

# Course Enrolment Performance

Prepared by:

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## About Us

The Knowledge Partnership is a specialist marketing and communications consultancy, providing strategic and focused support and intelligence for educational, academic and knowledge-based organisations, including universities, colleges and schools, research organisations, charities and the professions. Operating on an international basis, our current client list includes organisations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Europe and the UK.

The Leeds office specialises in university course development and portfolio management projects and we have created specific tools and methods which support and systematise our approach by providing new insights.

We were the lead consultants for I-MAP (Innovation in the Market Assurance of Courses).

Our range of services include:

- Course Portfolio Review – what to develop, what to invest in further and what to replace
- Market Assurance for New Course Development – from concept to evaluation to launch
- Course Concept Testing – using secondary and primary methods
- SubjectView UK Market Reports – our off-the-shelf reports, each covering trends for one of more than 100 subjects
- International SubjectView – your guide to the overseas potential of a HE subject
- Graduate Employer Engagement – design courses for optimum employability.

## Introduction

Analysis uses HESA data to explore trends in the volume of courses achieving set enrolment volumes over the period 2010/11-2013/14. Data has been presented separately for the full-time first degree<sup>1</sup>, full-time postgraduate taught (PGT) and part-time PGT markets.

Charts also plot performance across the different HESA subject groups to enable comparison by subject area.

This document presents the key findings and most-up-to-date picture. More detail on the analysis behind these findings can be provided on request.

### Key Findings

The number of first degree courses admitting full-time students declined over the period analysed, whilst the opposite was true for full-time PGT study.

For all levels of study, a small number of courses accounted for a large share of the enrolments. In 2013/14, the percentage of courses accounting for half of the full-time first degree enrolments was 12.5%, with corresponding figures of 10.5% for full-time PGT study and 6.9% for part-time PGT study.

Medical, Health and Law courses appear most successful at attracting large numbers at full-time first degree level, with Education and Business courses also appearing to be increasingly successful at admitting large cohorts. Language courses consistently admitted small cohorts, although this may be partly due to institutions offering the option to study many different combinations of two or more languages.

At PGT level, Business, Education and Social Studies courses were by far the most common, although whilst more than 50% of Business courses admitted 10+ students in 2013/14, the proportion was just below 40% for Education and Social Studies.

For part-time PGT admissions it was the Education subject group that consistently performed most strongly, based on the proportion of courses achieving set enrolment volumes. Subjects Allied to Medicine courses were also large in number, with circa 35% admitting 10+ students in 2013/14.

Please see the technical notes at the rear of this report for specifications relating to the use of HESA data and its [limitations](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Note that for first degree analysis we have tried, where possible, to remove obvious combined honours courses and top-up courses.

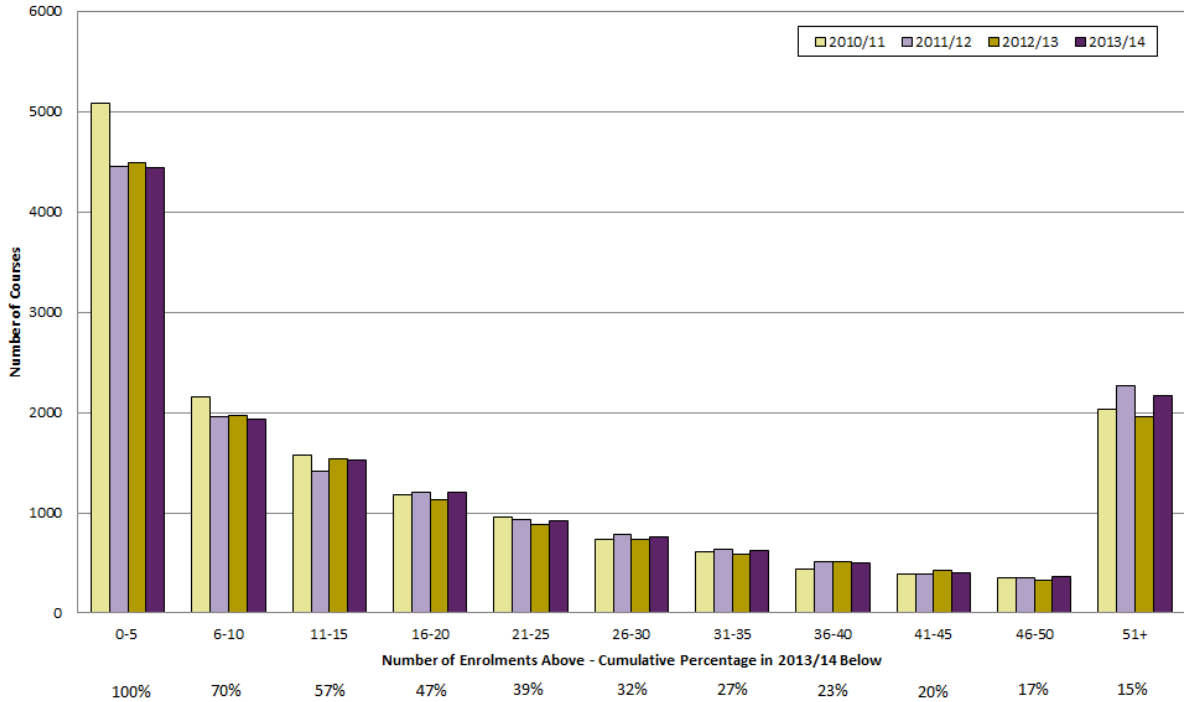
# Full-time First Degree

Around 30% of courses admit 5 or fewer students.

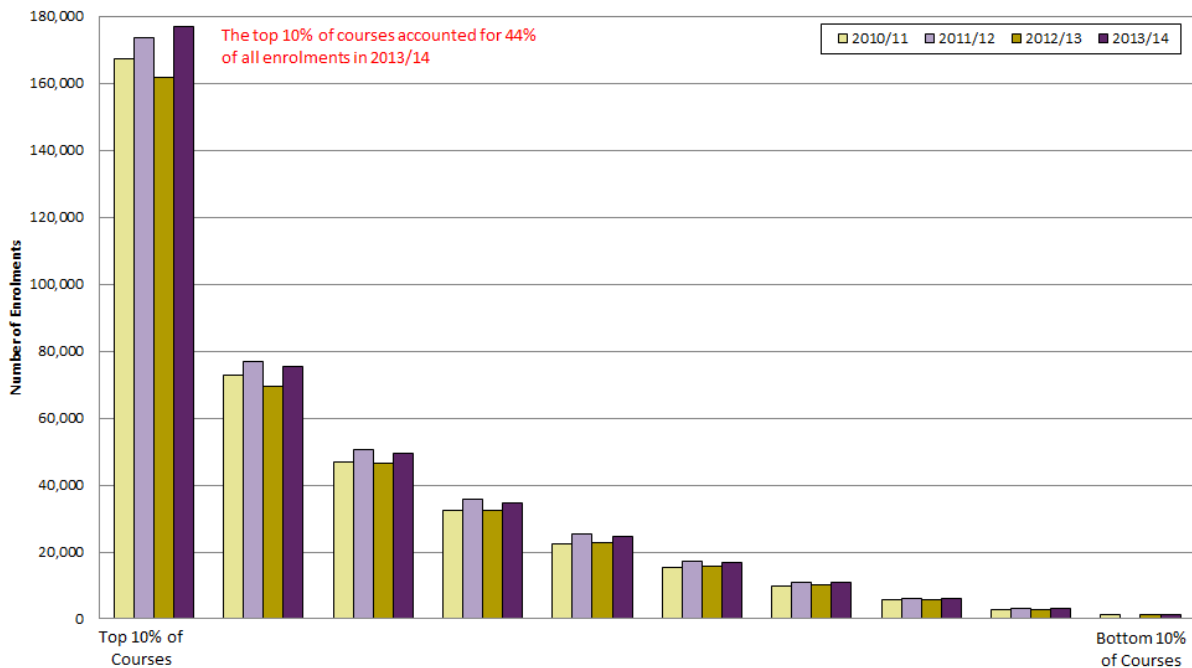
The total number of courses admitting students has seen an overall decline in recent years.

Circa 12.5% (1,850-1,950) of courses accounted for half of the enrolments in each cycle.

