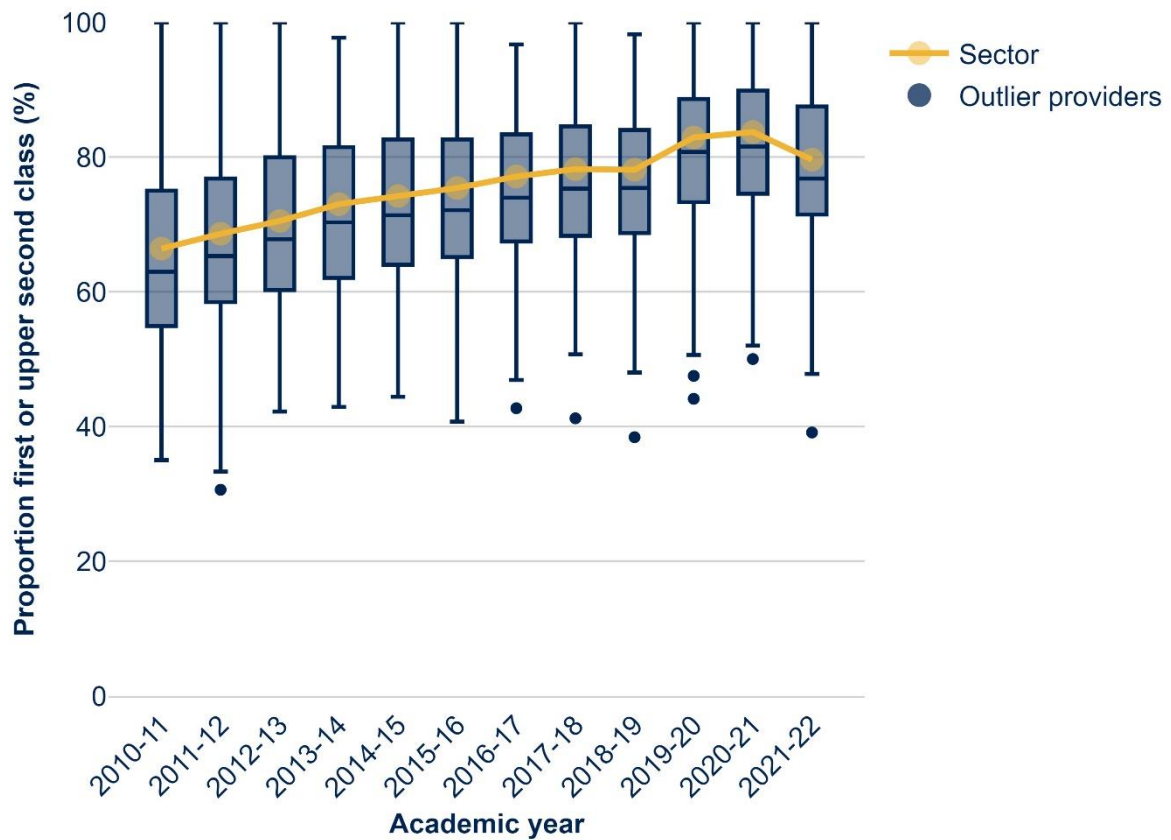
**Figure 1: Change in proportion of degrees awarded from 2010-11 to 2021-22**
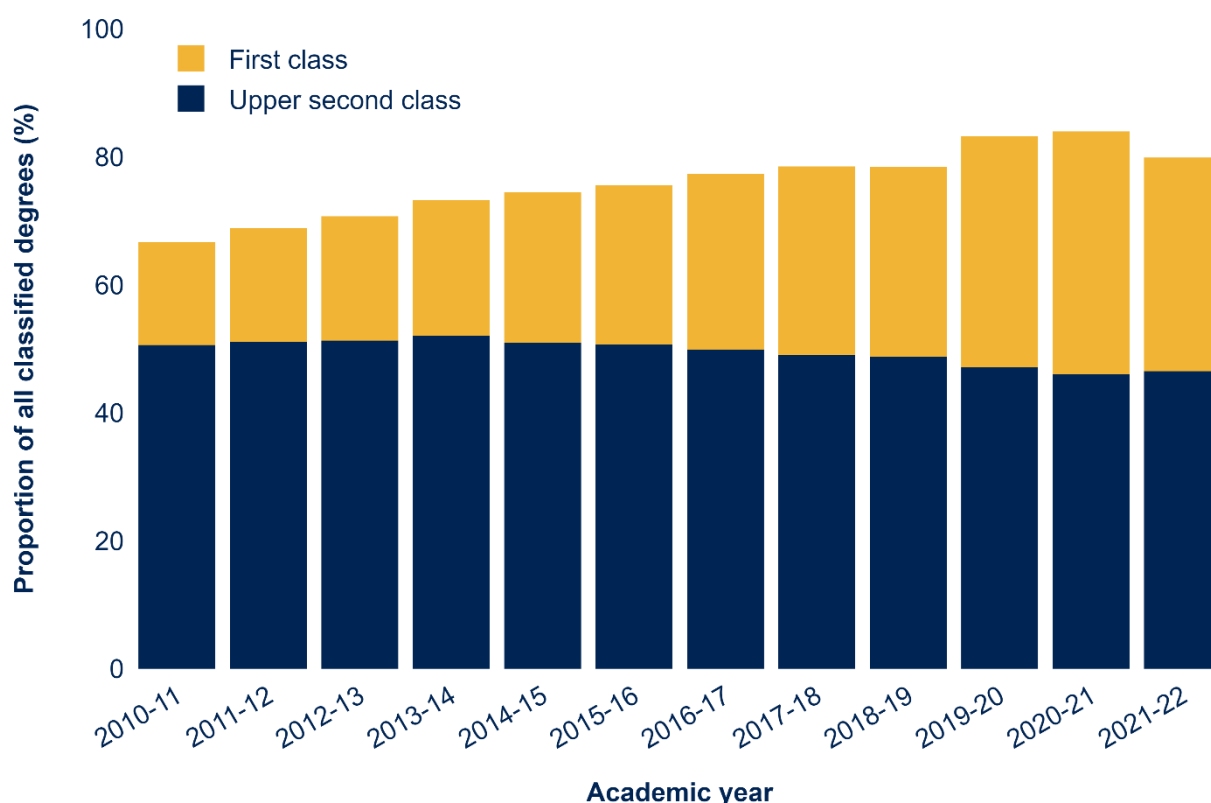


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.

