



Report

Final Report for the Sutton Trust

An evaluation of the Reach for Excellence Programme: Cohort One

Emily Lamont
Joshua Flack
Anne Wilkin

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Executive Summary

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is carrying out a longitudinal evaluation of the Reach for Excellence Programme (RfE). This summary sets out the key findings of the research to date.

About the Reach for Excellence (RfE) programme

Through funding from the HBOS Foundation and the Sutton Trust, RfE was set up in 2007 by the University of Leeds. The programme aims to help able young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Yorkshire to gain a place at a leading research university, and to ensure they enter Higher Education (HE) in general. Over the duration of the programme, 360 16-18 year olds will benefit from regular advice sessions and lectures, a summer school, university visits and individual mentoring, with the overall aim of raising the aspirations, achievement, confidence and self-esteem of the young people involved.

Key findings

- It is evident that the RfE programme is leading to beneficial outcomes for young people. This is particularly so when the RfE students are compared to peers who have not been involved in the programme.
- The research has shown that more of the RfE students have progressed on to university than their control counterparts, and, furthermore, they are more likely to have progressed on to prestigious, research-led universities.
- There are observable differences in the achievement of the RfE students when compared to the control group. How far this is a result of RfE cannot be established, but it is likely that the programme has encouraged the students to aim high and to fulfil their potential.
- RfE aimed to prepare students for higher education, and to provide them with sufficient skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about their university choices. The programme has achieved this, and in many cases, the RfE students are more knowledgeable or prepared for university than their control peers.
- The RfE students feel significantly more satisfied with the amount of information, advice and guidance that they have received to help them to make decisions about university than their control peers.
- Although engagement levels are lower than hoped the programme is having tangible benefits for those who do engage. Proposed plans to develop the programme look set to address some of the possible barriers to engagement and, in turn, this is likely to lead to positive outcomes for more of the RfE students in future cohorts.
- There is always the possibility that some of the impacts observed could be due to factors beyond the RfE programme. However, consistent messages have emerged which suggest that RfE is a valuable and effective tool for supporting students through the transition to HE.

Background to the RfE students

- Students on the RfE programme are largely female (61 per cent), and of White British or Pakistani backgrounds (54 per cent and 31 per cent respectively).
- Over half of the students (58 per cent) are from low academically achieving schools. Despite this, they are high academic achievers: 85 per cent have between 10 and 18 GCSEs as A* to C.
- Eighty-six per cent of students would be first generation university applicants. The majority (80 per cent) are also from families with low household incomes.

Engagement with the RfE programme

- The majority of students who gained a place on the RfE programme had low levels of engagement with the programme activities. Neither the distance from the student's school to Leeds University, nor the number of RfE pupils in each school had a consistently negative or positive effect on engagement levels. Rather, the schools' commitment to the programme, and the links they have with Leeds University, appear to be influencing engagement.

The impacts of RfE on HE choices and destinations

- At the time of the baseline survey, RfE students were slightly more likely to have planned to attend university compared to the control group of students (87 per cent versus 82 per cent). However, at the time of the follow-up survey, this gap in aspirations had significantly widened (95 per cent versus 72 per cent).
- At baseline, similar numbers of RfE and control students were considering applying to at least one of the Russell Group Universities. By the time of the follow-up survey, this gap had significantly widened. Eighty-three per cent of RfE students had applied to Russell Group Universities, compared to just 62 per cent of the control group.
- There is a significant difference in the proportion of RfE and control students who have actually progressed on to university (85 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively).
- A significant difference in the number of students who are attending research intensive universities is also apparent (45 per cent versus 21 per cent). This suggests that the RfE programme has helped more students to progress on to HE, and has encouraged them to attend prestigious, research-led universities.
- The most popular university choices for students in both the RfE and control groups are institutions in Yorkshire, or in easy reach of the region. Leeds University clearly stands out as the most popular choice for RfE students. This is unsurprising given the familiarity that they would develop with the University through RfE.
- Concerns over getting into debt as a result of going to university were considerable for both RfE and control students at baseline. However, by the time of the follow-up survey, a considerably smaller number of RfE students were concerned about ending up in debt as a result of attending university. For control students, the level of concern remained. This is likely to be a result of the higher awareness of the financial aspects of a university education amongst the RfE students.

- Generally, by the time of the follow-up survey, RfE students tended to agree more strongly with statements that represented positive views on university than the control students. More RfE students also agreed that a university education would lead to 'good' or 'well paid' jobs.

The impacts of RfE on university preparation

- RfE is offering students useful sources of information about university. It is likely that access to this advice has contributed to the positive outcomes that have emerged from the programme for those involved.
- RfE students are armed with more information about university study than their control counterparts. The RfE students rated their knowledge of all aspects of university higher than the control students.
- RfE students show a greater level of financial awareness than their control counterparts. The RfE programme is therefore equipping students with useful information about how they might fund their time and access financial support whilst at university.
- RfE students are more prepared for getting used to a new university and for university life in general than control students. Amongst the RfE students, with a 'high' level of engagement with the programme are significantly more likely to feel prepared for university life than those who engaged less.
- The RfE students are significantly more happy about the amount of information and guidance they have had to help them to make decisions about university than their control peers. Involvement in the programme is therefore better equipping students to make informed decisions about a university education.

The impacts of RfE on A-level achievement

- The GCSE achievement of the RfE and control group was broadly similar. However, more RfE students achieved between 13 and 18 GCSEs at grades A* to C than control students. Conversely, less RfE students achieved 8 or fewer GCSEs than students in the control group.
- The largest proportion of A-level grades achieved by RfE students were A grades, whilst the largest proportion of A-level grades for the control group were B grades. RfE students were significantly more likely to have achieved at least one A-grade at A-level than their control counterparts.
- Proportionally, RfE students achieved more A and B grades than the control students. Only 12 per cent of their grades were lower than C grades (compared to 21 per cent of the control group).
- Different levels of achievement between the RfE and control students do exist. However, how far this is a result of the RfE programme can not be accurately determined. Further examination of this as the evaluation of RfE progresses will provide more insight into the role of the RfE programme in student achievement.

About the research

Commissioned by the Sutton Trust, to date, the evaluation has tracked the first cohort of students as they progressed from year 12 to year 13, supported by RfE¹. This has included a baseline survey (to gauge student aspiration at the start of the RfE programme) and a follow-up survey (at the end of the programme). Both the students involved in the programme, as well as a control group of peers, have been tracked. Achieved A-level grades and the post-year 13 destinations have been gathered, and event visits and a mid-way proforma have also informed the research.

