



European Union and International Students in Scottish Higher Education Institutions

In Scotland the share of students attending Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who come from countries outside of the UK is higher than for the UK as a whole. Over the last decade, the number of students at Scottish HEIs from other member states of the European Union (EU students) and from countries outside of the European Union (international students) has grown considerably. The tuition fees paid by such students have become a significant source of income for most Scottish HEIs. Therefore, any change to UK immigration rules, regardless of the outcome of the current debate on constitutional change, would likely have more of an impact on Scottish HEIs compared to HEIs in other parts of the UK.

Key Points

- Scottish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) attract a higher proportion of EU and international students compared to the UK as a whole.
- The number of EU and international students in Scottish HEIs has increased over the last decade.
- The share of HEI income coming from the tuition fees paid by international students is higher in Scotland compared to the UK as a whole.
- The share of non-UK students varies significantly across Scottish HEIs. This suggests any change in immigration rules or policies relating to tuition fees paid would likely affect HEIs in an uneven fashion.

The study

This research investigates EU and international students' participation in Scottish higher education. We use data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA) to analyse

the movement of EU and international students to Scotland. The research is part of a wider programme aimed at understanding the potential impacts of demographic change in the UK in the context of potential constitutional change.

Scottish HE, Demography and the Global Context

The Scottish Governments Green Paper ‘Building a Smarter Future: Towards a Sustainable Scottish Solution for the Future of Higher Education’ (2010) described higher education as a “vital component in a global knowledge community and the sector is a major direct and indirect earner for Scotland in the world” (p. 1). Thus, part of the higher education sector’s importance for Scotland is the revenue it generates, some of which comes from tuition fees paid by students from other regions of the UK as well as students from the rest of the world.

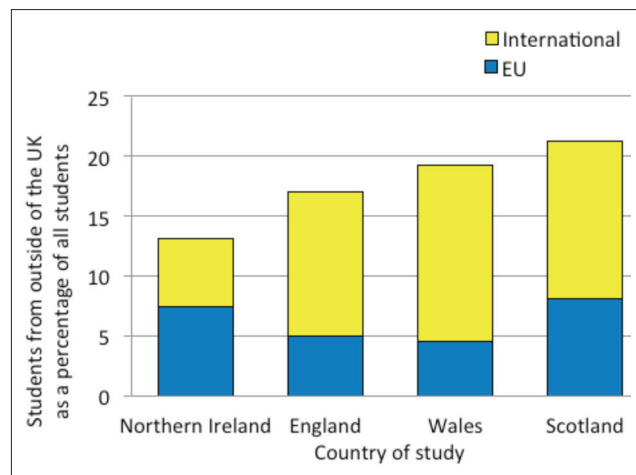
Population projections suggest that the number of young people in Scotland (including those in the higher education age groups) will decline in the future. In addition, the share of young people in the total population in Scotland is less than in the rest of the UK. So unless there is a substantial increase in higher education participation rates, the number of Scotland-domiciled students will likely decline. This means that students coming from other regions of the UK, along with EU and international students will become even more important.

Student mobility

In 2011/12 around 87,490 first-year students were enrolled at Scottish HEIs. Of this total, 24,420 were students whose usual domicile was the EU or elsewhere in the world. Figure 1 shows the share of students from outside of the UK studying in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales in 2011/12. EU and international students made up 21.3% of the total student population in Scotland, a greater share than any other part of the UK.

Figure 2 shows that over the academic years 2002/2003 to 2011/12, both the number of EU students and the number of international students in Scottish HEIs increased considerably. Table 1 shows that in 2011/12 China was the single most important origin of all non-UK students studying in Scotland (representing 16% of the total). While China is the largest international student group, Ireland is the largest EU student group. However, the Chinese student group is nearly three times larger than the Irish student group. No less than 62% of all non-UK students studying in Scottish HEIs are from outside the EU.

Figure 1: Percentage of Students from Outside of the UK, by Country of Origin and Country of Study, 2011/12.



