

**House of Lords European Union Committee:  
Inquiry into the Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe - The EU Contribution  
million+ Supplementary Evidence**

**About million+**

1. million+ is a university think-tank which provides evidence and analysis on policy and funding regimes that impact on universities, students and the services that universities and other higher education institutions provide for business, the NHS, education and the not-for-profit sectors.
2. Following the oral evidence given by Professor Les Ebdon, Chair of million+ to the House of Lords EU Committee on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2012, million+ were asked submit supplementary evidence on the impact of the Government’s higher education reforms on the subject choices of university applicants.
3. On 30<sup>th</sup> January 2012 UCAS released statistics covering applications up to the equal consideration deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2012. UCAS deals solely with applications for full-time undergraduate courses so please note that these statistics refer to applications to full-time undergraduate degrees, foundation degrees and other HE qualifications<sup>1</sup> only.

**UCAS Application Trends 2012**

4. Overall applications via UCAS for full time courses fell by 7.4% year on year. The greatest reductions were amongst men (-8.5%), mature applicants over the age of 21 (-11.0%), EU applicants (-11.2%) and amongst English applicants (-9.9%). Applications from international students increased by 13.7% but this headline increase should be treated with caution as many international students do not apply via the UCAS route.
5. There are no clear application trends in terms of region or institutional pricing strategy. Subject related trends for all universities and colleges across the United Kingdom are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: UCAS Applications by JACS3 Subject Group to 15<sup>th</sup> January**

JACS3 Subject Group	2012	2011	Diff (+/-)	Diff (%)
Group A Medicine & Dentistry	94,374	97,409	-3,035	-3.1%
Group B Subjects allied to Medicine	329,733	323,059	6,674	2.1%
Group C Biological Sciences	201,653	210,832	-9,179	-4.4%
Group D Vet Sci, Agr & related	24,747	25,347	-600	-2.4%
Group F Physical Sciences	93,587	94,133	-546	-0.6%
Group G Mathematical & Comp Sci	42,148	43,376	-1,228	-2.8%
Group H Engineering	117,221	118,823	-1,602	-1.3%
Group I Computer Sciences	76,855	82,096	-5,241	-6.4%
Group J Technologies	8,340	10,146	-1,806	-17.8%
Group K Architecture, Build & Plan	35,825	42,810	-6,985	-16.3%
<b>STEM</b>	<b>1,024,483</b>	<b>1,048,031</b>	<b>-23,548</b>	<b>-2.2%</b>
Group L Social Studies	190,115	216,272	-26,157	-12.1%
Group M Law	103,613	107,726	-4,113	-3.8%

<sup>1</sup> This category includes Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates, Certificates of H.E and Diplomas of H.E.

Group N Business & Admin studies	260,879	276,637	-15,758	-5.7%
Group P Mass Comms and Documentation	47,575	55,723	-8,148	-14.6%
Group Q Linguistics, Classics & related	62,266	67,970	-5,704	-8.4%
Group R European Langs, Lit & related	21,675	24,406	-2,731	-11.2%
Group T Non-European Langs and related	6,165	7,852	-1,687	-21.5%
Group V Hist & Philosophical studies	73,967	79,786	-5,819	-7.3%
Group W Creative Arts & Design	227,729	271,931	-44,202	-16.3%
Group X Education	80,578	86,564	-5,986	-6.9%
<b>Arts, Languages &amp; Social Sciences</b>	<b>1,074,562</b>	<b>1,194,867</b>	<b>-120,305</b>	<b>-10.1%</b>
Y Combined arts	55,042	65,640	-10,598	-16.1%
Y Combined sciences	33,898	37,315	-3,417	-9.2%
Y Combined social sciences	26,581	30,151	-3,570	-11.8%
Y Combined sciences & social sciences / arts	78,671	95,615	-16,944	-17.7%
Y Social sciences combined with arts	51,007	59,373	-8,366	-14.1%
Z General, other combined & unknown	24,321	16,991	7,330	43.1%
<b>Combined</b>	<b>269,520</b>	<b>305,085</b>	<b>-35,565</b>	<b>-11.7%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,368,565</b>	<b>2,547,983</b>	<b>-179,418</b>	<b>-7.0%</b>