¹ An interim report on progress after one year of the programme was produced in August 2008 (Lamont *et al.*, 2009).

1. Introduction

1.1 About the Reach for Excellence programme

In 2007, the University of Leeds was awarded funding from the HBOS Foundation and the Sutton Trust to help able young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Yorkshire to gain a place at a leading research university, and ensure they entered Higher Education (HE) in general. The Reach for Excellence programme (RfE) was subsequently established as the only university access programme of its kind in England. Over the duration of the programme, 360 16-18 year olds from Yorkshire schools are intended to benefit from regular advice sessions and lectures, a summer school, university visits and individual mentoring, with the overall aim of raising the aspirations, achievement, confidence and self-esteem of the young people involved. The programme also seeks to provide appropriate and impartial guidance in an environment that will stretch bright and capable students who may not have considered entry to prestigious research-led universities.

1.2 Eligibility criteria

To ensure that the programme was targeted accurately, eligibility criteria were set for inclusion. Students were invited to apply for the programme from schools that had a low rate of progression to HE, but to take part in RfE, candidates must also:

- live in Yorkshire
- have the potential to achieve 3 or more A-levels at grade B or above and to be a candidate for study at a leading research-led university
- have gained 5 or more GCSEs (including English Language and Mathematics) at grade C or above.

Candidates were also required to meet at least two of the following criteria:

- to be in receipt of an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
- to be in public care
- to have had their studies disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in their personal, social or domestic life
- to be the first member of their family to apply to HE (excluding older brothers or sisters).

The Sutton Trust commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to carry out an evaluation of the RfE programme. This involved tracking the first cohort of 120 students as they progressed from year 12 to year 13, supported by RfE. An interim report on progress after one year of the programme was produced in August 2008 (Lamont *et al.*, 2009).

This report sets out the findings of the two-year evaluation, by which time RfE students had been provided with a range of opportunities, including:

- the summer school, in July 2008
- study skills and personal development events (e.g. time management, revision skills, motivational speaker)
- subject-specific events (e.g. a medicine conference, a law session, a sociology workshop)
- higher education-oriented events (e.g. personal statement checking, careers, finance session, access to Leeds sessions).

Aims

The primary aim of the NFER evaluation is to ascertain how many pupils went on to a research led university (as well as entering HE as a whole) because of the scheme who would otherwise not have done so. In order to meet this aim, the study also explored the following research questions:

- Do pupils completing the RfE programme have a greater awareness of the options available to them, of the HE sector and of the funding available?
- How many pupils who complete the RfE programme enter higher education?
- How many pupils who complete the RfE programme secure a place and attend a research-led university?

1.3 Methodology

This report draws on four phases of data collection:

- a baseline survey
- event visits
- a follow-up survey
- follow-up data on student outcomes.

Baseline survey

In December 2007 and January 2008, before the students were informed of the RfE programme, 295 baseline surveys were completed (see Appendix 1). Of these, 114 were from students who subsequently gained a place on the programme; 27 were from students who applied but did not gain a place; and the remaining 154 were from students who were eligible to apply, but chose not to. These two latter groups formed the 'control group' for the remainder of the research.

Event visits

NFER researchers carried out three RfE event visits during the first year of the RfE programme. These included:

- **The launch event** (February 2008). Interviews were carried out with students on the programme as well as with event organisers. Views on RfE were also gathered from 37 parents via a proforma. Details of this are included in the interim report (Lamont *et al.*, 2009).
- **A programme event** (May, 2008). Six interviews were carried out with students, as well as an interview with programme organisers.
- **The Summer School** (July/August, 2008). During this visit, 47 of the 48 young people in attendance at the summer school completed a proforma. This explored current university intentions, the factors influencing their decisions, and the usefulness of RfE to date (see Appendix 2). Three focus groups, each comprising five students, were also conducted.

Follow-up survey

In April/May 2009, 18 months after the start of the RfE programme, the young people who filled in a baseline survey were asked to complete a follow-up survey (see Appendix 3). In total, 153 follow-up surveys were completed, 77 from young people on the programme (the RfE group), and 76 from the control group. Thirteen of the RfE students who returned a follow-up survey had only attended the launch event or had not attended any events. Given this lack of engagement, for analysis purposes, these 13 were moved into the control group, giving final numbers of 89 in the control group, and 64 in the RfE group (see Section 2.3 for further information).

Follow-up data

In the Autumn of 2009, the A-level grades and post-school/college destinations of all students who filled in a baseline survey were gathered. In total, data was gathered for 76 per cent of the original 295 students.

As well as the data detailed above, in autumn 2007, telephone interviews were carried out with heads of sixth forms (or their college-based equivalents) from which students had been invited to apply for RfE. Information on this data is detailed in the interim report (Lamont *et al.*, 2009).

1.4 Report structure

Findings are presented under the following chapter headings:

- Background and engagement of the RfE students
- Impacts of RfE on HE choices and destinations
- Impacts of RfE on university preparation
- Impacts of RfE on A-level achievement
- Conclusions.

2. Background and engagement of the RfE students

Key findings

- Students on the RfE programme are largely female (61 per cent), and of White British or Pakistani backgrounds (54 per cent and 31 per cent respectively).
- Over half of the students (58 per cent) are from low academically achieving schools. Despite this, they are high academic achievers: 85 per cent have between 10 and 18 GCSEs as A* to C.
- Eighty-six per cent of students would be first generation university applicants. The majority (80 per cent) are also from families with low household incomes.
- The majority of students who gained a place on the RfE programme had low levels of engagement with the programme activities. Neither the distance from the student's school to Leeds University, nor the number of RfE pupils in each school had a consistently negative or positive effect on engagement levels. Rather, the schools' commitment to the programme, and the links they have with Leeds University, appear to be influencing engagement.

In order to provide an overview of the types of students involved in the RfE programme, this section provides information on the following:

- background characteristics of the students
- the extent to which they met the RfE eligibility criteria
- levels of student engagement in the RfE programme.

2.1 Background characteristics

Background characteristics of the RfE cohort are given below. These are drawn from the baseline survey and also from data provided by the programme organisers.

2.1.1 Gender

Sixty-one per cent of students on the programme are female².

2.1.2 Ethnicity

The ethnicity of 110 of the 120 young people enrolled on RfE is provided in Table 2.1.

² Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

Table 2.1: Ethnicity of 110 students on RfE

Ethnic background	Number of students (n=110)	Percentage
White British	59	54
Asian/Asian British (Pakistani)	34	31
Asian/Asian British (Indian)	8	7
Black/Black British (Caribbean)	3	3
Mixed (White and Black Caribbean)	2	2
Chinese	1	1
Black/Black British (African)	1	1
Mixed (White and Asian)	1	1
Other Asian	1	1

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

As shown, 54 per cent of students on RfE are of White British origin, and 31 per cent are of Asian/Asian British (Pakistani) origin.

2.1.3 Schools attended

Students on the programme were drawn from 37 schools across West Yorkshire³. Fifty-eight per cent of the students were attending schools where the average percentage of GCSEs achieved at grades A* to C in 2007 (including English and mathematics) was below the national average⁴. Furthermore, eighteen per cent of the students were from schools that achieved less than half the national average GCSE scores in 2007. Twenty-eight per cent of students were from schools that achieved above the national average⁵, and fourteen per cent were at sixth form colleges (where GCSE data is not applicable). This demonstrates that over half of the students on RfE were from lower academically achieving schools.

2.1.4 GCSE achievements

Despite the fact that more than half of the RfE students attended a school where GCSE results were below the national average, 71 per cent of the students have between ten and 12 GCSEs at grade A* to C (25 per cent of the students have ten, 31 per cent have eleven, and 16 per cent have twelve). A further 14 per cent of students have between 13 and 18 GCSEs at A* to C. This indicates that, in line with

³ Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

⁴ In 2007, 47.6 per cent of pupils nationally achieved GCSEs at grades A* to C (including English and mathematics).

⁵ Of the 58 pupils who attended schools that achieved above the national average GCSE results, 20 were from one high performing school. This represented 17 per cent of the RfE cohort.

the RfE entry requirements, the students on the programme are very high achieving (85 per cent have between nine and 18 GCSEs at A* to C).

2.1.5 A-level subjects

The A-level subjects most commonly studied by students on RfE are listed in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Most commonly studied A-levels

A-level studied	Number of students studying (n=112)	Percentage
Biology	46	40
Chemistry	45	40
Psychology	45	40
Maths	38	33
Sociology	37	33
English Literature	25	22
English Language	24	21
History	21	18
Physics	17	15
Law	14	12

*More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
A total of 112 respondents gave at least one valid response to this question
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Baseline Survey, 2007*

Table 2.2 shows that science-related subjects were common choices for RfE students.

2.2 Meeting the eligibility criteria

Entry criteria for RfE have been set to ensure that the programme is targeted at those intended. As well as being high achievers and capable of studying at a research-led university, students needed to have met at least two additional criteria from a list of four (to be in receipt of an EMA; to be in public care; to be a first generation university applicant; or to have had their studies adversely affected). Seventeen per cent⁶ of students met three of the additional criteria, and 82 per cent met two⁷.

⁶ Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy

⁷ One student on the programme met only one of the criteria, but she/he was admitted to the programme due to additional educational and social needs.

2.2.1 Family attendance at university

Eighty-six per cent of students on RfE reported that neither their mother nor father⁸ had attended university. Ten per cent of students were from families where one parent (either their mother or father) had attended university, and four per cent reported that both parents had attended.

Sixty-two per cent of students whose parents had not attended university also reported that none of their siblings had attended. In this sense, they would be the first person in their immediate family to attend university. Thirty-eight per cent of students whose parents had not attended reported that their brother or sister (or both) had gone to university.

These results suggest that, in line with the entry criteria, the majority of students on RfE are first generation university applicants.

2.2.2 Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

Eighty-eight per cent of the students were in receipt of an Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) from the government⁹. Recipients of an EMA must come from families with a household income of no more than £30,810 per year. Seventy-one per cent received the maximum amount of £30 per week¹⁰, allocated only to families where household income is no more than £20,817 per year. This indicates that many of the young people enrolled on RfE are from families with low household incomes.

2.2.3 Students in public care

None of the RfE students have been, or are currently, in public care¹¹.

2.2.4 Disruption to studies

Thirty-one per cent of the young people on RfE were classified as having had their studies disrupted or adversely affected by circumstances in their personal, social or domestic life¹².

⁸ 'Mother' and 'father' include step-mothers or step-fathers

⁹ Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

¹⁰ Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

¹¹ Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

¹² Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy.

2.3 Engagement with the RfE programme

This section addresses the levels of engagement in the RfE programme and explores the possible reasons behind this.

2.3.1 Engagement levels

Engagement levels in the RfE programme varied. It was evident that some students attended more sessions than others, and that a proportion of the students failed to maintain their attendance after being accepted, or after the initial launch event. To enable a more detailed exploration of the impacts of the programme, RfE students were banded according to their level of engagement. This aided accurate analysis of whether those who engaged more in the programme reaped more benefits.

Students' levels of engagement were divided into 'high', 'medium', 'low' or 'not engaged'¹³. Table 2.3 shows the breakdown of RfE students by engagement level.

Table 2.3: Levels of RfE engagement

Engagement level	Percentage of students (n=119)
High	17
Medium	26
Low	31
Not engaged	26

Source: University of Leeds, Access Academy

Table 2.3 demonstrates that the majority of students (57 per cent) had low levels of engagement with the programme. The 26 per cent of students (n=31) who had not engaged were moved into the 'control' group of students for analysis purposes. Effectively, these students had received minimal or no RfE input, and therefore, their removal from the RfE sample reduced the possibility that they would skew the analysis of results for the RfE group of students. This allowed more accurate comparison between control and RfE students. Subsequent chapters of the report will include references to the engagement levels of students where it appears that there may have been different experiences and results of the RfE programme according to students' level of engagement.

2.3.2 Possible reasons for low engagement

Interviews with Sixth Form Heads during the early part of the project shed light onto some possible barriers to student engagement. These included:

- Giving up free time (e.g. Saturday mornings or Wednesday afternoons). This was predicted to be particularly difficult where students had part-time jobs and contributed significantly to the household economy.

¹³ This includes those who had only attended the launch event (n=20) or had not engaged in any RfE event (n=11).

- The distance from some students' homes to Leeds. It was felt that this might prevent or deter some students from attending. The difficulties in making the journey (generally via public transport), as well as the motivation and confidence to travel, were highlighted as potential difficulties despite the assistance provided via the programme. Furthermore, parents' social and cultural values could limit students' mobility and inhibit their attendance at RfE sessions.
- The small number of students gaining a place on RfE. In some schools/colleges this meant that there was 'no critical mass' of participating students, making it harder for the students to remain motivated and committed.
- The economic disadvantage and low aspirations of some students could limit their willingness to see the benefits of participating in RfE.

