

The demise of part-time study in England: Who Cares?

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- **The characteristics of part-time undergraduate students**
- **The 2012/13 reforms of part-time student funding in England**
- **The initial impact of the 2012/13 reforms on part-time students**
- **What needs to change**

The characteristics of part-time students

Undergraduate student characteristics by mode of study, 2013/14

Characteristic	Part-time (%)	Full-time (%)
Age		
Under 25 years	25	89
25 years or over	75	11
Gender		
Female	61	55
Male	39	45
Highest qualification on entry		
HE Qualification	53	9
GCE A Level	22	85
Other /no formal qualifications	25	5
Qualification obtained		
Bachelor's degree	46	88
Sub-degree and other HE qualifications	54	12
All ^{HESA, 2015}	100	100

The 2012/13 reforms of part-time student funding

2012/13 reforms of English student funding



2012/13 part-time student funding reforms



- Universities no longer receive most of the money they got from the government for teaching full and part-time undergraduate courses = 80% cut
- Income replaced by higher tuition fees.
- Cap on tuition fees raised from £3,290 to £9,000 a year for full-time courses and to £6,750 for part-time courses.
- Full-time students, and for the first time some part-time students, qualify for income-contingent loans to pay for fees.
- All full time students eligible for loans for living costs, and poorer full-time students qualify for grants.
- Tuition fee and course grants for part-time students abolished.

Students at the Heart of the System, 2011

For the first time, students starting part-time undergraduate courses in 2012/13, many of whom are from non-traditional backgrounds, will be entitled to an up-front loan to meet their tuition costs.... This is a major step in terms of opening up access to higher education, and remedies a long-standing injustice in support for adult learners. Up to around 175,000 part-time students will benefit. (BIS, 2011, p 61)

Loan eligibility criteria

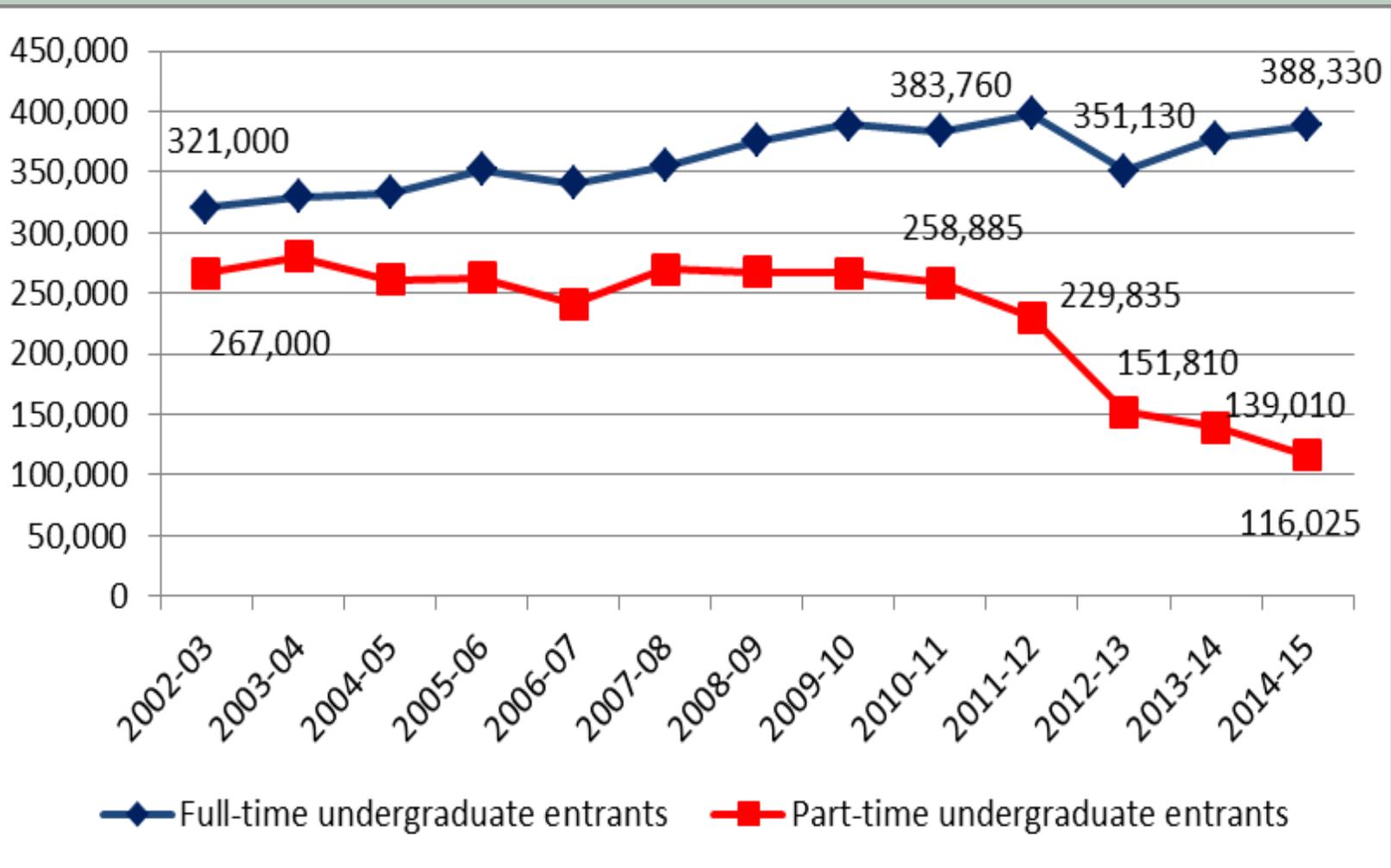
- **aiming for a qualification that is not at an equivalent or lower level than the qualification (ELQ) they already hold – if they already have a Bachelor’s degree, for example, they cannot get a loan to pay for a second Bachelor’s degree;**
- **studying at an intensity of greater than 25 per cent of a full-time equivalent course; and**
- **following a full course for a specified qualification aim – so students studying individual modules are ineligible for loans.**

