



FUTURETRACK is following a cohort of students from UCAS application until they get their first job in order to build a 'real-time' picture that reveals how, when and why students make decisions.

The study is helping the government, careers advisers and education professionals to provide the best possible information and guidance to students throughout their academic careers.

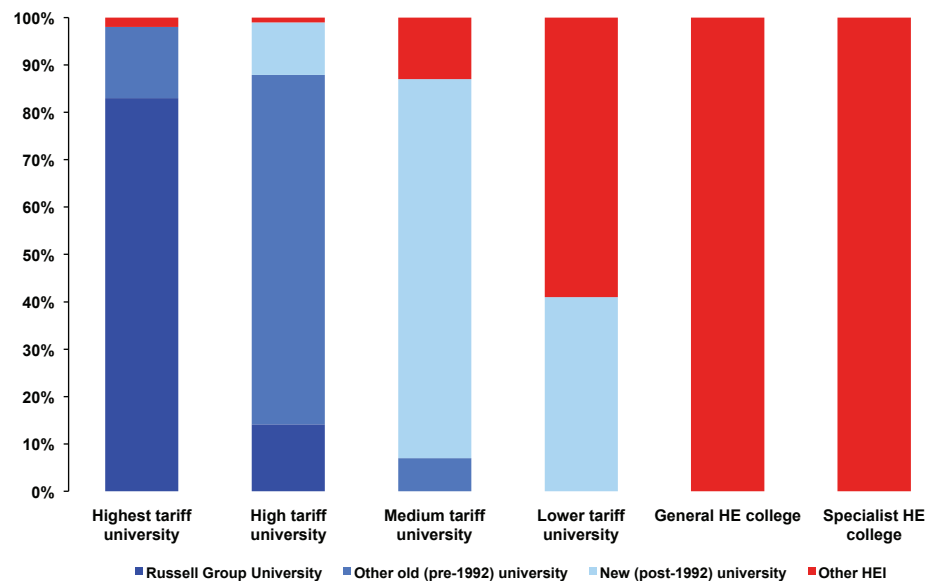
# A New Classification of Higher Education Institutions

There is a public and professional need for a more precise taxonomy of universities; one which provides accurate information about the relative difference between the higher education provided by different UK institutions and the implications of these differences for the opportunities to which institutions give or restrict access.

While conducting Stage 1 of Futuretrack, it was observed that the commonly used classification of institutional prestige (and by implication, intellectual performance of students and quality of academic experience on offer): 'Russell Group', 'Other old (pre-1992) universities', and 'New (post-1992) universities' did not always align very closely with the experiences of applicants.

This raised the question of whether it would be possible to group higher education institutions in such a way that the resulting categories became more meaningful for both students and graduate employers.

**PERCENTAGE OF 'RUSSELL GROUP', 'OTHER PRE-1992' AND 'POST-1992' INSTITUTIONS IN EACH TARIFF CATEGORY'**



\*note: figures are taken from Futuretrack Working Paper 1, which was published in November 2009 (the Russell Group has since extended its membership).

## WHY TARIFF POINTS?

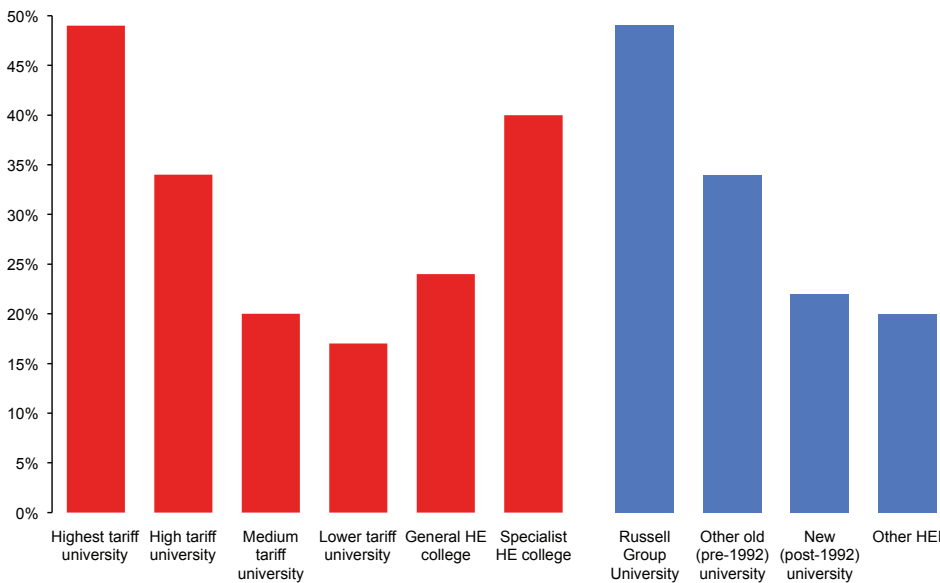
- As an overall indication of a university's reputation in the international marketplace and, to a lesser extent, the national one, the tariff points held by a successful applicant is a tangible measure of their educational capital.
- Consequently, the tariff points institutions require of applicants are generally indicative of the comparative status of the institution and the competition to enter it.

To create the new tariff classification, researchers drew on entry standards data generated by the UCAS application process, The Times Good University Guide 2006 and 2007, and the data collected during Stage 1 of the Futuretrack study.

Institutions were ranked according to their entry tariff points score, and then grouped according to their ranking. Six categories were identified: Highest Tariff, High Tariff, Medium Tariff, Lower Tariff, General HE College, and Specialist HE College.

For more information, see: Purcell, K., Elias, P. and Atfield, G. (2009). A new classification of higher education institutions. Manchester: HECSU [www.hecsu.ac.uk](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk).

**PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS AT DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEI, WHO HAD EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGE\* PRIOR TO ENTERING HIGHER EDUCATION**



*\*Educational advantage was defined as having studied at a selective or fee-paying school and/or applying as a second generation higher education participant (reflecting the Stage 1 finding that these students were more likely than other students to report that applying to higher education was 'normal for somebody from my background'; to report above-average access to careers guidance before they applied to university, and to be the most likely to be attending the more elite, higher-ranked institutions).*

**Q. Does the 'tariff' classification allow for more useful comparisons than the current 'pre-1992/post-1992' classification?**

The big question for higher education researchers is: 'Has the expansion of higher education increased equality of opportunity, or has it simply segmented and reinforced existing inequalities?', and consequently the key question for the tariff classification is: 'Does it enable a more useful exploration and analysis of this key issue?'

The researchers' analysis indicates that students attending specialist colleges have more in common with students attending the highest and high tariff universities than with those attending lower tariff universities and general HE colleges, demonstrating how the current, commonly used categories conceal the extent to which boundaries between old and new universities (and highly and relatively elite institutions) are changing.



**FUTURETRACK** is funded by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) - a charity with 40 years experience in higher education research. The study is being conducted by the Warwick Institute for Employment Research.

[www.hecsu.ac.uk](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk)  
[www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier)

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

- More information about the project [www.hecsu.ac.uk/current\\_projects\\_futuretrack.htm](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/current_projects_futuretrack.htm)
- Download research reports in full [www.hecsu.ac.uk/futuretrack\\_research\\_reports.htm](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/futuretrack_research_reports.htm)
- Find out more about Futuretrack: part-time students [www.hecsu.ac.uk/futuretrack\\_part\\_time\\_students.htm](http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/futuretrack_part_time_students.htm)

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