Analysis of RfE student engagement by individual schools/colleges was performed to explore two of the potential barriers identified by Heads of Sixth Form. Firstly, no trend was identified of schools' and colleges' distance from Leeds negatively affecting student engagement levels. Whilst most schools and colleges in the Leeds area were 'well engaged', there were numerous examples of 'well engaged' schools and colleges located 15-20 miles from Leeds. Therefore, the distance students need to travel to access RfE events, was not impacting on engagement levels in a consistent way. However, for individuals who are not engaging, the distance they need to travel could still be an inhibiting factor.

Secondly, no trend emerged when comparing schools' and colleges' engagement levels by the size of their RfE cohorts. 'Well engaged' schools and colleges included a similar mix of RfE cohort sizes to the 'less well engaged'. Furthermore, there were cases of schools with very large numbers of RfE students that were classed as being low engaged schools, and conversely, schools with very few students that were classed as being very highly engaged. Therefore, the number of students enrolled in RfE from each school does not affect engagement levels.

Other factors must therefore be influencing student engagement. Through discussions with the RfE team at Leeds University, it appears that the engagement could be influenced by school support for the programme or by school links with the RfE organisers or the Leeds Access Academy more broadly. It is notable that those schools classed as 'well engaged' (i.e. those with higher proportions of their RfE students who have engaged in the programme) are largely those with which staff from the Leeds Access Academy have better links, or are schools who are always keen to access the opportunities provided by the University. Further attention will be paid to exploring whether or not engagement is affected by the relationship between the school and the Access Academy as part of the continued evaluation of the RfE programme.

Encouragingly, the RfE organisers are introducing a series of measures to increase the engagement of RfE students in the third cohort (who will engage in the school years 2009/10 to 2010/11). These include a 2-day residential early in the RfE programme, a student mentoring programme, and subject-specific and study skills sessions which will be delivered within schools and colleges to ensure that all

students are reached. These proposed changes look highly likely to encourage more students to engage with the programme in the future. Delivering sessions in schools or clusters of schools is likely to reduce the barrier of distance for some students, and the residential early in the programme would facilitate the forming of friendships which might motivate more isolated students to maintain their attendance levels. The value of information and advice from current university students is also highlighted in Section 4.1, providing strong support for the increased role of student mentors in the RfE programme.

3. Impacts of RfE on HE choices and destinations

Key findings

- At the time of the baseline survey, RfE students were slightly more likely to have planned to attend university compared to the control group (87 per cent versus 82 per cent). However, by the time of the follow-up survey, this gap in aspirations had significantly widened (95 per cent versus 72 per cent).
- At baseline, similar numbers of RfE and control students were considering applying to at least one of the Russell Group universities. By the time of the follow-up survey, this gap had significantly widened. Eighty-three per cent of RfE students had applied to a Russell Group university, compared to just 64 per cent of the control group.
- There is a significant difference in the proportion of RfE and control students who have actually progressed on to university (85 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively).
- A significant difference in the number of students who are attending research intensive universities is also apparent (45 per cent versus 21 per cent). This suggests that the RfE programme has helped more students to progress on to HE, and has encouraged them to attend prestigious, research-led universities.
- The most popular university choices for students in both the RfE and control groups are institutions in Yorkshire, or in easy reach of the region. Leeds University clearly stands out as the most popular choice for RfE students. This is unsurprising given the familiarity that they would develop with the University through RfE.
- Concerns over getting into debt as a result of going to university were considerable for both RfE and control students at baseline. However, by the time of the follow-up survey, a considerably smaller number of RfE students were concerned about ending up in debt as a result of attending university. For control students, the level of concern remained. This is likely to be a result of the higher awareness of the financial aspects of a university education amongst the RfE students.
- Generally, by the time of the follow-up survey, RfE students tended to agree more strongly with statements that represented positive views on university than the control students. More RfE students also agreed that a university education would lead to 'good' or 'well paid' jobs.

This chapter explores the impact of the RfE programme on students' HE choices and destinations. It considers the university intentions and actual university destinations of RfE and control students, including their attendance at Research Intensive universities.

3.1 Progression to HE

This section explores the RfE and control student's intentions to progress on to HE, and moves on to examine their actual rates of HE attendance. It also addresses the factors that have influenced students' decision over whether or not progress into HE.

3.1.1 Intentions to progress to HE

At the time of the baseline survey, 85 per cent of students (including both the control and RfE group) planned to attend university. Of the RfE students, 95 per cent were planning to go to university. This suggests that the overwhelming majority of young people in the research were already setting their sights high and considering a university education¹⁴.

Table 3.1 shows the intended post-school destinations of the RfE and control students who filled in a follow-up survey. This was administered around 18 months after the baseline survey.

Table 3.1: Intended post-school destinations, follow-up survey

Intentions post year 13	Number of students		Percentage	
	RfE (n=64)	Control (n=89)	RfE	Control
University (or gap year then uni)	61	69	95	78
Employment	0	10	0	11
Don't know	0	3	0	3
Training programme/ apprenticeship	2	2	3	2
Voluntary work	0	1	0	1
Other	1	4	2	4
Total	64	89	100	100

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2009

Table 3.1 shows that 61 out of 64 RfE students (95 per cent) still intended to go to university immediately following school/college, or after a gap year, compared to just 78 per cent of control students. To provide a more accurate picture of changes to university intentions, data for only those students who filled in both a baseline and control survey can be compared. At baseline, 87 per cent of the RfE students and 82 per cent of the control group (who also filled in a follow-up survey) planned to go to university. By the time of the follow-up survey, 95 per cent of these RfE students compared with 72 per cent of these control students still planned to go to university. Therefore, the university aspirations of the RfE students increased, whilst they decreased significantly for the control group.

¹⁴ It should be noted that previous national surveys suggest that aspirations to study at university are not always translated into actual participation.

3.1.2 Actual progression to HE

In the final stages of the project, NFER collected information on the actual destinations of students who had filled in a baseline survey. Complete destinations data was received for 188 students, which represented 65 per cent of the baseline sample. Table 3.2 shows the destinations of the RfE and control students.

Table 3.2: Actual destinations of RfE and control students

Destination	Number		Percentage (excluding unknown responses)		Percentage (including unknown responses)	
	RfE	Control	RfE (%)	Control (%)	RfE (%)	Control (%)
University	68	72	87	65	85	59
Gap year/gap year then university	7	11	9	10	9	9
Employment	1	9	1	8	1	7
Other (college, school, job, apprenticeship)	2	18	3	16	3	15
Unknown	2	12	-	-	3	10
N=	80	122	78	110	80	122

Due to rounding, percentages do not sum to 100

Source: Destination and grade data provided to NFER, 2009

Correction to report: table 3.2 has been amended to include actual destination percentages for all students (including unknown responses) as well as providing the percentages for the cohort excluding unknown data. The percentages given in the key findings and executive summary, which were tested for significance, are the percentages based on the whole cohort, including unknown responses.

