

**Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment - Education**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Budget Estimates 2014-2015**

**Outcome 3 - Higher Education, Research & International**

**Department of Education Question No. ED0359\_15**

**Senator Back asked on 5 June 2014 , Hansard page 51**

**Question**

***Deregulation of fees in the United Kingdom***

CHAIR: Before I go to Senator Rhiannon, I will go back to the UK experience. Have you got any data to advise us about two things related to the deregulation of fees in the United Kingdom. What happened to low SES enrolments? Did they go up or go down or have they not changed? Secondly, has there been a change in the graduation rate? We are all very interested in getting people into institutions. We actually want them graduating from the institutions. If you cannot tell me now, perhaps you can either during the afternoon or on notice. I would be very keen to know. Ms Paul: My colleagues may have more. What I was referring to in particular was, unlike the proposal in these reforms, the UK put a cap on fees. So they might have said they deregulated, but they set a ceiling. Lo and behold, all the publicly funded universities went up to the ceiling. That is exactly what we want to avoid here. We want to avoid that kind of incentive. So we have been extremely careful in the holistic nature of these reforms, which, as I said before, are well balanced between all of the incentives to avoid any incentive for universities just to raise prices to a certain level as defined by government policy. Mr Griew: The other thing about the UK experience that is interesting is that, notwithstanding the increase in costs, which was, as here, associated with an income protected loan system—I am going from memory here—there has been a 12 per cent increase in low SES participation in the period since the implementation of that. CHAIR: A 12 per cent increase? Mr Griew: If that is wrong, I will take it as a question on notice and provide a different figure. But it is of that order. It is one of the things that has stood out for comment about the experience in the UK system post implementation. On completion, I am not sure that it has been in place long enough to have completion data yet. CHAIR: If and when it is available, I would be keen to get stats on completion. Mr Griew: Or if there are some I do not know about.

**Answer**

The UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) does not report higher education statistics (e.g., changes in applications and acceptances) in terms of low SES but rather comments on “disadvantaged groups and areas”, defined by a non-SES measure.

UCAS also does not report on the enrolment rates of all disadvantaged students. However, enrolment information is available for 18 year olds who are the largest age cohort, making up over 50 per cent of enrolments each year. Enrolments for 18 year olds from disadvantaged areas rose 12 per cent in 2013 when compared with 2011, the year before higher tuition fees were introduced.

Insufficient time has elapsed since 2012 to allow for an assessment of the impact on graduation rate.