25. Figures 2 to 5 present 'box-and-whisker' summary plots of degree attainment at individual providers and across the sector. In each of these figures the solid horizontal line spanning the interior of the shaded box indicates the median attainment across all the providers, while the lower and upper bounds of the shaded box indicate the first (Q1) and third (Q3) quartiles of attainment across providers, respectively. The vertical lines extending out from the shaded box are known as the 'whiskers'. Data points that sit outside of this range are considered to be 'outliers'.

26. Figure 2 shows a summary of the proportion of classified degrees awarded as first or upper second class for academic years 2010-11 to 2021-22 across the 144 providers included in this analysis. This shows large variation in attainment of upper second and first class degrees across providers. Following a levelling out in attainment levels and provider variation in 2018-19, there was a large increase in sector attainment in 2019-20, a smaller increase again in 2020-21 and then a decrease in 2021-22. Some outliers can be seen, all exhibiting attainment levels below the lower whisker cap of the respective year.

**Figure 2: Provider-level summary distributions for proportions of first or upper second class degrees awarded from 2010-11 to 2021-22**



Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.

27. Figure 3 shows the equivalent summary, for first class degrees only, over the same period. Similar to the trend of the proportion for combined first or upper second class degrees, following a levelling off of the sector attainment in 2018-19, there was a large increase in 2019-20 and a smaller increase again in 2020-21. This was followed by a decrease in 2021-22. Some outliers can be seen, all exhibiting attainment levels above the upper whisker cap of the respective year.

**Figure 3: Provider-level summary distributions for proportions of first class degrees awarded from 2010-11 to 2021-22**
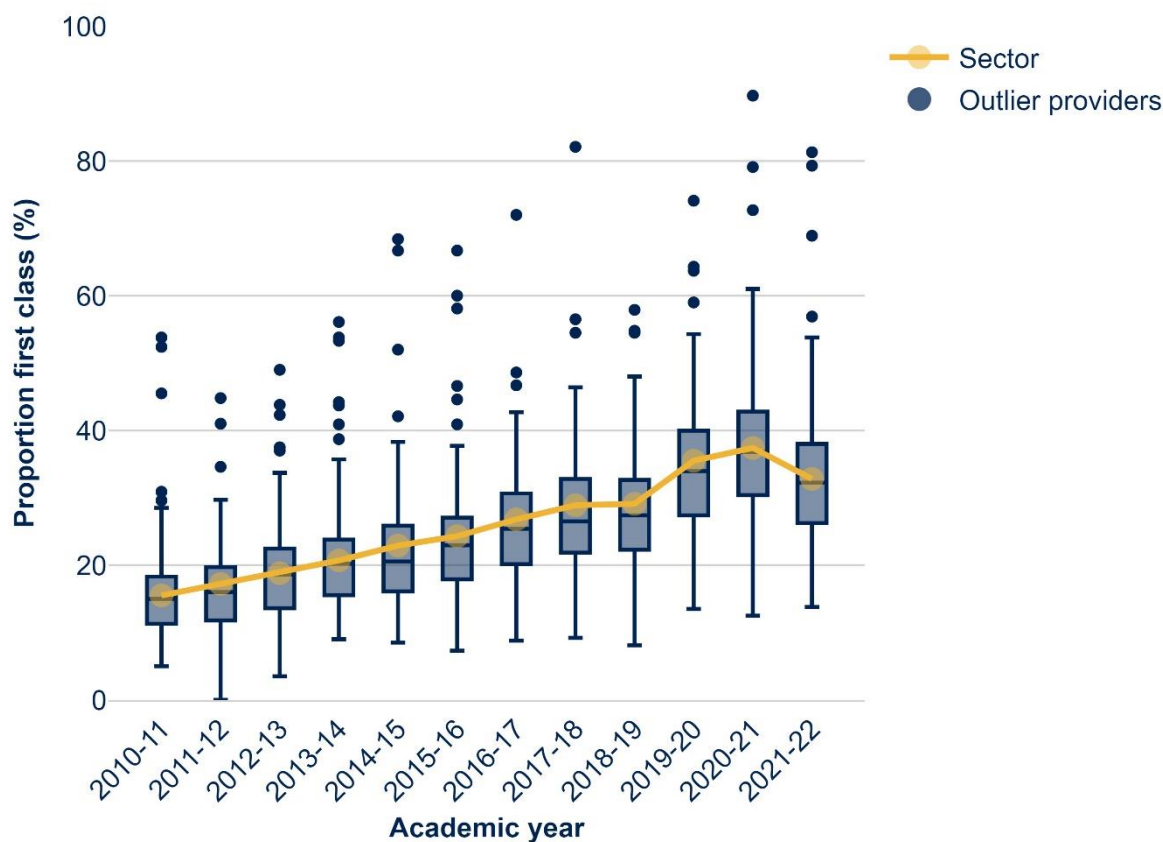


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.

28. Figure 4 shows the year-on-year changes in the attainment of first or upper second class degrees for the 144 providers, and the mean for the sector. The sector year-on-year changes have been variable, especially in more recent years. For many years, proportions consistently increased by over one percentage point each year, but between 2017-18 and 2018-19 there was a 0.1 percentage point decrease in the proportion of students awarded a first class or upper second class degree. However, between 2018-19 and 2019-20 there was a sector-level increase of 4.8 percentage points, followed by a further increase of 0.7 percentage points between 2019-20 and 2020-21. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22, there was a decrease of 4.1 percentage points. The greatest fluctuations in year-on-year attainment changes tend to occur in providers with small numbers, where changes in the outcomes for a small number of students can greatly change the proportion attaining a particular degree outcome.