Clearly, attending university was the most popular post-school/college destination for students. There is, however, a marked difference in the proportion of RfE and control students that have gone on to university. Eighty-seven per cent of RfE students for whom data was provided have gone on to university. However, for the control group, this figure is just 65 per cent. This represents a significant difference between the number of students who have actually progressed on to university. Given that the RfE programme aims to encourage students to attend university, this is a very positive finding, and suggests that the programme might be playing a significant role in these different progression rates.

Previous research has suggested that students' intentions to attend university will often be higher than what is actually observed. This phenomenon appears to be present, but to be affecting the control group more than the RfE students. Indeed, there was a drop of 13 per cent in the numbers of control students who actually progressed on to university from the number who had intended to. The equivalent drop was only 8 per cent for the RfE students. This suggests that more of the RfE students have fulfilled their intention to progress on to university than their control counterparts. Again, it is highly likely that the focused support they received through the RfE programme has helped many of the RfE students to meet their intention to progress on to HE.

3.2 University destinations

One of the aims of the RfE programme is to encourage students to raise their aspirations to attend highly regarded, research intensive universities, such as those that are members of the Russell Group¹⁵ or the 1994 Group¹⁶. This section examines the RfE and control students intended university destinations at the time of the baseline and the follow-up surveys, and then their actual destinations. In doing so, it looks at intentions for and progression to Research Intensive Universities, as well as the geographical spread of their university choices.

3.2.1 Intended university destinations

Intended destinations at baseline

At the time of the baseline survey most students knew that they wanted to go to university, but only 48 per cent (including control and RfE students) stated that they knew where they would apply. Table 3.3 sets out the top 11 university destinations of that 48 per cent.

Table 3.3: Intended university destinations at baseline

University	Number of students intending to apply (n=125)	Percentage
University of Leeds	84	67
University of Manchester	42	34
University of Bradford	19	15
Leeds Metropolitan University	15	12
University of Huddersfield	14	11
University of Cambridge	13	10
Newcastle University	11	9
University of Oxford	9	7
University of Sheffield	9	7
University of York	7	6
University of Nottingham	7	6

*A filter question: all those who said they knew where they intended to apply
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100
Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Baseline Survey, 2007*

¹⁵ The 'Russell Group' universities include: Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Imperial College, Kings College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Queens University Belfast, Sheffield, Southampton, University College London, and Warwick.

¹⁶ The 1994 Group is comprised of: Bath, Birkbeck, Durham, East Anglia, Essex, Exeter, Goldsmiths, Institute of Education, Royal Holloway, Lancaster, Leicester, Loughborough, Queen Mary, Reading, St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, Surrey, Sussex, York.

The majority of students (67 per cent) planned to apply to Leeds University. Manchester, Bradford and Leeds Metropolitan were also popular choices. Indeed, with the exception of Cambridge and Oxford, there was a geographical bias for universities in Yorkshire or those within easy reach of the West Yorkshire region.

Intended university destinations at follow-up

At the time of the follow-up survey, students who indicated that they intended to go on to university were asked to list the universities that they had applied to. A total of 518 university applications were listed, which gives an average of just under four university applications per student responding. Table 3.4 shows the breakdown, by RfE and control students, of the ten most frequently applied for universities.

Table 3.4: Intended university destinations at follow-up

University	Number of students applying		Percentage	
	RfE (n=61)	Control (n=69)	RfE	Control
University of Leeds	39	18	64	26
University of Manchester	25	15	41	22
University of Bradford	21	13	34	19
University of Huddersfield	14	15	23	22
University of Sheffield	13	13	21	19
Leeds Metropolitan University	13	11	21	16
University of Liverpool	6	13	10	19
University of York	8	9	13	13
University of Nottingham	6	10	10	14
University of Durham	4	8	7	12

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2009

At the time of the follow-up survey, similar universities dominated the top choices for both RfE and control students. Again, Leeds University was the most popular choice for both control and RfE students. However, the proportion of RfE students who had applied to Leeds University was more than double that of the control students (64 per cent versus 26 per cent respectively). It is perhaps unsurprising that Leeds University was a popular choice for RfE students, as many will have become familiar with it through their attendance at RfE activities. Manchester University continued to be a popular choice for RfE and control students, but again, the proportion choosing this university was much higher amongst RfE students.

The trend also remained that the most popular university choices for students in both the RfE and control cohorts were for institutions within easy reach of Yorkshire.

3.2.2 Russell Group intentions

At baseline, a focus was taken on just the Russell Group Universities. As shown above in Table 3.3, at baseline, seven of the most frequently identified university destinations were from the Russell Group, suggesting that the students were already aiming for top universities (in total, 17 of the Russell Group universities featured in the university destinations).

The follow-up survey results, shown in Table 3.4, also show that Russell Group Universities continued to feature heavily in the intended university destinations of both the RfE and control groups. However, a statistically significant difference is evident in the intentions to apply to a Russell Group University between the control and RfE groups. For example, at baseline, 42 per cent of RfE students were considering applying to at least one of the Russell Group Universities, compared with a similar 40 per cent of the control group. By the time of the follow-up survey, this had increased to 83 per cent for RfE students, but just to 62 per cent for the control group.

Additionally, amongst the RfE students, those who engaged the most with the programme were most likely to be applying to a Russell Group University. For example, 88 per cent of those who were classified as having 'high' engagement were applying to Russell Group Universities, compared to 77 per cent of those classed as having 'low' engagement.

3.2.3 Actual attendance at research intensive universities

At follow-up, the 1994 list of universities was added to the list of Russell Group Universities to provide a more comprehensive list of research intensive universities. Table 3.5 lists these research intensive universities that control and RfE students have gone on to attend.

Table 3.5: Actual Research Intensive university destinations of RfE and control students

Destination	RfE students (n=38)	Control students (n=29)
Leeds University	19	8
Manchester University	7	4
Newcastle University	4	3
Lancaster University	1	3
University of Sheffield	1	2
Durham University	1	2
University of Liverpool	0	1
Loughborough University	2	0
University of Edinburgh	0	3
University of Birmingham	0	1
University of Cambridge	1	1
University of Bath	0	1
University of Leicester	1	0
University of Oxford	1	0

Source: NFER destination and grade data, 2009

RfE students have gone on to study at nine of the research intensive universities, whilst students from the control group have gone on to study at eleven. As predicted by the intentions at follow-up, Leeds University clearly stands out as the most popular choice for RfE students, and perhaps, therefore, reduces the range of research intensive Universities that they have subsequently attended.