**All First Degree Courses Enrolling Full-Time Students 2010/11-2013/14**



**All First Degree Courses Enrolling Full-Time Students 2010/11-2013/14**



Subject groups which consistently performed well in the percentage of first degree courses attracting 15+ or 50+ full-time students:

- Medicine and Dentistry
- Law
- Subjects Allied to Medicine
- Creative Arts and Design
- Business and Administrative Studies
- Social Studies
- Biological Sciences

Subject groups which consistently performed poorly in the percentage of first degree courses attracting 15+ or 50+ full-time students:

- Languages (*often universities enable the study of two or more languages with a variety of combinations on offer, thus leading to individual cohorts limited in size*)
- Historical and Philosophical Studies
- Veterinary Science, Agriculture and Related Subjects
- Physical Sciences
- Mathematical Sciences
- Engineering and Technology (*this may be due to separate reporting of BEng and MEng variants, or for separate reporting of enrolments onto study abroad and sandwich year options*)

Subject groups which experienced an increase in the proportion of first degree courses attaining 15+ full-time students over the period 2010/11-2013/14:

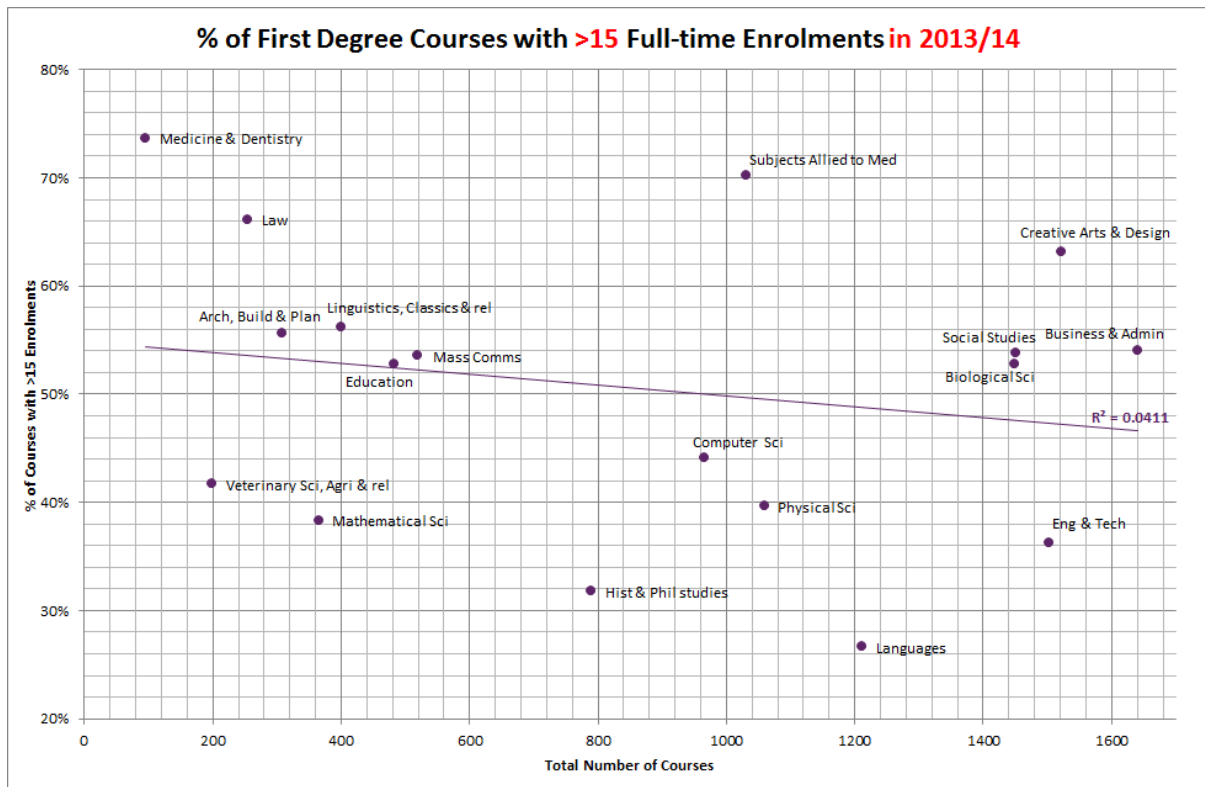
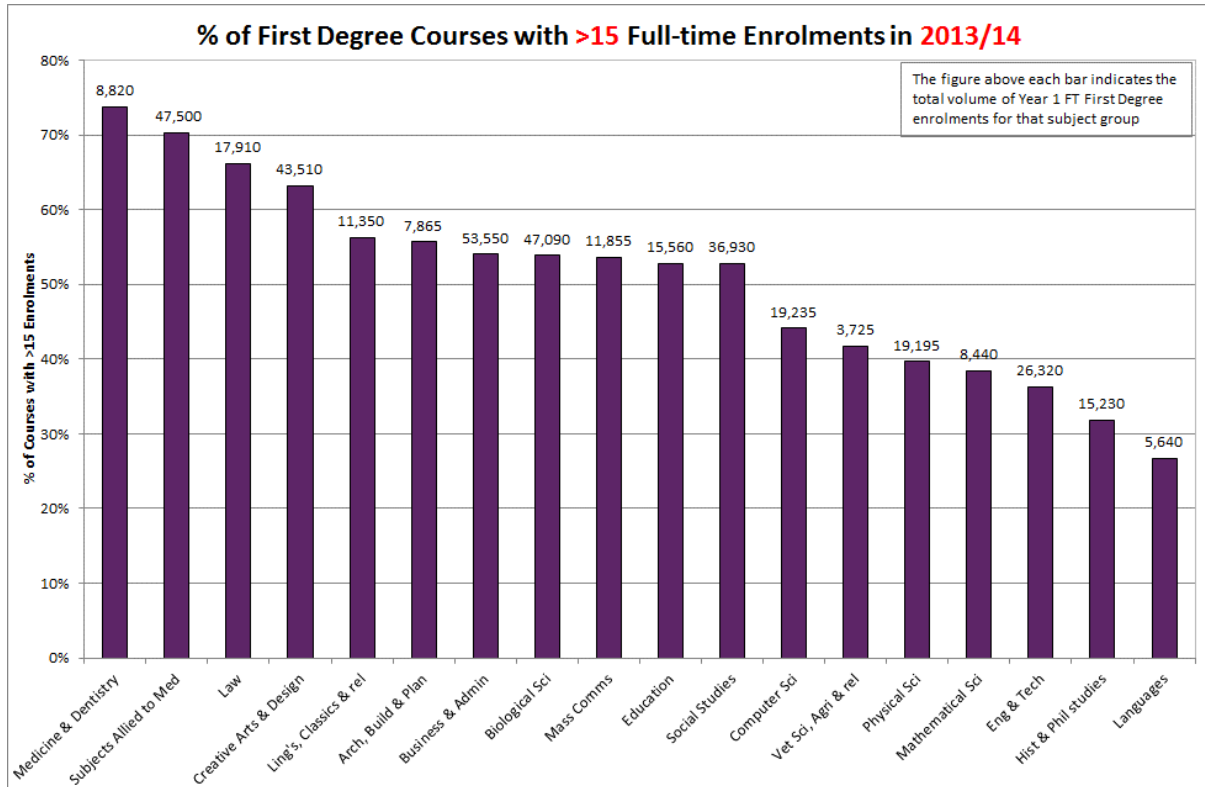
- Subjects Allied to Medicine (also increase in proportion achieving 50+)
- Law
- Business and Administrative Studies
- Biological Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Mathematical Sciences

Additionally, the Education subject group saw a steady increase in the proportion of first degree courses admitting 50+ full-time students (from 18% in 2010/11 to 23% in 2013/14).