**Figure 4: Provider-level summaries for year-by-year changes in proportions of first or upper second class degrees awarded from 2010-11 to 2021-22**
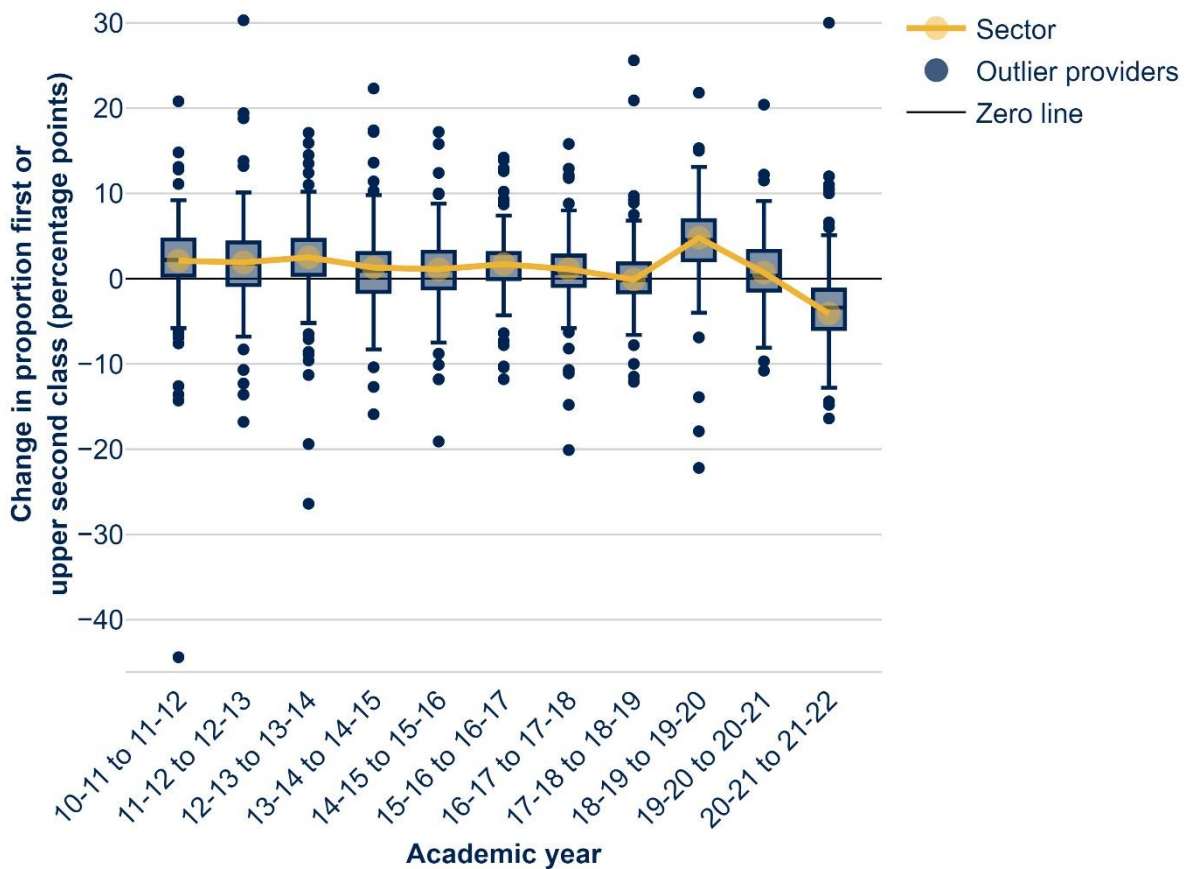


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.

29. Figure 5 shows the same data as Figure 4, but for first class degrees alone. The trends for first or upper second class degrees combined and first class degrees alone are similar, but the yearly increases are larger for firsts alone. This classification has typically seen an increase of between one and a half and two and a half percentage points a year in earlier years. Between 2017-18 and 2018-19 the sector proportion increased by 0.2 percentage points. Between 2018-19 and 2019-20 there was a sector level increase of 6.5 percentage points, followed by another increase of 1.8 percentage points between 2019-20 and 2020-21. Between the two most recent years there was a decrease of 4.6 percentage points.