It is apparent in Table 3.5 that more RfE students have gone on to research intensive universities overall. Table 3.6 develops this further, and shows the proportion of RfE and control students attending research intensive universities versus non-research intensive.

Table 3.6: Actual research intensive destinations of RfE and control students

Destination	Number of students		Percentage	
	RfE (n=68)	Control (n=72)	RfE	Control
Research intensive university	35	23	52	32
Non-research intensive University	33	49	48	68
Total	68	72	100	100

*Source: NFER destination and grade data, 2009
Due to rounding, percentages do not sum to 100*

Of the students who progressed on to university, it is clearly evident that proportionally more students from the RfE programme have progressed on to research intensive universities than their control counterparts (52 per cent versus 32 per cent, respectively). Therefore, it appears that the RfE programme may be helping students to 'Reach for Excellence' and attend some of the UK's most reputable, research-led, universities. It should be noted that this effect may, in part, have been observed due to the relatively large number of RfE students who progressed on to Leeds University, especially when compared to the control group.

Students from both the RfE and control groups went on to attend a wide variety of other universities. The most popular among these were local universities such as Bradford University, the University of Huddersfield and Leeds Metropolitan University.

3.3 Factors influencing university decisions

This section looks at the factors that have influenced student's decisions over whether or not to progress to HE, as well as the factors considered when choosing universities.

3.3.1 Factors influencing progression or non-progression to HE

Influential factors at baseline

In the baseline survey, students were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with a number of statements about university. Some of the statements related to concerns, or reasons that would militate against university attendance. Others related to positive reasons for attending university.

The statements agreed with most strongly were as follows (figures in brackets relate to the percentage of RfE and control students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement):

- I want to get a higher qualification (92)
- Going to university will enable me to get a good job (91)
- I want to continue studying (90)
- Going to university will allow me to get a well-paid job (90)
- I want to go to university (88)
- I think I would enjoy the studying (80)
- I know people who have been to university (81)
- I have heard good things about university from my friends (73)

It is perhaps unsurprising that positive statements emerged most strongly, given that eighty-five per cent of the students already planned to attend university (see Section 3.1). Largely, the students appeared confident that university attendance will lead on to good jobs and better qualifications, and that it will be an enjoyable experience. Of the more negative statements, the following were agreed with most frequently:

- I'm concerned I will end up in debt (56)
- I want to start earning as soon as possible (35)
- I am not sure what university will involve (27)
- I don't want to leave home (21).

The statement 'I'm concerned I will end up in debt' was agreed with by more than half of the young people. This suggests that concerns over debt were quite common at the time of the baseline survey.

Influential factors at follow-up

Comparison can be made between the responses of RfE and control students at baseline and at follow-up. RfE students' responses revealed that there was still widespread agreement with the positive factors that might encourage university attendance. These included 'I want to continue studying' (95 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement), 'I want to get a higher qualification' (95 per cent agreement) and 'I want to go to university' (94 per cent). Their agreement with these factors was strong at baseline, and 95 per cent of the RfE students intended to go to university at the time of the follow-up survey. It is therefore not surprising that few

substantial changes had occurred in the level of agreement with these factors. However, for the control group, the proportion of students agreeing with each of these factors had fallen slightly by the time of the follow up survey. This may be a reflection of the lower proportion of control students who intended to progress onto HE at this time (72 per cent).

At follow-up, a large majority of RfE students remained confident that university attendance would lead to a good job (94 per cent agreed at both baseline and follow-up) and a well-paid job (92 per cent agreed at follow up and 90 per cent at baseline). However, considerably fewer control students agreed with these statements at both baseline and follow-up; furthermore, their level of agreement had dropped by the time of the follow-up. Ninety-two per cent agreed HE would lead to a good job at baseline, compared to 81 per cent at follow-up. At baseline, 91 per cent of control students agreed that HE would lead to a well-paid job, versus 71 per cent at follow-up. The lack of recognition that HE can lead on to good and well paid jobs amongst the control group may be one of the reasons behind their lack of aspiration for and engagement with HE.

Interestingly, by the time of the follow-up survey, a considerably smaller proportion of RfE students (44 per cent, versus 66 per cent at baseline) were concerned about ending up in debt as a result of attending university. Amongst the control group, this proportion remained virtually unchanged (60 per cent agreed at baseline and 58 per cent at follow-up). This suggests that the RfE students are less concerned about funding their university education than they were at baseline. This is likely to be a result of their higher awareness of the financial aspects of a university education (as highlighted in Section 4.2). This provides additional support to the suggestion that RfE is effectively preparing students for HE.

Concerns about moving away from home became more of an issue for RfE students by the time of the follow-up than they were at baseline. However, for the control group, there was no increase in this concern. This may seem counter-intuitive, considering that the RfE programme contained information and guidance for students on what student life might involve. Perhaps, though, this finding may partly stem from the timing of the surveys. More RfE students were progressing on to university than control students (see Section 3.1) so by the time of the follow-up survey, concerns over leaving home may have been prominent in their minds than was the case at the time of the baseline survey. This finding might also explain the large numbers of RfE students who chose to attend a university close to home.

Generally, by the time of the follow up survey, RfE students tended to agree more strongly with statements that represented positive views on university than the control students. These covered various aspects of university, from enjoying the study, making new friends and knowing what course to study, though to positive employment outcomes associated with university attendance.

3.3.2 Factors influencing HE destinations

The follow-up survey asked students to rank the relative importance of a series of six factors which might influence their choice of university. These included:

- the university's closeness to home
- how good it is for my chosen subject
- whether my friends are applying/ already attend
- the quality of student life there
- the reputation of the university
- the grades required to get in.

Analysis revealed that the RfE and control students are influenced by slightly different factors when making decisions about university destinations. When choosing a university, the RfE students rated how good the university is for their chosen subject slightly more importantly in their decision making than the control group. This represents a positive finding for the RfE programme, which seeks to highlight the importance of attending the best universities for the subjects studied. At the same time, however, RfE students also rated the universities' closeness to home more importantly than the control group.

Conversely, the control group considered the factors of whether their friends were applying and the 'quality of student life' to be slightly more influential over their decisions than the RfE students. Both groups rated the reputation of the university and the grades required to have a similar level of influence over their decisions about which university to attend.