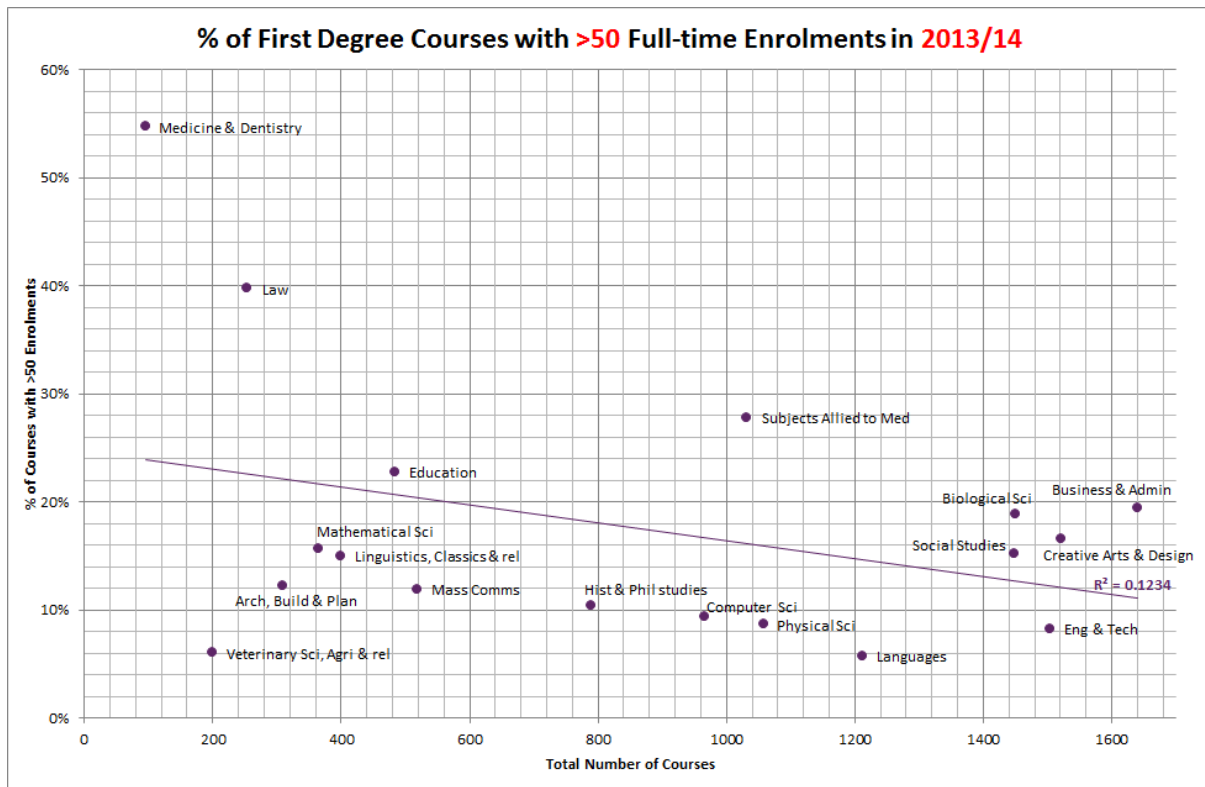
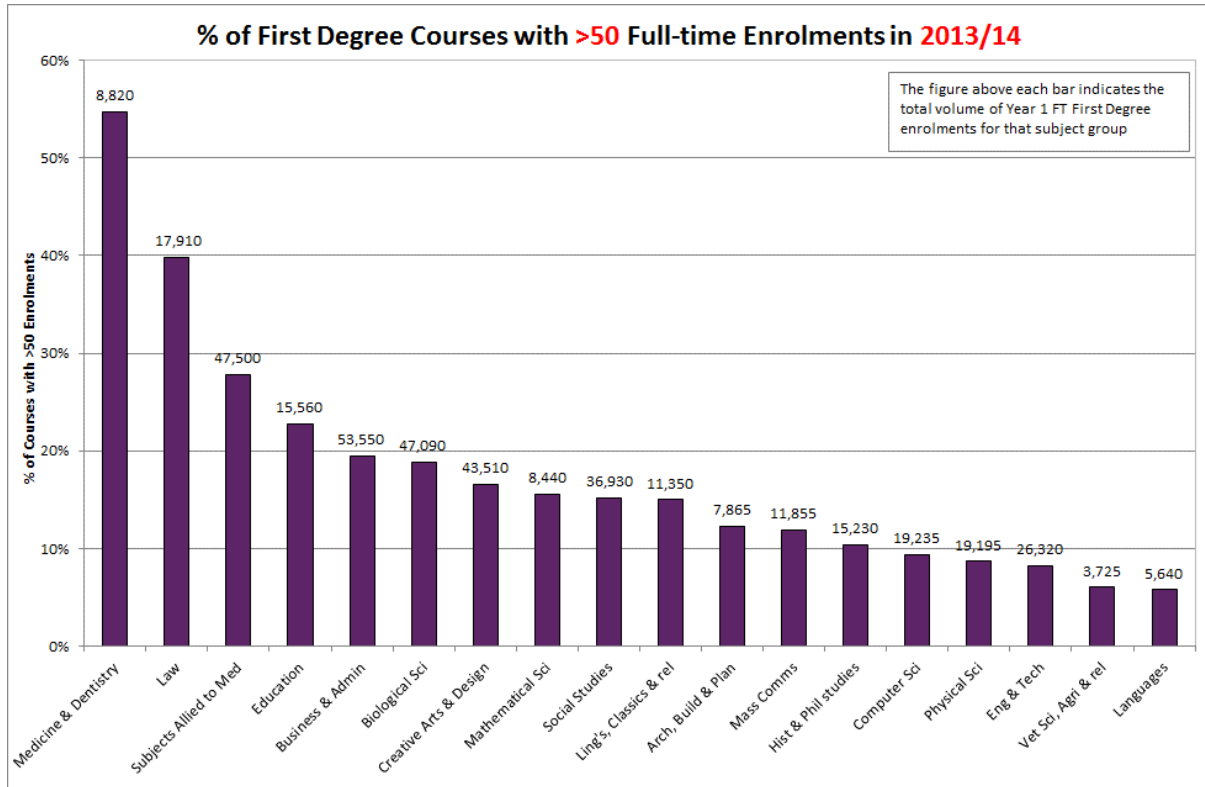
No subject groups experienced a continual decline in the proportion of courses attaining 15+ or 50+ full-time students over the period 2010/11-2013/14.

It is important to note that subject groups where integrated master's courses are commonly offered can appear to be less successful due to the separate reporting of enrolments to bachelor and master's courses. Additionally, some institutions choose to report enrolments onto three-year courses and those with a study abroad or sandwich placement separately, thus reducing the apparent volume of students on what is essentially a single course of study. There are also incidences where enrolments onto different pathways within a single course of study are reported separately.