**Figure 5: Provider-level summaries for year-by-year changes in proportions of first class degrees awarded from 2010-11 to 2021-22**
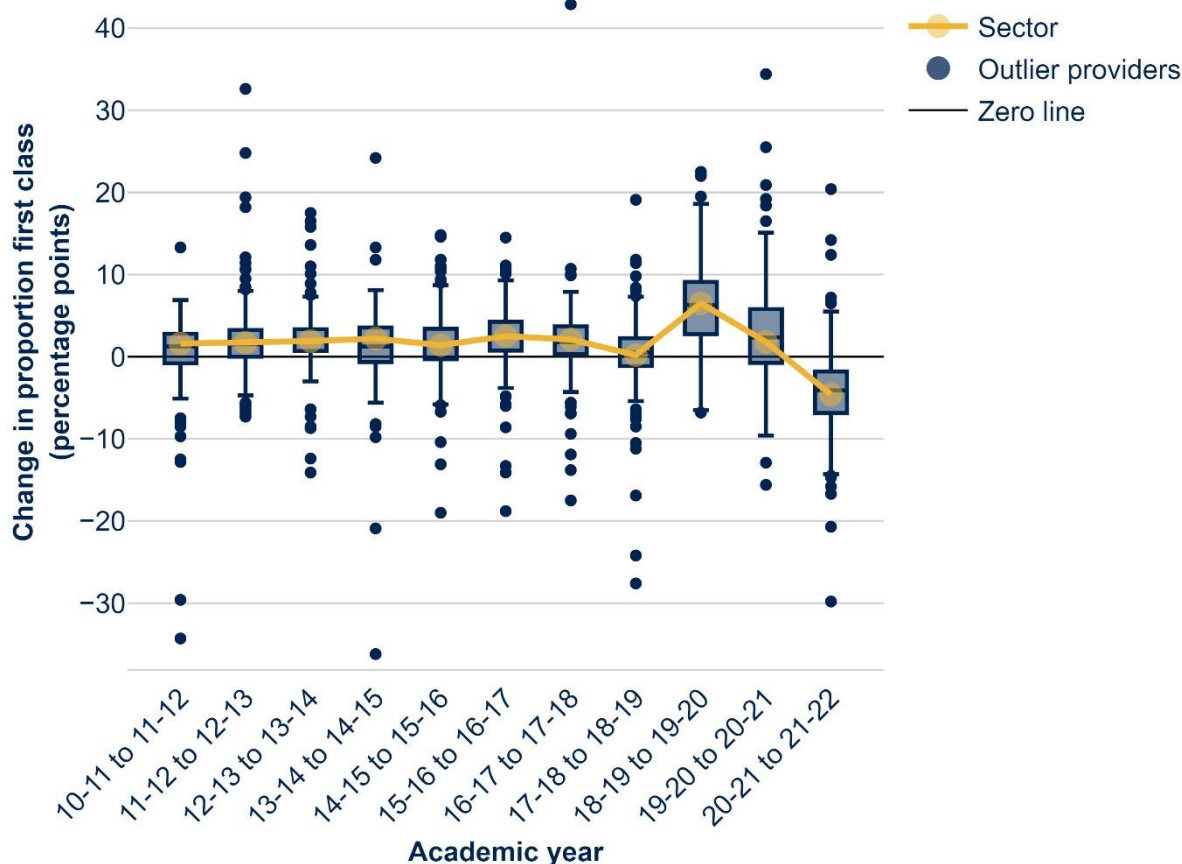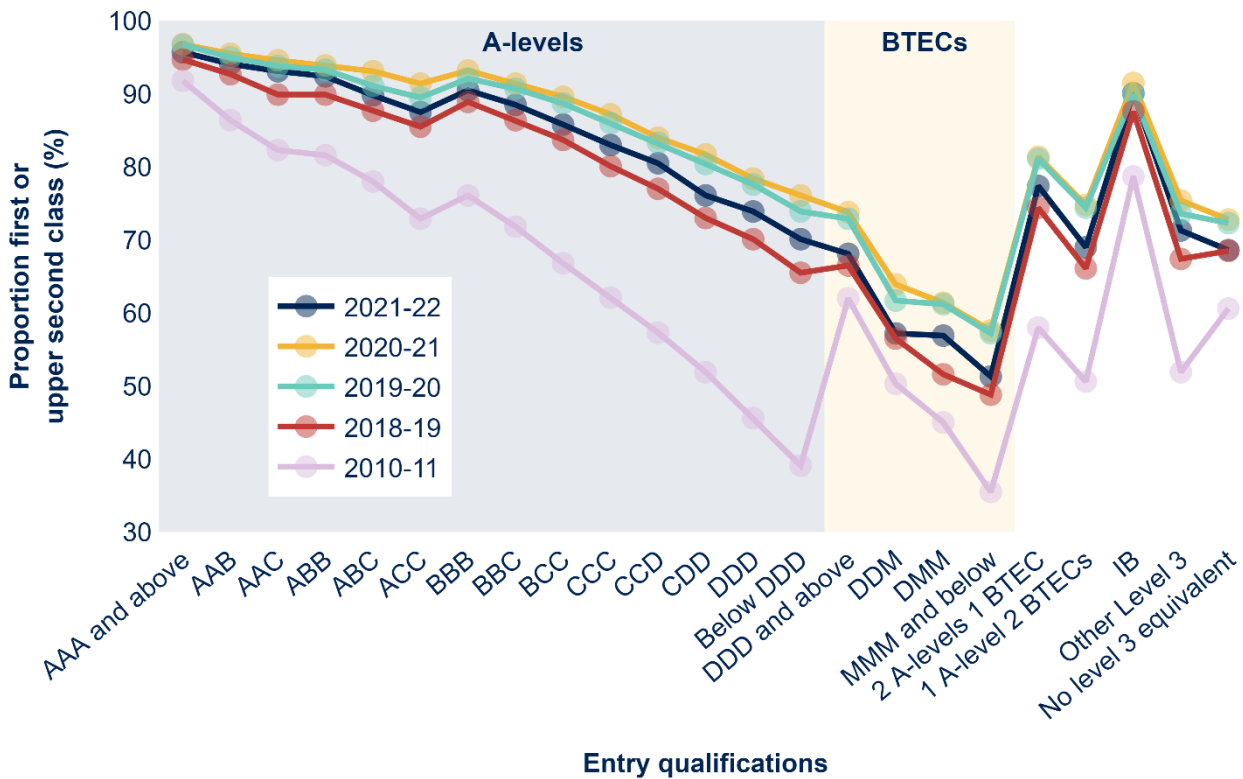


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.

## Changes by entry qualifications

30. Figure 6 presents the changes in the attainment of first and upper second class degrees combined, in relation to graduates' entry qualifications. Between 2010-11 and 2021-22 there has been a 13.2 percentage point increase in first or upper second degree attainment rates (see Table 2). However, the size of the average increase has varied considerably between students entering higher education with different qualifications. In general, between 2018-19 and 2019-20 there were large increases across the different groups, and the size of the differences varied markedly. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22 however, all of the entry qualification groups saw decreases in attainment, although all remained higher than they were in 2018-19.

31. Figure 6 shows that for A-level and BTEC qualifications (where there is a clear concept of hierarchy), those with the highest entry qualifications have experienced the smallest changes in attainment rates, while students entering with the lowest A-level qualifications have experienced the largest changes. However, we note that there is a ceiling effect for those with the highest A-level category.

32. The impacts of the sector-level 4.1 percentage point decrease in first and upper second class degrees awarded between 2020-21 and 2021-22 varied between the different entry qualification groups. Decreases ranged from 1.1 percentage points for students with A-level

grades of AAA and above through to a 6.7 percentage point decrease for students entering with BTEC grades DDM (distinction, distinction, merit).