The initial impact of the 2012/13 reforms of part-time student funding

Initial impact of the 2012/13 funding reforms

- In 2012/13, part-time fees doubled or even trebled.
- 55% fall between 2010/11 and 2014/15 in the number of UK and EU part-time undergraduate entrants to HEIs and FECs in England.
- 2012/13, 22% entrants took out a loan, by 2013/14, 19 per cent of all students who started their course after September 2012 had taken one out.

Full and Part-time UK and EU UG entrants to English HEIs and FE Colleges, 2002/03 – 2014/15



Change since 2010/11

FT 1%

PT -55%

Source: Derived from HEFCE 2014

Changes in the number of entrants to part-time undergraduate courses at HEIs in England (HEPI,2013)

		HEIs in England (exec OU)	Open University	All HEIs in England
2003-04	Degree, HND, FD	9%	45%	24%
to	Other	-10%	59%	2%
2008-09	All	-6%	53%	8%
2008-09	Degree, HND, FD	-6%	25%	9%
to	Other	-28%	-36%	-30%
2011-12	All	-23%	-11%	-19%
2011-12	Degree, HND, FD	-32%	-12%	-21%
to	Other	-35%	-60%	-44%
2012 ¹³ -13	All	-34%	-32%	-33%

Explaining the impact of the 2012/13 reforms of part-time student funding

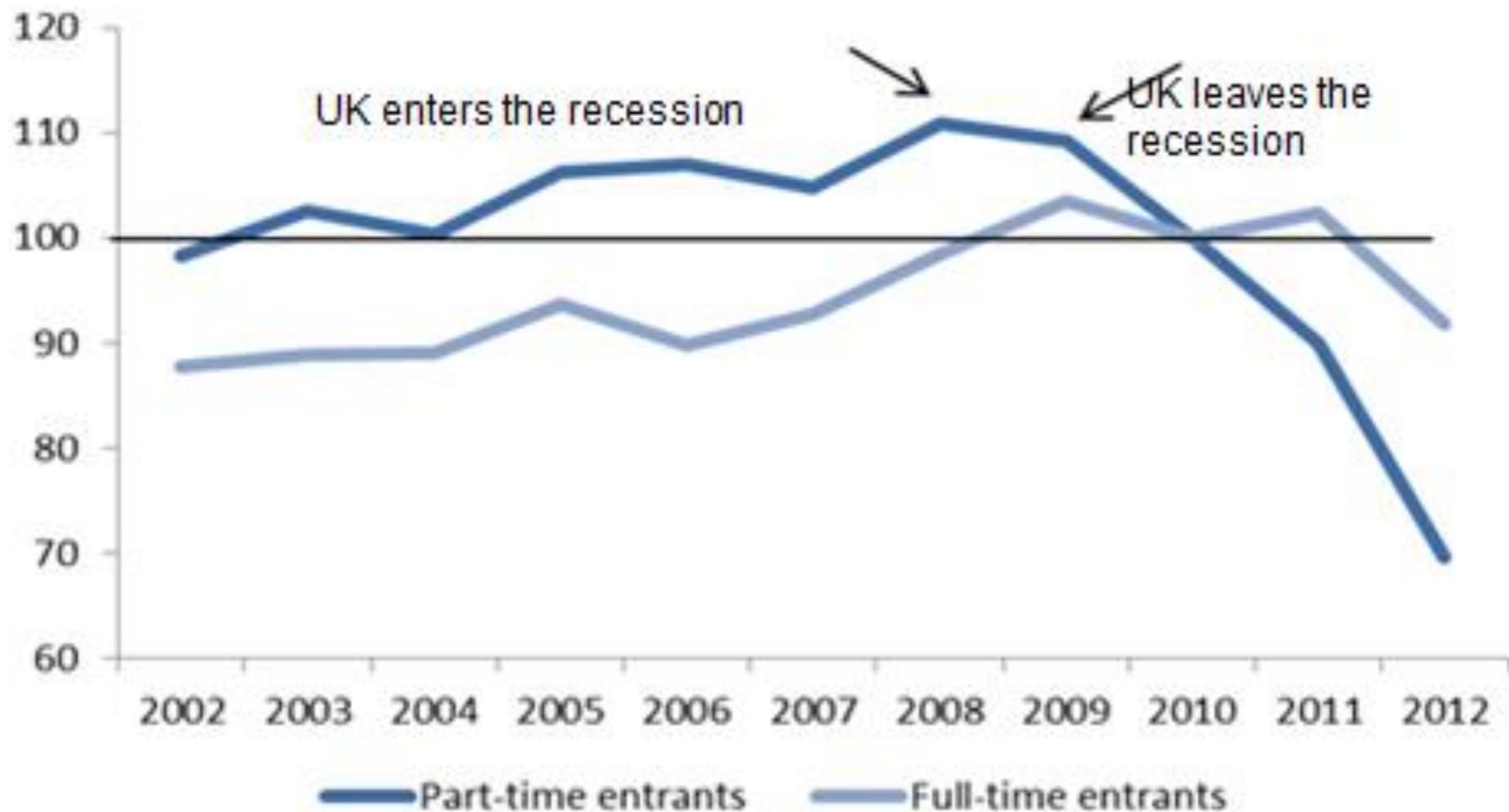
Limitations of 2012/13 part-time student funding

- **Student loan eligibility criteria too restrictive:**
 - Students who already hold an equivalent level or higher qualification are ineligible – excluding 54% of all part-timers.
 - Students studying less than 25% of a full-time course are ineligible – excluding a further 15% of part-timers.
 - Majority of part-timers do NOT qualify for loans but are faced with higher fees they have to pay up-front and out of their own pocket.
 - High fees make part-time study unaffordable or too risky an investment

Limitations of 2012/13 part-time student funding

- **Are student loans attractive to part-time students?**
 - By August 2013, over 5,000 loan applicants who were offered a loan decided not to take one out.
 - Financial returns to part-time study tend to be lower than those experienced by younger full-time students in terms of higher wages and employment opportunities.
 - Income-contingent loans repayments not perceived as an adequate safeguard to these lower returns – opportunity costs and risks too great.
 - Already have considerable financial commitments – mortgage and children – average age = 34.
 - Paying 9% of their income in student loan repayments more than they can manage or prepared to pay.

UK higher education entrants by mode of study index (2010 = 100)



What needs to change?

- **Current policies designed for the ‘typical student and graduate’ - a young school leaver studying full-time and entering the labour market for the first time.**
- **Policies need to acknowledge the distinctive characteristics part-time students.**
- **The lower financial returns to part-time study and wide ranging non-pecuniary benefits justify larger government subsidies to encourage demand.**
- **Need to revise the loan eligibility criteria so more students qualify.**
- **Need the political will within HE and government to tackle the challenges posed by part-time study.**