## Course Enrolment Performance



### Course Enrolment Performance

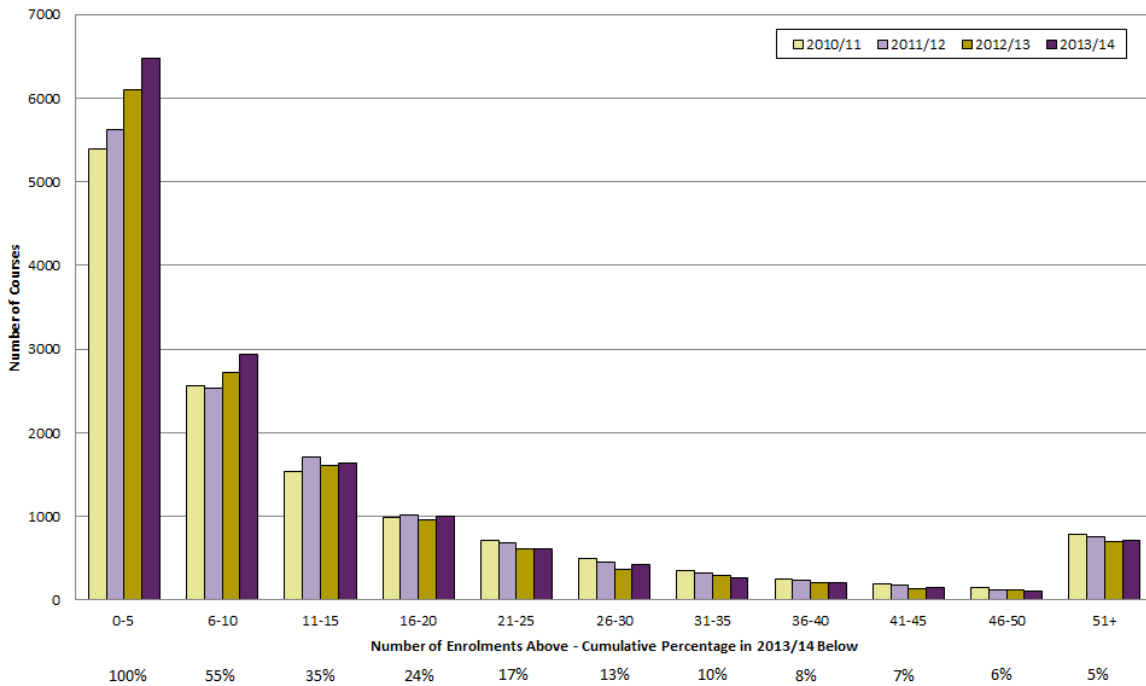




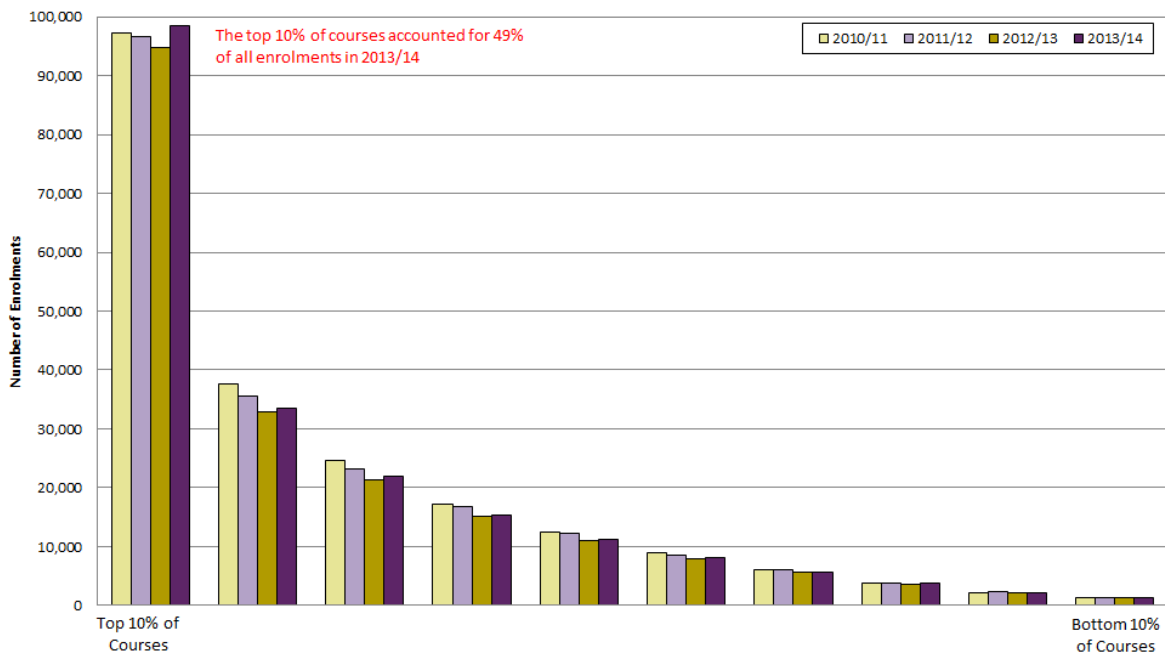
## Full-time Postgraduate Taught

45% of courses admitted 0-5 students in 2013/14, a steady increase from 40% in 2010/11. The number of courses admitting students has seen a continual increase in recent years. 10.5% (1,531) courses accounted for half of the enrolments in 2013/14 – a year on year decline from 11.8% in 2010/11.

**All PGT Courses Enrolling Full-Time Students 2010/11-2013/14**



**All PGT Courses Enrolling Full-Time Students 2010/11-2013/14**



Subject groups which consistently performed well in the proportion of PGT courses attracting 10+ or 50+ full-time students:

- Business and Administrative Studies
- Mass Communications and Documentation
- Architecture, Building and Planning
- Mathematical Sciences
- Law

Subject groups which consistently performed poorly in the proportion of PGT courses attracting 10+ or 50+ full-time students:

- Languages
- Historical and Philosophical Studies
- Linguistics, Classics and Related Subjects
- Creative Arts and Design
- Social Studies

No subject groups experienced a continual increase in the proportion of PGT courses attaining 10+ or 50+ full-time students over the period 2010/11-2013/14, although the Languages subject group did see an overall increase over the four-year period.

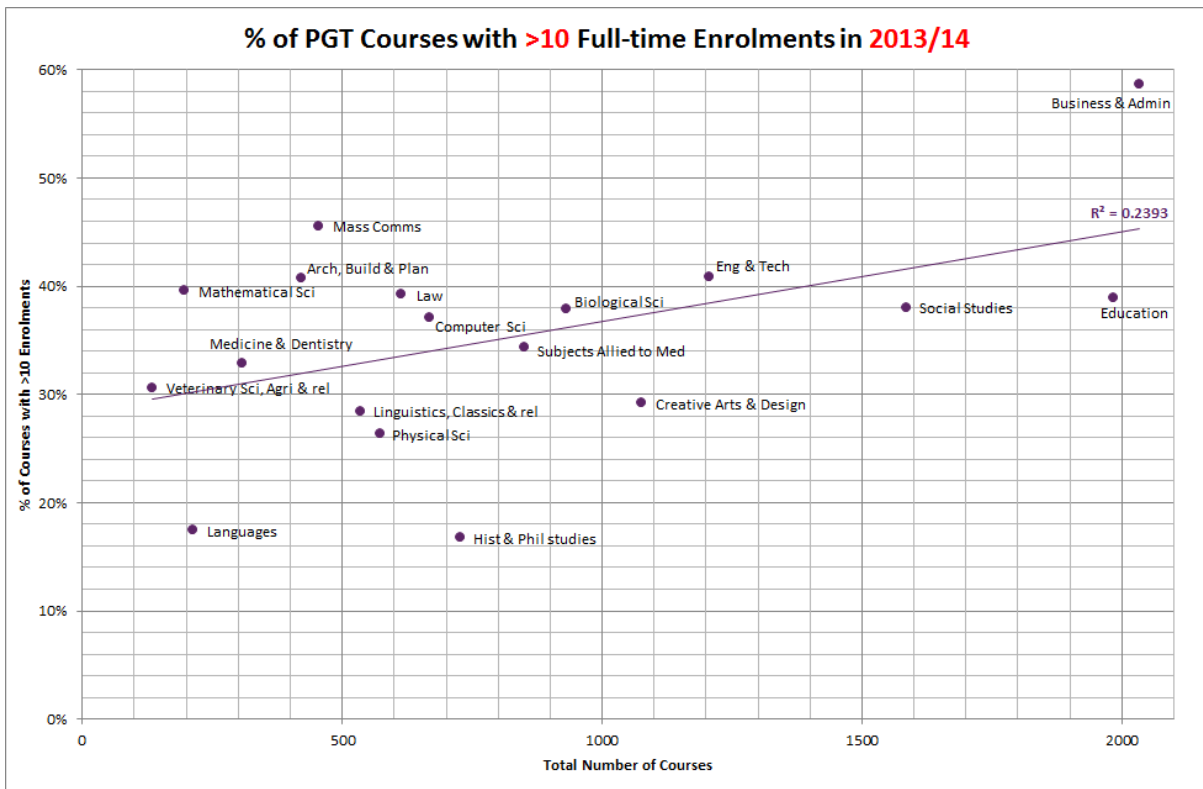
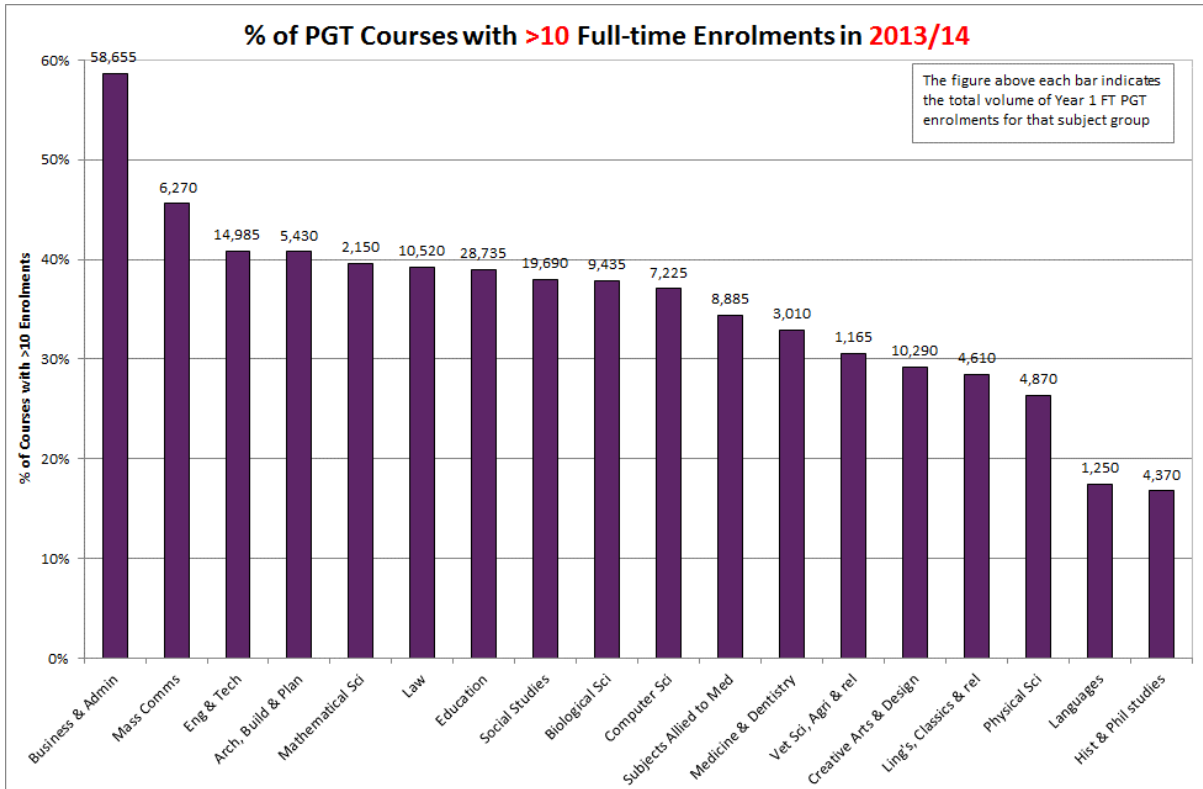
Subject groups which experienced a continual decline in the proportion of PGT courses attaining 10+ full-time students over the period 2010/11-2013/14:

- Engineering and Technology
- Architecture, Building and Planning
- Mathematical Sciences
- Law
- Education
- Subjects Allied to Medicine
- Medicine and Dentistry
- Physical Sciences

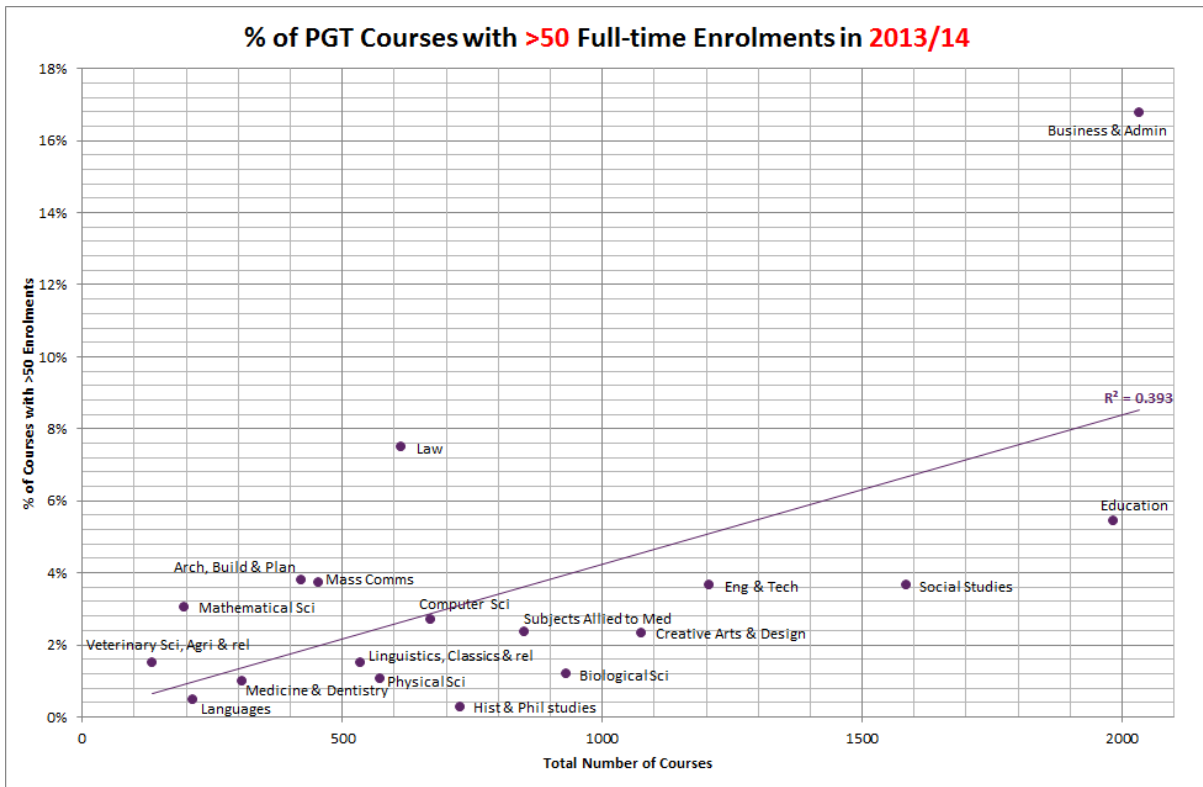
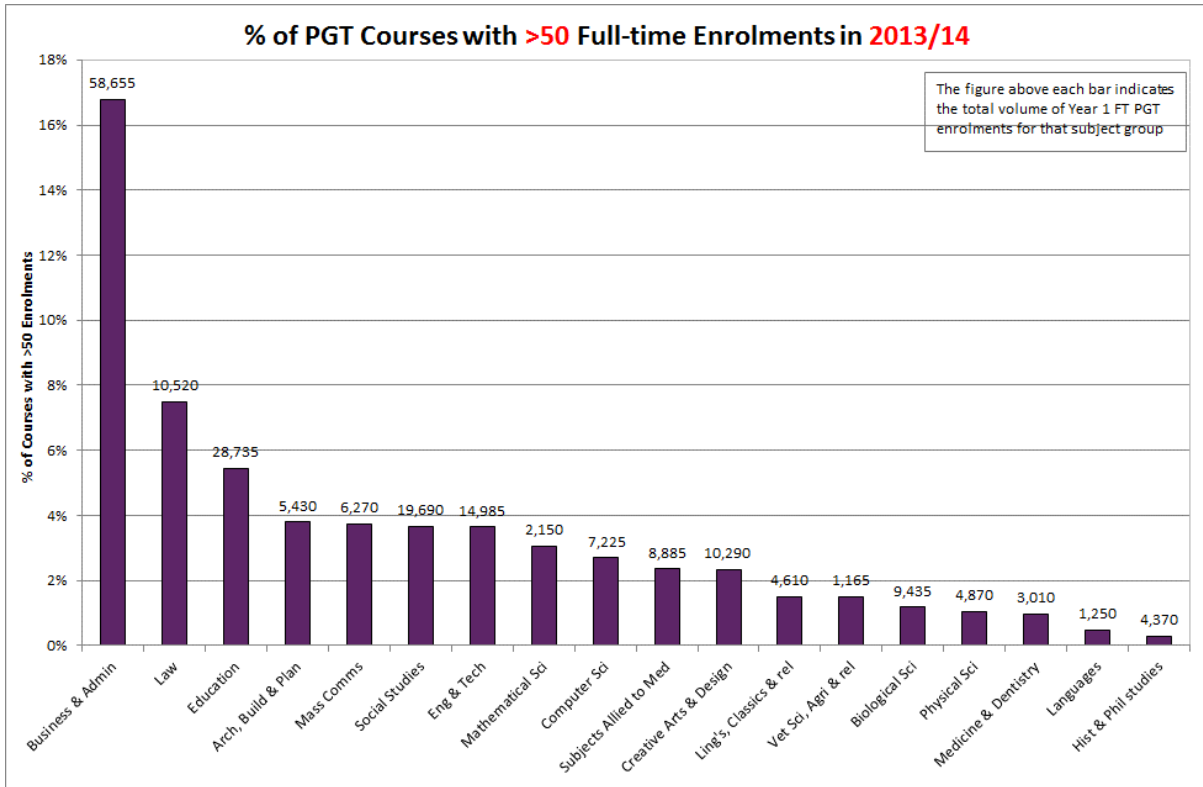
Additionally, the Business and Administrative Studies group saw a year-on-year decline in the proportion of courses admitting 50+ full-time students.

Note that for full-time PGT study in particular, some subject groups are influenced more than others by changes in the overseas international (OSI) market of students domiciled outside of the EU – see appendix 1 for a guide to which subject groups are most attractive to OSI students at this level of study.