**Figure 6: First and upper second class degree attainment by entry qualifications for academic years 2010-11 and 2018-19 to 2021-22**
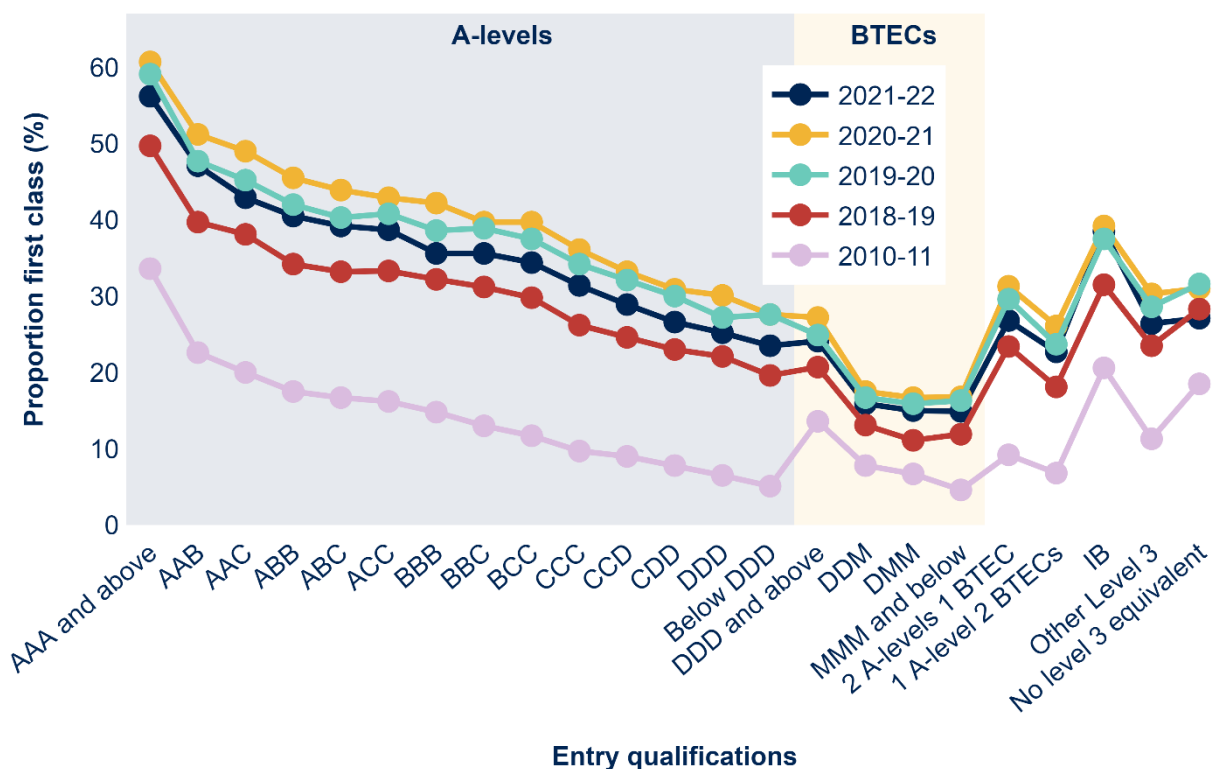


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A. This includes data for the intermediate years not displayed in the chart.

33. Figure 7 shows first class degree attainment by entry qualifications. Between 2010-11 and 2021-22 there was a 17.3 percentage point increase in the first class degree attainment rate (see Table 3). Again, we saw that between 2018-19 and 2019-20 there were large increases across the different groups, and between 2019-20 and 2020-21 smaller increases again. Between 2020-21 and 2021-22 however, all entry qualification groups saw decreases.

34. Figure 7 shows that for first class degrees alone, there were similar changes in attainment across different entry qualifications for the years presented. Between 2010-11 and 2021-22, students entering with A-level grades of AAB experienced the largest increase in first class degree attainment; 24.5 percentage points, from 22.6 per cent to 47.1 per cent. Students entering with BTEC grades of DDM (distinction, distinction, merit) experienced the smallest increase, of 8.1 percentage points from 7.8 per cent to 15.9 per cent.

**Figure 7: First class degree attainment by entry qualifications for academic years 2010-11 and 2018-19 to 2021-22**



Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A. This includes data for the intermediate years not displayed in the chart.

## Results from statistical modelling

35. Tables 2 and 3 present sector-level changes in the attainment of first and upper second class degrees combined and of first class degrees alone, respectively, from 2010-11 through to 2021-22. The tables show the observed proportion of graduates attaining the respective degree classifications ('Observed') and the percentage point ('pp') change in the observed attainment relative to 2010-11 ('Change from 2010-11'). The tables include the amount of attainment 'explained' by the characteristics included in our model when looking at awarding in 2010-11 (see paragraph 12). As we use 2010-11 as our reference year, all attainment in 2010-11 is explained. The tables also include the amount of attainment that is 'unexplained' by the characteristics included in our model. This is the difference between the observed attainment and attainment explained by our modelling. Details of the methodology used to determine unexplained attainment can be found in Annex B.

**Table 2: Summary of observed and unexplained sector-level changes in first and upper second class degree attainment combined**

| Academic year | Observed attainment (%) | Change from 2010-11 (pp) | Explained attainment from model (%) | Unexplained change (pp) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2010-11 (ref)** | 66.4 | 0.0 | 66.4 | 0.0 |
| **2011-12** | 68.6 | 2.2 | 65.1 | 3.4 |

| 2012-13 | 70.5 | 4.1 | 66.3 | 4.2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2013-14 | 73.0 | 6.6 | 66.5 | 6.5 |
| 2014-15 | 74.2 | 7.8 | 68.0 | 6.3 |
| 2015-16 | 75.4 | 9.0 | 68.0 | 7.4 |
| 2016-17 | 77.1 | 10.7 | 67.6 | 9.5 |
| 2017-18 | 78.2 | 11.8 | 67.4 | 10.7 |
| 2018-19 | 78.1 | 11.7 | 69.1 | 8.9 |
| 2019-20 | 82.9 | 16.5 | 68.2 | 14.7 |
| 2020-21 | 83.7 | 17.3 | 69.4 | 14.2 |
| 2021-22 | 79.6 | 13.2 | 68.8 | 10.7 |

**Table 3: Summary of observed and unexplained sector-level changes in first class degree attainment**

| Academic year | Observed attainment (%) | Change from 2010-11 (pp) | Explained attainment from model (%) | Unexplained change (pp) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2010-11 (ref) | 15.5 | 0.0 | 15.5 | 0.0 |
| 2011-12 | 17.2 | 1.7 | 15.0 | 2.2 |
| 2012-13 | 18.8 | 3.3 | 14.6 | 4.3 |
| 2013-14 | 20.7 | 5.2 | 15.2 | 5.5 |
| 2014-15 | 22.9 | 7.4 | 13.9 | 9.0 |
| 2015-16 | 24.3 | 8.8 | 13.9 | 10.4 |
| 2016-17 | 26.8 | 11.3 | 13.5 | 13.3 |
| 2017-18 | 28.9 | 13.4 | 13.8 | 15.1 |
| 2018-19 | 29.1 | 13.6 | 14.1 | 15.0 |
| 2019-20 | 35.5 | 20.0 | 14.5 | 21.0 |
| 2020-21 | 37.4 | 21.9 | 16.2 | 21.2 |
| 2021-22 | 32.8 | 17.3 | 16.4 | 16.4 |