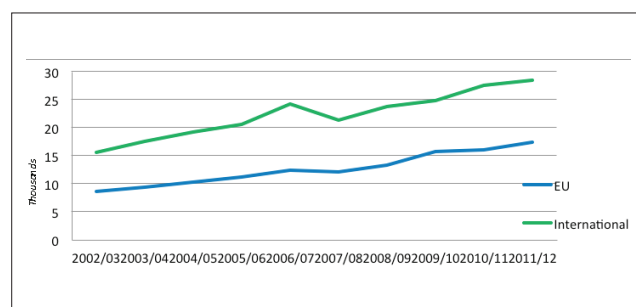
Source: Authors’ calculations, using HESA data 2011/12

Table 1: “Top 5” Countries of Origin of EU and International Students in Scottish HEIs, 2011/12.

Non-EU Country	No. of students	EU Country	No. of students
China	7485	Ireland	2630
United States	3645	Germany	2315
India	2445	France	1510
Nigeria	2070	Greece	1290
Malaysia	1160	Poland	1200

Source: Authors’ analysis, using HESA data 2011/12

Figure 2: Number of EU and International Students in Scottish HEIs, 2002/03-2011/12



Source: Authors’ calculations, using HESA data between 2002/03 and 2011/12.

Tuition fees

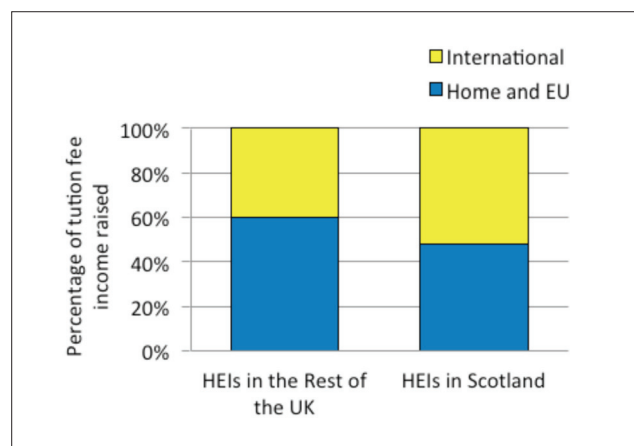
For the UK as a whole, in 2011/12, 35.3% of HEIs' total income came from tuition fees. This average hides considerable variation across HEIs. Scotland and England have adopted different policies on "own domiciled" students and EU students paying a tuition fee for their education. This policy difference partially explains the difference between these two countries; compared to the rest of the UK, Scottish HEIs have a much larger share of their total income coming from the tuition fees paid by international students. Figure 3 shows that in Scotland over one-half (51.7%) of HEIs' total income comes from tuition fees, while in England the share is lower at around 40% (38.7%). Any change in the relationship between Scotland and the EU would likely affect the number of EU and possibly international students coming to study in Scotland. This would have significant financial implications for the country.

The Uneven Geography of Scotland's Non-UK student population

EU and international students are more important to some Scottish HEIs than others. The share of EU students in Scottish HEIs ranges from 1% to 14%. The share of international students ranges from 3% to 32%.

International students pay considerably more in fees compared to UK, EU and Scottish students. Scottish HEIs generate more than £336 million from these international students in tuition fees. However, this income is not evenly spread across institutions and it's clear that some Scottish HEIs are more successful at raising income from tuitions fees than others. It is likely that any changes in the level of tuition fees paid by international students would affect HEIs in Scotland, and do so in an uneven way. Any policies that lead to a reduction in the number of EU and international students will have a detrimental impact on the Scottish economy. Any changes in immigration

Figure 3: Percentage of Tuition Fee Income from Home, EU, and International Students, Scotland and the Rest of the UK, 2011/12.



Source: Authors' calculations, using HESA data 2011/12

policy that make it more difficult to obtain a student visa is also likely to lower numbers, while inversely any relaxation on student visas could increase international student flows to Scotland.

Policy implications

EU and international students are important to Scotland and the Scottish economy. Their share of the total student population is higher in Scotland compared to the rest of the UK. Their share has also increased considerably over the past decade. Given the expected decline in the number of Scotland-domiciled higher education students, EU and international students will become even more important in the future. Whether Scotland's success at attracting students from outside the UK will continue in the future is a key question. Policy-makers at both the Scotland and UK level must recognise that changes to immigration rules and tuition fee levels can impact on the number of EU and international students coming to study in Scotland and the UK.

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