## Course Enrolment Performance



## Course Enrolment Performance



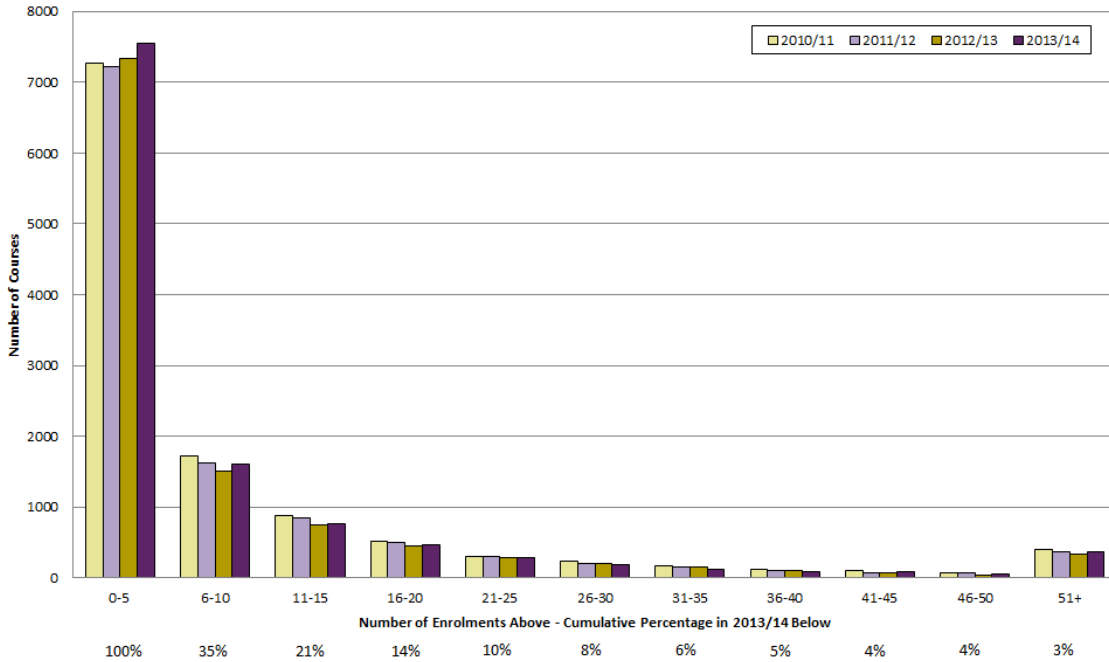
## Part-time Postgraduate Taught

65% of courses admitted 0-5 part-time students in 2013/14.

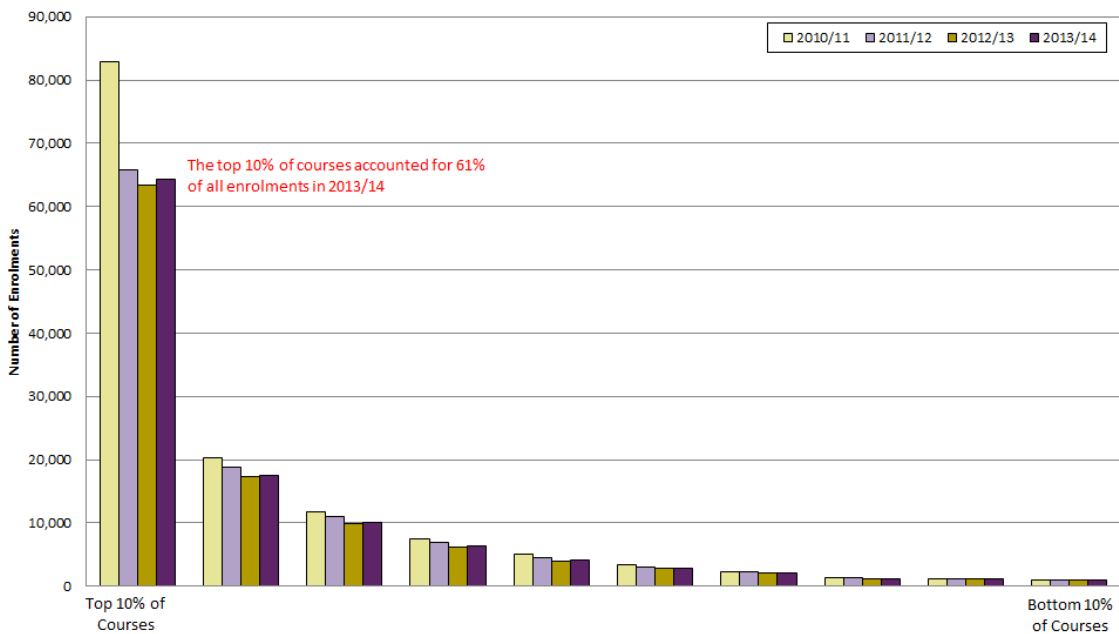
The number of courses admitting students declined from 2010/11-2012/13 but rose in 2013/14.

6.9% (794) courses accounted for half of the enrolments in 2013/14 - a number of part-time enrolments are likely to be onto courses predominantly designed for the full-time market.

**All PGT Courses Enrolling Part-Time Students 2010/11-2013/14**



**All PGT Courses Enrolling Part-Time Students 2010/11-2013/14**



Subject groups which consistently performed well in the proportion of PGT courses attracting 10+ part-time students:

- Education (also for proportion admitting 50+ students)
- Business and Administrative Studies
- Medicine and Dentistry (also for proportion admitting 50+ students)
- Law (also for proportion admitting 50+ students)
- Architecture, Building and Planning
- Veterinary Science, Agriculture and Related Subjects
- Mathematical Sciences

Subject groups which consistently performed poorly in the proportion of PGT courses attracting 10+ or 50+ part-time students:

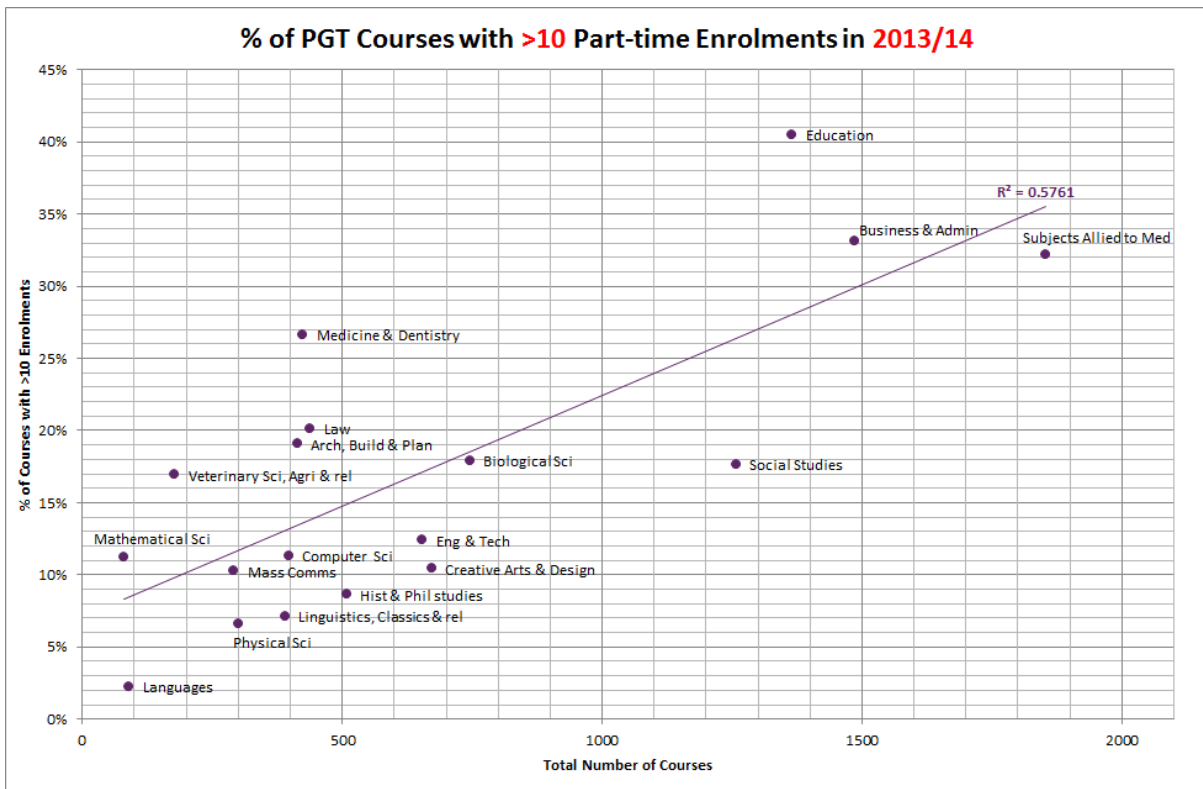
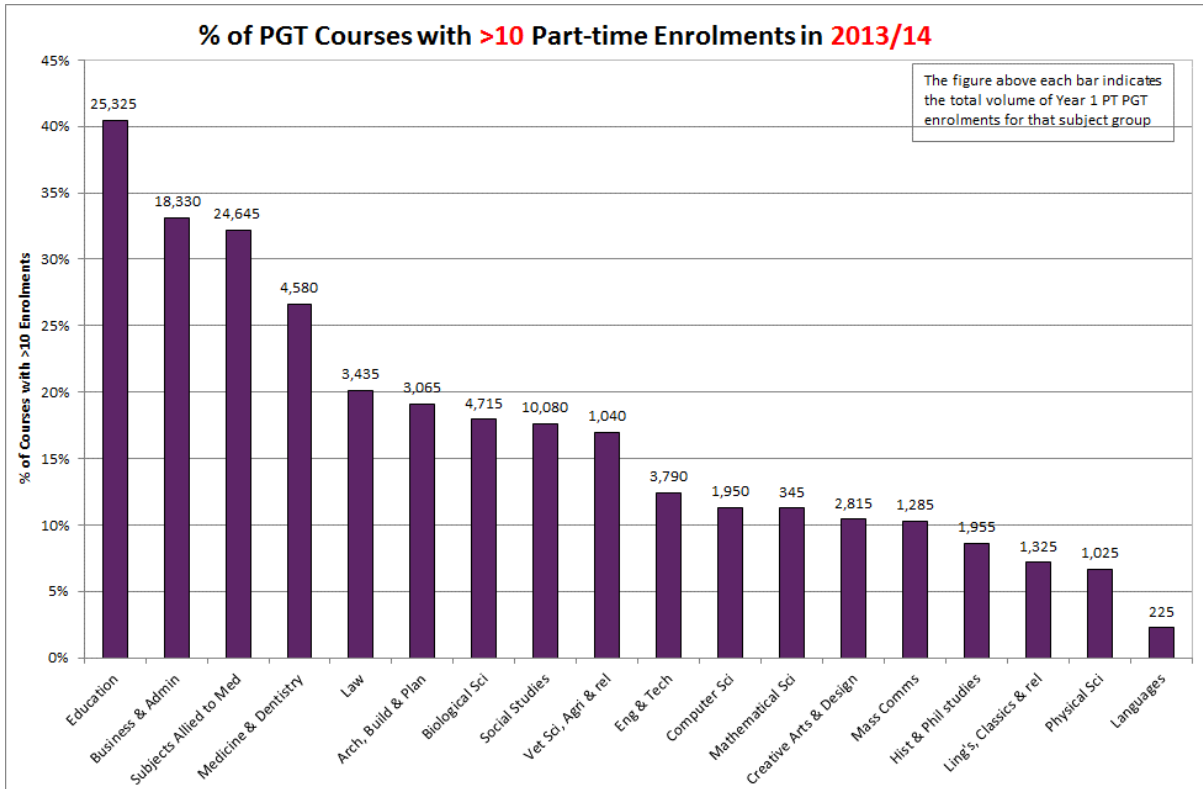
- Historical and Philosophical Studies
- Linguistics, Classics and Related Subjects
- Physical Sciences
- Creative Arts and Design
- Engineering and Technology
- Social Studies
- Subjects Allied to Medicine
- Computer Sciences

Veterinary Science, Agriculture and Related Subjects was the only subject group which experienced an increase in the proportion of PGT courses attaining 10+ part-time students when comparing 2010/11 with 2013/14.

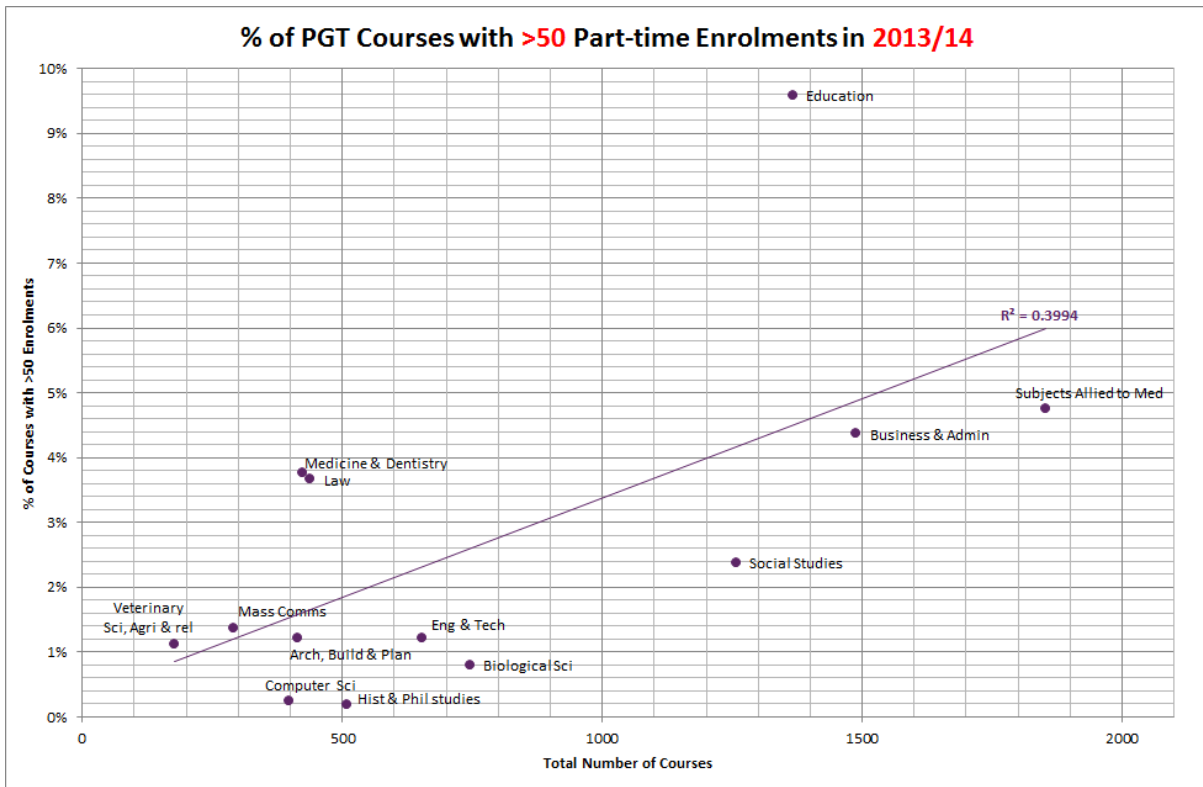
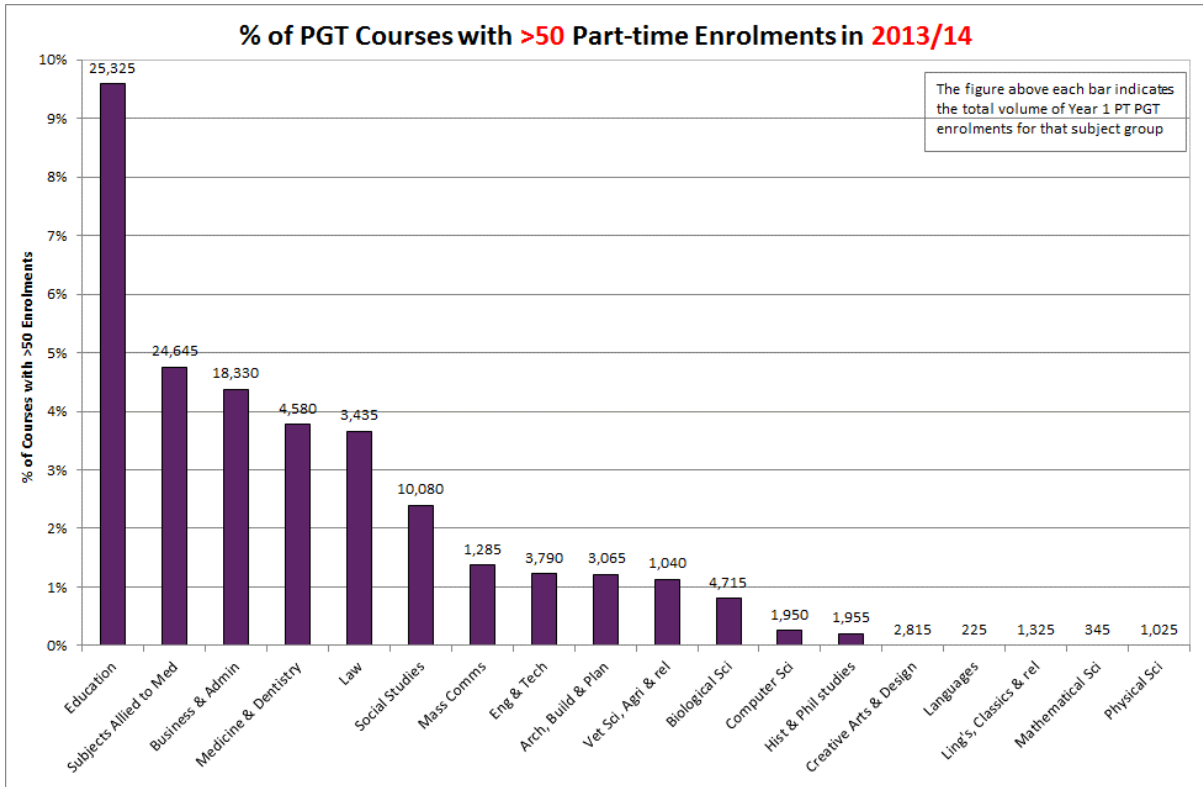
Subject groups which experienced the largest decline in the proportion of PGT courses attaining 10+ part-time students when comparing 2010/11 with 2013/14:

- Business and Administrative Studies
- Law
- Mass Communications and Documentation
- Languages

### Course Enrolment Performance



Course Enrolment Performance



Note that missing subject groups from the scatter chart had no courses with >50 part-time PGT enrolments in the academic year plotted on the chart.



## Appendix 1

Note that for full-time PGT study in particular, some subject groups are influenced more than others by changes in the overseas international (OSI) market of students domiciled outside of the EU.

The following table details the volume of full-time PGT students domiciled outside of the EU admitted to each HESA JACS subject group in 2013/14.

The subject groups are listed in descending order for the share of their market occupied by overseas international students.

JACS Subject Group	Volume of FT PGT OSI Students	% OSI
Business & administrative studies	46,460	79.2%
Engineering & technology	10,140	67.7%
Computer science	4,480	62.0%
Mathematical sciences	1,205	55.9%
Mass communications & documentation	3,445	54.9%
Architecture, building & planning	2,845	52.4%
Social studies	9,650	49.0%
Creative arts & design	4,980	48.4%
Languages	600	48.1%
Agriculture & related subjects	495	47.3%
Law	4,860	46.2%
Linguistics, classics & related subjects	2,030	44.1%
Physical sciences	2,050	42.1%
Medicine & dentistry	1,215	40.4%
Historical & philosophical studies	1,480	33.9%
Subjects allied to medicine	2,540	28.6%
Biological sciences	2,175	23.1%
Veterinary science	25	21.8%
Education	2,315	8.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>102,995</b>	<b>51.1%</b>

## Appendix 2 – Data Technical Notes

Analysis uses headcount enrolment data from the HESA Student Record 2010/11 – 2013/14, comprising enrolments for the four academic cycles from August 2010 up to and including July 2014. Whilst some courses have a January intake, these enrolments are not disaggregated.

A HESA definition for the coverage of the 2013/14 Student Record can be viewed at [https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_studrecandtask=show\\_fileandmnl=13051andhref=coverage.html](https://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_studrecandtask=show_fileandmnl=13051andhref=coverage.html)

Further definitions can be viewed at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2880/#SRP>

Enrolments onto year 1 of a course have been analysed. This means students are only included once – in their first year of enrolment onto a course, as opposed to each time they enrol for a new academic year (e.g. three times for a three year course).

Data is subject to the HESA Services Standard Rounding Methodology:

- 0, 1, 2 must be rounded to 0
- All other numbers must be rounded to the nearest multiple of 5
- Percentages based on 52 or fewer individuals must be suppressed
- Averages based on 7 or fewer individuals must be suppressed

Due to this rounding methodology, any totals provided in a table may not equal the sum of the respective row/column.

HESA do not accept responsibility for any inferences or conclusions derived from the data by third parties. Data may only be used for research and analysis for university and HEI clients. Report data at institutional level may not be released into the public domain. Special permission is required before any HESA data is reproduced e.g. commercial publication or on an Internet Web-site.

Please note that where students are studying at a partner college of a public HEI, under a franchising or alternative agreement, it varies whether these students are included in the Student Record. This depends on the funding arrangement and differs between institutions located in England and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

**Full-time** includes students recorded as studying full-time, normally required to attend an institution for periods amounting to at least 24 weeks within the year of study, plus those enrolled on a sandwich course (thick or thin), irrespective of whether or not they are in attendance at the institution or engaged in industrial training, and those on a study-related year out of their institution. During that time students are normally expected to undertake periods of study, tuition or work experience which amount to an average of at least 21 hours per week for a minimum of 24 weeks study/placement.

**Part-time** includes students recorded as studying part-time, or studying full-time on courses lasting less than 24 weeks, on block release, or studying during the evenings only. Note that a number of these students may be studying by distance learning.

## Data limitations

It is important to note that private providers (with the exception of University of Buckingham) are not included in the HESA dataset. Additionally, Liverpool Hope University do not permit the release of data from HESA.

Enrolments at the Open University are reported to HESA but are difficult to compare with those at other institutions. This is because the enrolments are not reported under a specific year of course, simply being returned as Year of Course Unknown. Information on activity at the Open University has therefore not been included within this report.

Note that a further limitation of the HESA dataset is that overseas international (OSI) students undertaking a distance learning course without spending 8 or more consecutive weeks in the UK are not included in the main HESA dataset. These students are accounted for within HESA's Aggregate Offshore Record, which only records the country in which they are resident (not necessarily their nationality) and the awarding institution for the course (no course-level information).

It is also important to note that subject groups where integrated master's courses are commonly offered can appear to be less successful due to the separate reporting of enrolments to bachelor and master's courses. Additionally, some institutions choose to report enrolments onto three-year courses and those with a study abroad or sandwich placement separately, thus reducing the apparent volume of students on what is essentially a single course of study. There are also incidences where enrolments onto different pathways within a single course of study are reported separately.

It is also important to note that some institutions report enrolments onto a certificate, diploma and full master's course separately, whilst some combine enrolments onto the different levels.

## Removal of Combined Honours courses

Note that where feasible, joint and major/minor honours courses were removed from the first degree data used to create this report. However, although this has been carried out consistently across all subjects/academic cycles, we are aware that when dealing with an initial dataset of more than 1.6 million records per cycle, some combined honours courses will have remained within the dataset used for the analysis.

Additionally, difficulties arise because use of the word 'and' in a course title is not a clear indicator of the single/combined nature of the course, e.g. *Finance and Accounting* is often a single honours degree. Additionally, within engineering it is unclear, e.g. *Civil and Structural Engineering, Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering*.

Within the languages subject group the majority of courses combine two or more subjects. For the first degree analysis in this report, courses combining a language with a non-language subject were removed, whilst those combining two or more languages were retained. This is because a student studying two or more languages has clearly chosen to study languages and this is a common way of doing so.

## JACS-level analysis limitations

It is important to note that student enrolments onto a single course can be allocated to more than one JACS code. Thus, information on enrolments at a single competitor institution can vary depending on whether JACS-level data or course-level data is being examined.

For example, a competitor institution may have reported 55 enrolments under JACS code (L7) Human and Social Geography in a single academic cycle. This could comprise 40 enrolments onto a *BA Human Geography* and 15 enrolments on a *BA Geography and International Relations*. However, it could be the case that 30 students were admitted to the *Geography and International Relations* course but with only a headcount of 15 reported under the JACS code (L7) and the remaining 15 reported under (L2) Politics.

For the analysis in this report, it is therefore the case that some courses which span more than one JACS subject group, e.g. PPE - Politics, Philosophy and Economics, may be counted more than once when the dataset is separately filtered to single JACS subject groups. This also means that the enrolment volume is suppressed when analysing data for a single subject group.

*Note that The Knowledge Partnership often carries out analysis using key-word searches on the course title field within the HESA dataset, thus eliminating the issues identified above and enabling the extraction of data for a niche individual subject area. Please contact us for further information.*