‘Disabled’ students in higher education

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Overview

- Heterogeneous group – differences in need, experiences and outcomes but most statistical analysis compares disabled with non-disabled
- Recent Scottish legislation on access to higher education – includes ‘underrepresented’ groups but there is a lack of data and intersectional analyses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of impairment</th>
<th>1994-95</th>
<th>2004-05</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unseen disability</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyslexia (Specific learning difficulty)</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other disability (or medical condition)</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf/hard of hearing</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair/mobility difficulties (A physical impairment or mobility issues)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind/partially sighted</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple disabilities (Two or more conditions)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health difficulties</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal care support</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Social communication and) Autistic spectrum disorder</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of all F-T first degree students</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different students – different needs – different outcomes (from Fuller, et al, 2009)

- I’m still having problems with attendance and stuff. But I’ve had another seizure as well which is a, a bit of a strange thing. I don’t know what happened (Teresa - epilepsy); Outcome: non completion

- **Physical access** has a knock on effect on everything else, I would end up sitting right up at the back with a little table, completely cut off; I had a note taker; [with no] knowledge of Spanish language, [but] was the PA who was doing the note taking [and by 4\textsuperscript{th} year the course was taught in Spanish] (Karrie – cerebral palsy/wheelchair user); Outcome: 3\textsuperscript{rd} class Honours

- she would use a lot of **overheads** for things and I would lose visual sight of what my aim was for this workshop, and then she would just put overheads up … and I found that so difficult. **Personal life** - university is geared to seventeen, eighteen year olds who don’t have a life (Jean – mature student, dyslexia); Outcome: First class Honours

- it’s like an ordinary radio mike that you’ve got on for the lecture and then I’ve just got the other end, the same sort of thing … [it worked] but the **PE teachers wouldn’t wear** it. (Lesley – hearing impairment); Outcome: Unknown
Outcomes: Employment rates
(AGCAS, 2013)
Outcomes: employment rates continued  (AGCAS, 2013)
The Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 places a number of statutory duties on SFC in relation to access to colleges and universities. These include provisions that mean institutions:

- must have regard for the desirability of widening access among under-represented socio-economic groups
- have a duty to define what under-represented means (SFC Key Priorities 2014-2017)
- [aim to] increase ... the proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 40% most deprived postcodes (from SFC Guidance AY 2015-16)
Underrepresentation – how do you define it? And how do you capture differences within a group?

- How do you know who is underrepresented?
  - Gender is not problematic – we know overall population
  - Disability – we don’t know the population; LFS asks about health;
  - Little known about disabled students from low socioeconomic backgrounds

- How do you ensure that you capture differences within a group, e.g. disabled? Disabled group in higher education is skewed – numbers in some categories very high – in others very low
Access: disabled/non-disabled from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, HESA, 2015

Disabled SIMD20

- Ancient: 7.3
- Old: 6.8
- New: 7.8

Non-disabled SIMD20

- Ancient: 8.1
- Old: 8
- New: 10.3
Percentage of Scottish students by type of impairment, HESA, 2015

- VI: 1.3%
- HI: 2.1%
- Physical/mobility: 3.2%
- Mental health: 12.7%
- Long-standing illness: 12.1%
- 2 or more conditions: 5.6%
- ASD: 5.1%
- SpLD: 48%
- Another disability: 9.9%
SpLD and socioeconomic background, HESA, 2015

- Ancient
- Old
- New

- SpLD SIMD20
  - 6.7
- SpLD SIMD20-40
  - 9.3
- SpLD SIMD40-100
  - 83.6

- SpLD SIMD20
  - 7.8
- SpLD SIMD20-40
  - 13.4
- SpLD SIMD40-100
  - 78.8

- SpLD SIMD20
  - 13.1
- SpLD SIMD20-40
  - 16
- SpLD SIMD40-100
  - 70.7
Returning to study in year 2, SFC

The proportion of full-time first year Scottish-domiciled entrants from different protected characteristic groups returning to study in year two

Source: HESA
A report on Deaf or Hard of Hearing 18-24 year olds noted that:

‘the social networks and advocacy power of their parents were closely related to their socio-economic status. They played a significant role in shaping the young people’s experiences of school education, as well as their post-school journeys’ (Fordyce, et al, 2013, p.113)
1. Disabled students are not a homogeneous group – they have:
   - different impairments
   - different needs
   - different outcomes

2. Disabled students from disadvantaged backgrounds are potentially doubly disadvantaged because:
   - they do not necessarily have access to social networks that can help them
   - they are probably at greater risk of dropping out

3. We need more fine-grained analysis of access to university, retention and outcomes for disabled students by type of impairment
Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service (AGCAS), (n.d.) *What Happens Next? Ten years on.* Available at: www.agcas.org.co.uk

Fordyce, M., Riddell, S., O’Neill, R. and Weedon, E. (2013) *Post-school Transitions of People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.* Available at: www.ed.creid.ac.uk


HESA (2015) *Student Record 2013/14,* Copyright Higher Education Statistics Agency Limited 2015

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2014) *SFC Guidance, University Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2015-16.* Available at: www.sfc.ac.uk

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (n.d.) *Universities: Progress and Ambitions: Summary of 2015-16 university outcome agreements.* Available at: www.sfc.ac.uk