4. Impacts of RfE on university preparation

Key findings

- RfE is offering students useful sources of information about university. It is likely that access to this useful advice has contributed to the positive outcomes that have emerged from the programme for those involved.
- RfE students are armed with more information about university study than their control counterparts. The RfE students rated their knowledge of all aspects of university higher than the control students.
- RfE students show a greater level of financial awareness than their control counterparts. The RfE programme is therefore equipping students with useful information about how they might fund their time and access financial support whilst at university.
- RfE students are more prepared for getting used to a new university and for university life in general than control students. Students with a 'high' level of engagement with the programme are significantly more likely to feel prepared for university life than those who engage less.
- The RfE students are significantly more happy about the amount of information and guidance they have had to help them to make decisions about university than their control peers. Involvement in the programme is therefore better equipping students to make decisions about a university education.

The RfE programme aims to prepare students for HE by providing impartial information, advice and guidance about university. As well as providing information on university choices and research skills to refine their decision making, RfE aims to furnish students with information on all aspects of university life. The evaluation sought to explore whether RfE students were more prepared for HE than their peers who were unable, or chose not, to be involved in the programme.

This section addresses the impact of RfE on university preparation. It covers the following:

- Sources of advice about university
- Knowledge about university
- Impacts on preparedness
- Satisfaction with information, advice and guidance received.

4.1 Sources of advice about university

This section sets out the sources of advice accessed most frequently by students. It also addresses how useful RfE and control students found the advice.

4.1.1 Sources accessed

At baseline, the majority of advice about university had been provided to both RfE and control students by parents or carers, ‘other’ family members (such as siblings or cousins), and teachers. By the time of the follow-up survey, the majority of advice was still being provided by teachers and parents. Both at baseline and at follow-up, the least frequently accessed sources of advice were employers, Connexions advisers, and school careers coordinators. At baseline, few students were accessing support from university staff, but this had become more common by the time of the follow-up survey (e.g. 52 per cent of respondents to the baseline survey had accessed advice from university staff, compared to 72 per cent of respondents to the follow-up survey).

4.1.2 Most useful sources of advice

At baseline, students reported that the most useful sources of advice about university that they had accessed were ‘other’ family members (e.g. siblings or cousins), university staff, and parents. The least useful sources were employers, Connexions and school careers coordinators.

Table 4.1 details the usefulness of advice received by the time of the follow-up survey.

Table 4.1: Useful sources of advice at follow-up

Source of advice	Percentage of students accessing support who rated it as ‘very useful’ or ‘useful’ (n=153)
University staff	96
Current students	95
Teachers	89
‘Other’ family members	84
Parents/carers	76
Connexions	54
Employer	47
Schools careers coordinators	47

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2009.

By the time of the follow-up, advice from university staff, current students and teachers was deemed more useful than previously – the most useful sources of advice were considered to be university staff and current students. Advice from RfE staff was also rated highly by the RfE students (57 of 59 RfE students rated advice

from RfE staff as ‘very useful’ or ‘useful’). This suggests that the most beneficial sources of advice for young people considering a university education are offered by RfE (e.g. University staff, RfE staff and current students). Fewer control students had accessed advice from current students, and therefore been able to benefit from their insights. Indeed, 52 of the 64 RfE students (81 per cent) had spoken to current university students, compared to 62 of the 89 control students (70 per cent). However, overall, they emerged as a particularly useful source of information.

This suggests that RfE is providing students with valuable sources of information about university. It is likely that access to this useful advice has contributed to the positive outcomes that have emerged from the programme for those involved. Plans to more closely involve student mentors in RfE look set to ensure that students in the second and third cohorts are provided with even better access to sources of information and advice, specifically that which they consider to be particularly influential over their university decisions.

4.2 Knowledge about university

This section looks at whether the RfE students are more knowledgeable about university, and have a greater financial awareness, than their control counterparts¹⁷. It also looks back at the types of information about university that students were requesting before the programme began.

4.2.1 Information required before RfE began

Results from the baseline survey (conducted in December 2007) revealed that 94 per cent of students (both RfE and control) indicated that they would benefit from more information about what going to university would involve. The types of information that they required are set out in Table 4.2.

¹⁷ There is no baseline data available on this so only comparisons between responses to the follow-up survey can be made.

Table 4.2: Information required by RfE and control students at baseline

Information required	Percentage of students (n=295)
The best universities for the subject(s) I am considering	88
What the subject(s) I am considering would involve	83
How much it would cost	82
The grades you need	81
What different universities are like	81
Financial support	76
Student loans	73
How to find out about courses	71
How to apply	70
What you need for the top universities	64
How the study compares to school	62
What student life is like	61

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Baseline Survey, 2007

These initial results suggested that there was considerable hunger for information about what going to university would involve. Even information required by the lowest proportion of students was still thought be useful to over half (61 per cent) of the students.

Eighty-eight per cent of students required information about the best universities for the subjects they are considering. This suggested that the students may already have been aiming high. Eighty-two per cent also required information about costs, suggesting that how they would finance their time at university was a concern. This, along with a relatively high proportion of students seeking information on financial support and student loans (76 and 73 per cent respectively) might also reflect the relatively financially deprived backgrounds of the students (see Section 2).

RfE aimed to provide the students with all of the information listed in Table 4.2. A comparison between control and RfE students after involvement in the programme is explored in Section 4.2.2. The programme also aimed to improve the financial literacy and awareness of the students, and the extent to which this has been achieved is explored in 4.2.3.

4.2.2 Levels of knowledge about university after the RfE programme

The follow-up survey results suggest that RfE students are armed with more information about university study than their control counterparts.

Regardless of whether or not they planned to go on to university, students were asked to rate how much they knew about a number of aspects of university study. Students were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that they know 'a lot' about the area, and 5 meaning they know 'nothing' about it. Table 4.3 sets out the number and percentage of RfE and control students who ranked their knowledge with a score of 1 or 2.

Table 4.3: Levels of knowledge about university

Area of knowledge	Number of students rating their knowledge highly		Percentage	
	RfE (n=64)	Control (n=89)	RfE	Control
The grades you need to get into university	62	79	97	89
How to apply	61	76	95	85
How to find out about courses	60	74	94	83
What the subject(s) that interest you involve	59	71	92	80
What you need to get into the top universities	52	55	81	62
What student life is like	49	56	77	63
The best universities for the subject(s) that interest you	49	52	77	58
How university study compares to school	49	50	77	56
What different universities are like	48	54	75	61

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2009.