36. Table 2 shows that unexplained attainment for first and upper second class degrees has increased by 10.7 percentage points between 2010-11 and 2021-22. During this time, observed attainment increased 13.2 percentage points. Our modelling suggests that, given the awarding behaviours in 2010-11 and the characteristics of students graduating in 2021-22, we might have expected attainment rates for first and upper second class degrees to have been 68.8 per cent. However, they were 79.6 per cent. In all years after 2010-11 the explained attainment was smaller than the observed attainment, indicating that changes in student and course characteristics do not fully explain the increases observed.

37. Table 3 shows these trends for first class degrees. In 2021-22, 32.8 per cent of students were awarded a first class degree, a 17.3 percentage point increase compared with 2010-11. Our

modelling suggests that this value would have been 16.4 per cent, had awarding behaviours been the same as 2010-11, based on the characteristics included in the model. As noted for firsts and upper second class degrees combined, in all years for firsts, observed attainment was greater than the attainment explained by our modelling.

38. Tables 2 and 3 show that both observed and unexplained attainment peaked in 2019-20 and 2020-21. These years were the ones most affected by the coronavirus pandemic and are considered to be atypical in terms of graduate attainment. Despite the fact that observed and unexplained attainment fell in 2021-22 in both cases, they still remained higher than the pre-pandemic levels in 2018-19.

39. Unexplained attainment has decreased for first and upper second class degrees from 14.7 per cent in 2019-20 to 10.7 per cent in 2021-22. However, it is still higher than the 8.9 per cent in 2018-19, before the pandemic began. For firsts, the unexplained attainment fell from a peak of 21.2 per cent in 2020-21 to 16.4 per cent in 2021-22, mirroring the change in observed attainment. Again, unexplained attainment remained higher than that in 2018-19 (15.0 per cent).

## Provider-level analysis

40. In addition to our sector-level analysis we have investigated changes in graduate attainment at individual providers, relative both to the mean graduate attainment in the sector in 2010-11 and to the same provider in 2010-11. Provider differences are presented as Z-scores to measure the significance of the change in unexplained attainment.

41. Z-scores measure the distance a provider's attainment is from a comparator mean (the sector or same provider attainment in 2010-11) and whether they are above (positive Z-score) or below (negative Z-score) that mean. The distance is measured in standard deviations so that differences are comparable across academic years and providers.

### Changes in attainment at providers relative to the sector in 2010-11

42. Figures 8 and 9 present the distribution of Z-scores denoting the changes in unexplained graduate attainment between the sector in 2010-11 and providers for years 2010-11, 2014-15 and 2017-18 to 202122, for first and upper second class degrees combined and first class degrees alone respectively. This demonstrates that in 2010-11 providers were fairly evenly distributed around the 2010-11 sector average (where the Z-score is 0), with only a small number exhibiting attainment considerably higher or lower than the sector mean. The overall shape of the trend across providers has been fairly consistent over time. Differences between the sector average in 2010-11 and the provider averages increased in most years until 2020-21. In 2021-22, however, the differences between the sector average in 2010-11 and the provider averages decreased in size, although they remained above the 2018-19 differences.

43. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18, the Z-scores for first and upper second class attainment increased with some consistency each year. However, Figure 8 shows that in 2018-19 many Z-scores dropped in value compared with 2017-18. There was a large increase between 2018-19 and 2019-20, but Z-scores in 2021-22 were lower than the Z-scores in 2020-21, although still higher than those in 2018-19.

44. Figure 9 shows a similar trend for first class degrees alone. However, the difference from the 2010-11 sector average is more pronounced for firsts, with larger Z-scores, especially for the more recent years.

**Figure 8: Distribution of Z-scores denoting the difference between first and upper second class attainment in the sector in 2010-11 and individual providers for academic years 2010-11, 2014-15 and 2017-18 to 2021-22**
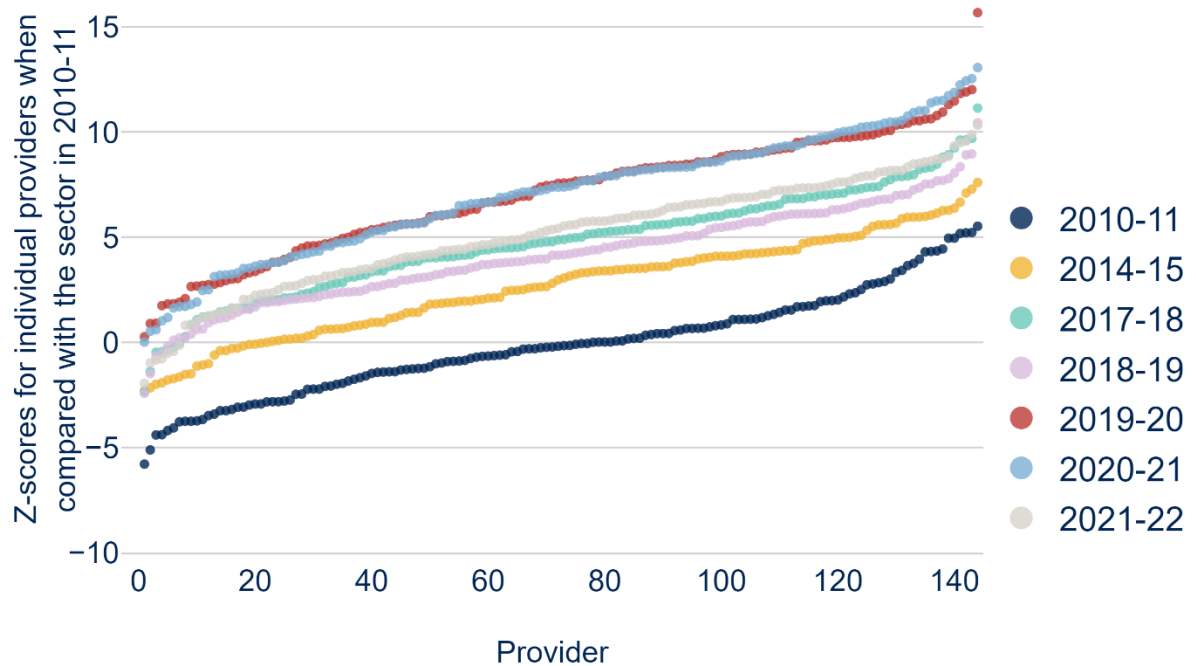


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.[6] This includes data for the intermediate years not displayed in the chart. These years follow similar trends, with differences between the sector average in 2010-11 and the provider averages gradually increasing each year. The colours used to represent specific years may change between charts.