- In terms of subject choice, Table 1 shows that applications for STEM subjects have fallen by just 2.2% compared to 10.1% for arts, humanities, languages and social sciences and an 11.7% fall in applications for combined degree courses. The relative strength of STEM subject applications, particularly in medicine and dentistry, subjects allied to medicine, biological sciences, veterinary science, physical sciences, mathematics and engineering, indicates that the long-term, above average rate of increase in STEM applications (see Table 2) continues. However this trend is not universal amongst STEM subjects as applications for technologies and architecture related subjects have fallen by more than 16%.
- Applications for the majority of arts, humanities languages and social science subjects have fallen at a greater than average rate. The greatest decreases have been in European (-11.2%) and other foreign languages (-21.5%) which has significant long-term implications for UK competitiveness, and creative arts and design (-16.3%) and mass communications (-14.6%) have also seen substantial falls. Applications for law, businesses studies and education have all fallen but by a below average rate.
- The reduction in applications for education (-6.9%) and social studies (-12.1%), a subject band that includes social work, is noteworthy and perhaps concerning, given the on-going need for teacher training and social work recruits. It is not possible to disaggregate subject choices by age, gender, nationality or institution but education and social work tend to attract a high proportion of mature applicants so it is likely that the greater decline in mature applications (-11.0% compared to -6.5% amongst 17 – 20 year olds) has had an impact.
- Applications for combined subjects have all fallen significantly in line with the long-term trend away from combined subjects seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: UCAS Applications Compared: 2006 – 2011**

Subject group (JACS)	2006	% Total	2011	% Total	PP Change
A Medicine and dentistry	21,590	4.3	25,068	3.6	-0.7
B Subjects allied to medicine	42,195	8.3	95,560	13.6	5.3

C Biological sciences	34,282	6.8	48,165	6.9	0.1
D Veterinary sciences, agriculture & related	4,523	0.9	7,982	1.1	0.2
F Physical sciences	14,499	2.9	20,672	3.0	0.1
G Mathematical and computer sciences	24,722	4.9	33,407	4.8	-0.1
H Engineering	21,138	4.2	31,202	4.5	0.3
J Technologies	1,630	0.3	2,422	0.3	0.0
K Architecture, building and planning	9,202	1.8	11,283	1.6	-0.2
<b>STEM</b>	<b>175,787</b>	<b>34.7</b>	<b>277,772</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>5.0</b>
L Social Studies	36,627	7.2	55,396	7.9	0.7
M Law	20,644	4.1	27,074	3.9	-0.2
N Business and administrative studies	52,717	10.4	75,756	10.8	0.4
P Mass communications and documentation	9,303	1.8	13,580	1.9	0.1
Q Linguistics, Classics and related studies	12,583	2.5	15,046	2.1	-0.3
R European languages, literature and related studies	4,581	0.9	5,309	0.8	-0.1
T Non-European languages & related	1,205	0.2	1,446	0.2	0.0
V Historical and philosophical studies	14,652	2.9	17,814	2.5	-0.3
W Creative arts and design	55,970	11.1	75,977	10.9	-0.2
X Education	17,078	3.4	23,631	3.4	0.0
<b>Arts, Languages &amp; Social Sciences</b>	<b>225,360</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>311,029</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>-0.1</b>
Combined sciences	2,262	0.4	3,486	0.5	0.1
Combined social sciences	2,501	0.5	3,498	0.5	0.0
Combined arts	8,996	1.8	10,517	1.5	-0.3
Sciences combined with social sciences or arts	10,047	2.0	13,546	1.9	0.0
Social sciences combined with arts	7,008	1.4	8,598	1.2	-0.2
General, other combined and unknown	1,546	0.3	1,903	0.3	0.0
No preferred subject group	74,803	14.8	71,823	10.3	-4.5
<b>Combined</b>	<b>104,901</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>109,885</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>-5.0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>506,304</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>700,161</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

## Summary

10. These figures are not the end of the story. Applications stay open until the end of June and there are further opportunities in clearing. One in four students are over 21 when they enter university and they often apply later and not through UCAS.
11. million+ is also concerned by the fall in mature student applications. The overwhelming majority (90%) of current mature students are studying for a degree for the first time and there is a risk that people who missed out on university the first time around have been deterred from applying under the new fees system. The Government has to date targeted its university campaign on school leavers and million+ has urged Ministers to refocus the campaign on prospective mature students.
12. Media narrative around a 'squeezed middle' of 18 year old applicants should also be treated with caution as it is based on ward level POLAR2 data which provides a relatively crude measure of

advantage and disadvantage. The socio-economic profile for 2012-13 entrants will only be known when the analysis of enrolments is published by HESA in early 2013.

13. The UCAS statistics at 15<sup>th</sup> January indicate that the study of modern languages do not appear to have been incentivised by the new fees regime in England. Notwithstanding this, as Professor Ebdon pointed out in his oral evidence to the Committee, there is more that the Government could do to support Erasmus study by confirming the continued funding of fee waivers and ensuring that they are available on a more flexible basis and provide fee waivers for shorter periods of study which are less than a full academic year.

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