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[6] In Figures 8 to 11, providers are ordered independently each year based on the size of their Z-score, so the provider with the lowest Z-score each year is always first and the provider with the highest Z-score that year is always last. Thus the position of a specific provider will not necessarily be the same from year to year.

**Figure 9: Distribution of Z-scores denoting the difference between first class attainment in the sector in 2010-11 and individual providers for academic years 2010-11, 2014-15 and 2017-18 to 2021-22**
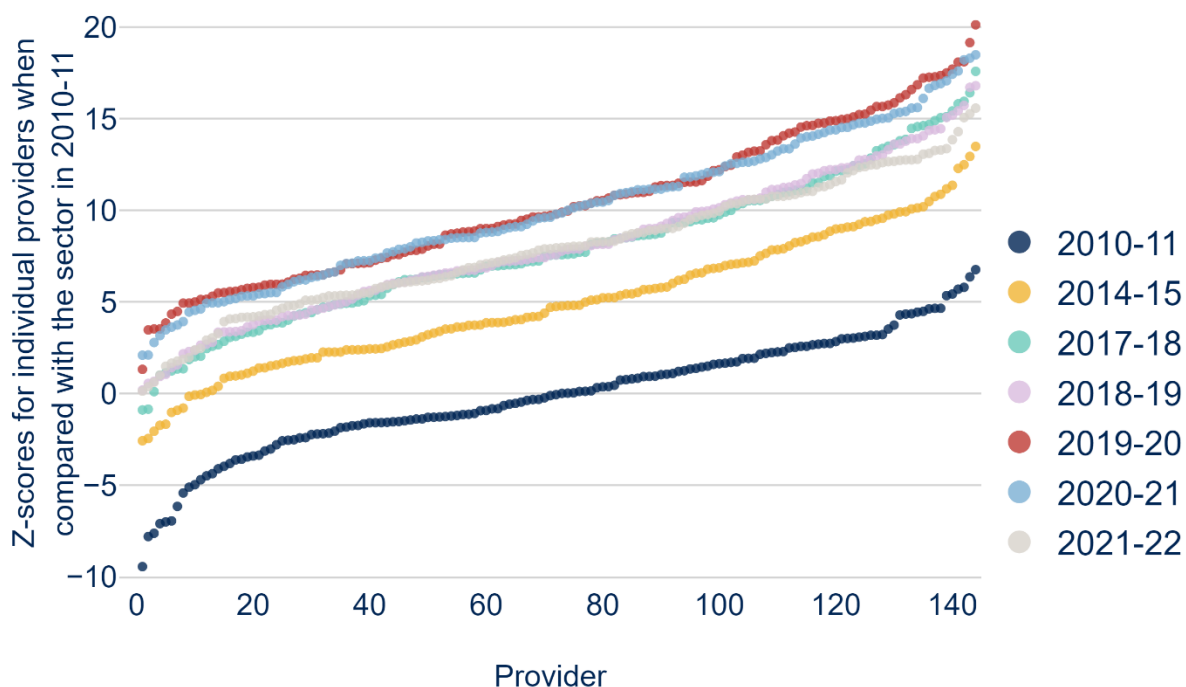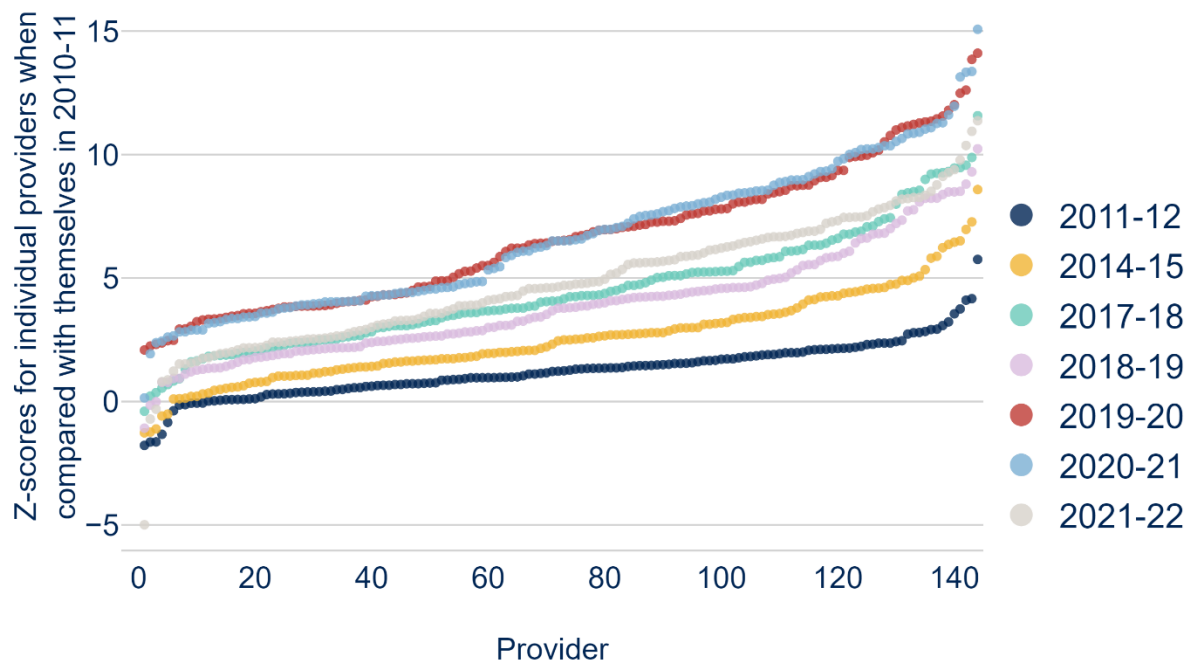


Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A.[7] This includes data for the intermediate years not displayed in the chart. These years follow similar trends, with differences between the sector average in 2010-11 and the provider averages gradually increasing each year. The colours used to represent specific years may change between charts.

## Changes in attainment at providers relative to the provider in 2010-11

45. Figures 10 and 11 present the distribution of Z-scores for providers when comparing their graduate attainment in 2010-11 with subsequent years, for first and upper second class degrees combined and first class degrees alone respectively. Trends similar to the 2010-11 sector comparison (Figures 8 and 9) have been observed. However, given the trend of attainment increasing in providers and comparing providers with themselves in 2010-11 (where the Z-score is 0), we see fewer negative Z-scores, unlike the sector comparisons where negative Z-scores were common in earlier years. The trends for firsts alone and first and upper seconds combined are similar, but firsts alone have seen larger increases in Z-scores.

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[7] In Figures 8 to 11, providers are ordered independently each year based on the size of their Z-score, so the provider with the lowest Z-score each year is always first and the provider with the highest Z-score that year is always last. Thus the position of a specific provider will not necessarily be the same from year to year.

**Figure 10: Distribution of Z-scores denoting the difference between first and upper second class attainment at providers in 2010-11 compared with 2011-12, 2014-15 and 2017-18 to 2021-22**



Note: The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A. This includes data for the intermediate years not displayed in the chart. These years follow similar trends, with differences between the provider in 2010-11 and successive years gradually increasing. The colours used to represent specific years may change between charts.

**Figure 11: Distribution of Z-scores denoting the difference between first class attainment at providers in 2010-11 compared with 2011-12, 2014-15 and 2017-18 to 2021-22**
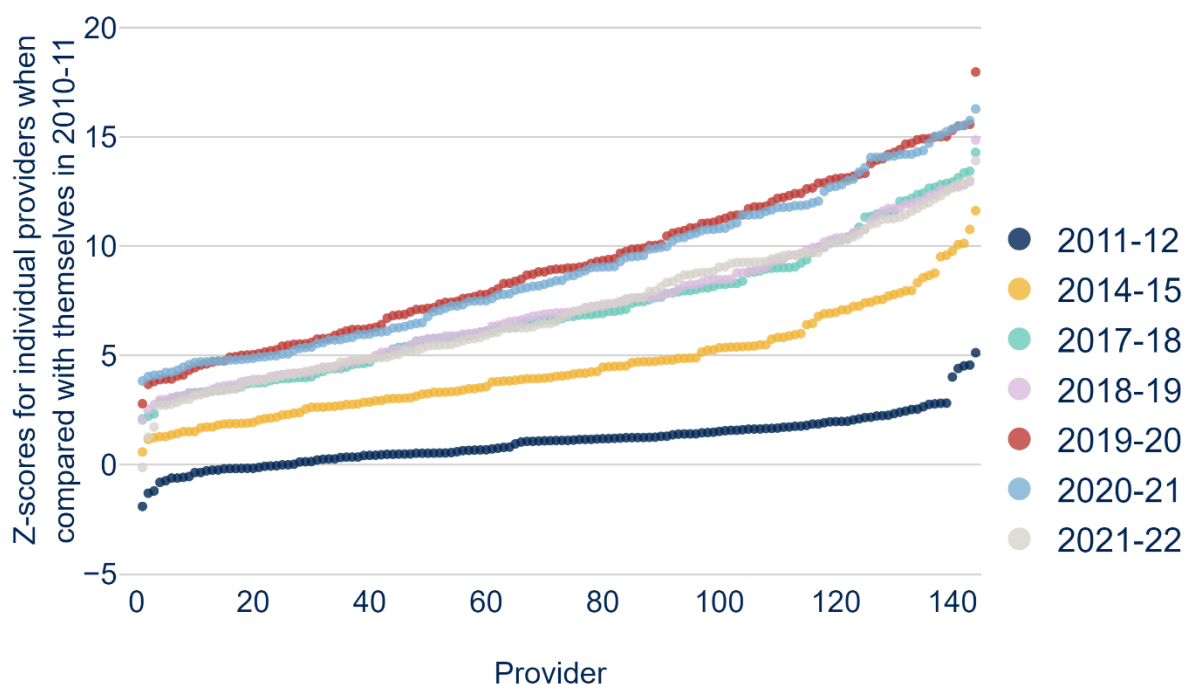


The data used to create this chart can be found in Annex A. This includes data for the intermediate years not displayed in the chart. These years follow similar trends, with differences between the provider in 2010-11 and successive years gradually increasing. The colours used to represent specific years may change between charts.

## Provider-level changes in unexplained attainment following the coronavirus pandemic

46. As discussed in paragraph 38 and Tables 2 and 3, the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21 saw sector-level unexplained attainment peaking, before falling again in 2021-22. These recent decreases in unexplained attainment were not uniform across all providers however, and varied considerably, as can be seen in Tables 1 and 2 of Annex A.

47. For firsts and upper second class degrees combined, between 2020-21 and 2021-22, overall sector-level unexplained attainment dropped 3.5 percentage points, to 10.7 per cent. At individual providers the change between years fluctuated widely, ranging from a 24.1 percentage point increase to a 20.8 percentage point decrease. For comparison, before the coronavirus pandemic, unexplained attainment fell between 2017-18 and 2018-19 by 1.8 percentage points, to 8.9 per cent. Again the changes varied considerably between providers, from an increase of 21.1 percentage points between these two years to a decrease of 12.1 percentage points.

48. For first class degrees at a provider level, changes in unexplained attainment between 2020-21 and 2021-22 ranged from a 15.9 percentage point increase to a 31.9 percentage point decrease, with a sector decrease of 4.8 percentage points. By comparison, before the

coronavirus pandemic, between 2017-18 and 2018-19 the average change in unexplained awarding of first class degrees was a 0.1 percentage point decrease, but at provider level changes ranged from a 18.3 percentage point increase to a 24.0 percentage point decrease.