Not all students responded to each question so percentages are based on valid percents.

Overall, RfE students claimed to know more about each of the aspects of university than their control counterparts. Significant differences in levels of knowledge were evident for the following aspects:

- what different universities are like
- how university study compares to school
- the best universities for the subjects that interest them
- what they need to get into the top universities.

The results appear to be very positive, suggesting that involvement in RfE does lead to better levels of knowledge about university. However, more detailed analysis reveals that of those intending to go to university, the differences in levels of knowledge between the control and RfE students are slightly less marked. It is

important to consider the effects when only those intending to go to university are included in the analysis. It is possible that students who do not intend to progress into HE would not have been seeking information about university, and they would therefore have ranked their knowledge as lower.

The RfE students who intend to go to university still rate their knowledge as higher than students in the control group who intend to go to university on each of the aspects set out in Table 4.3 (e.g. giving a rating of 1 or 2). However, a significant difference in levels of knowledge is only apparent regarding awareness of what different universities are like. This finding could imply that RfE makes a smaller difference to the levels of knowledge about university between RfE and control students than first thought, or it could imply that as the control students as a whole have less knowledge about university, fewer of them are proceeding into higher education. It is also worth noting that some of the schools and colleges from which RfE students are drawn, are known to provide good quality study skills and UCAS application sessions for their students. Therefore, some of the control students in the sample are usefully able to access this support. This may reduce the gap in knowledge between control and RfE students in some schools/colleges, and therefore reduce the differences in knowledge that can be observed between some of the control and RfE students overall.

As there is no baseline data on the levels of knowledge about university, it is difficult to tell whether real gains have been made by the RfE group as a result of their involvement in the programme. However, these findings do suggest that the RfE group are generally rating themselves as more knowledgeable about university than students in the control group.

Effects of RfE engagement on knowledge

Students who engaged more with the programme rated themselves as having higher levels of knowledge about a number of the aspects of university study than those who engaged less. This remained the case when only those who intend to go to university were included in the analysis. For example, of the RfE students who intend to go to university, those who engaged more with the programme rated their knowledge more highly on the following aspects of university study than those who engaged less¹⁸:

- how university study compares to school (this difference was statistically significant)
- the grades you need to get in to university
- what the subject(s) that interest them involve
- the best universities for the subject(s) that interest them.

¹⁸ Based on proportions of students rating their knowledge with as 'a lot' or 'quite a lot'

This suggests that greater engagement with RfE is leading to higher levels of knowledge amongst students¹⁹.

4.2.3 Levels of financial awareness

As detailed in Table 4.2, before the programme began, significant numbers of students were keen to find out more about how much university would cost, about student loans and about financial support. At the mid-point of the RfE programme, it was evident that students at the summer school particularly valued the information on the financial considerations surrounding university attendance. Some quotes from students in attendance at the summer school demonstrate this value.

RfE student quotes on financial information

It [RfE] has explained many offers I did not know existed e.g. access scheme and scholarships, finance etc. It has sparked my interest into looking at what other universities have to offer.

The thing I found most helpful was stuff about funding and bursaries. I didn't know much about it but it really helped me.

One of the most helpful things has been information about finances and the availability of bursaries and grants. I was worrying about finances but I'm a bit happier now.

I've learnt about the bursaries I could possibly get and the bursaries I could get could cover most of my loans as I'd be living at home, so the only real thing would be travel, but I think the bursaries could cover that.

The follow-up survey asked students to rate their levels of knowledge about difference financial aspects associated with a university education. Again, students were asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating that they know 'a lot' about the area, and 5 meaning they know 'nothing' about it. Table 4.4 sets out the number and percentage of RfE and control students who ranked their knowledge with a score of 1 or 2.

¹⁹ Small numbers involved in this analysis means that findings, even when significant, are tentative.

Table 4.4: Levels of financial awareness

Area of knowledge	Number of students rating their knowledge highly		Percentage	
	RfE (n=64)	Control (n=89)	RfE	Control
Course fees	41	43	64	48
Repaying student loans	36	31	56	35
Maintenance grants	35	30	55	34
Student bursaries/ scholarships/ awards	29	27	45	30
What student loans offer/provide	27	27	42	31
Applying for student loans	22	23	34	26

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2009.

Table 4.4 shows that levels of knowledge about the financial aspects of a university education were generally much lower than levels of knowledge about university more generally (covered in Section 4.2.3). This shows that students (both RfE and control) feel less informed about finances and might benefit from additional awareness raising activities. However, Table 4.4 also shows that by the end of RfE, the RfE students showed a greater level of financial awareness than their control counterparts. Significant differences in levels of knowledge were found for awareness of repaying student loans and maintenance grants.

Similar differences remain when the responses just from those intending to go to university are analysed. Indeed, higher proportions of RfE students still rate themselves as more knowledgeable than control students for each financial aspect listed in Table 4.4 (based on proportions of students provided a rating of 1 or 2). However, this time, the RfE students rate their knowledge as significantly higher than the control group with regards to what student loans provide, and again, repaying student loans.

RfE therefore appears to equip students with useful information about how they might fund their time and access financial support whilst at university. Significant differences in knowledge are evident between the RfE and control group with regards to information on student loans, suggesting that the RfE students have been provided with significantly more information about this aspect of university finances than the control group. Although some of the other differences in knowledge are marginal, a general pattern has emerged of RfE students rating their knowledge more highly than control students on each aspect. Given that no baseline data is available on levels of financial awareness prior to the programme, it is again difficult to see if greater gains have been made by the RfE group. However, ensuring that the programme continues to feature information sessions on financial aspects of university is important, particularly given the generally lower levels of knowledge about this aspect of university life.

Effects of RfE engagement on financial awareness

Again, levels of engagement in RfE have an impact on levels of knowledge. Students with higher levels of engagement have a greater financial awareness than students who engage less. Although not statistically significant, differences in knowledge were observed for each of the financial aspects listed in Table 4.4 (with the exception of information on student bursaries). When only those intending to go to university are included in the analysis, those who engaged more with the programme continue to have higher levels of financial awareness of all aspects (again with the exception of information on student bursaries).

At the time of the baseline survey, 69 percent of students (RfE and control) and specifically 78 per cent of the RfE students, stated that not having to worry about being in debt would encourage them to attend university. The higher levels of financial awareness amongst the RfE students may therefore have contributed to the higher percentage of students who have progressed on to university (see Section 3). Combined with their greater knowledge about general aspects of a university education, a degree of financial awareness is likely to have better prepared RfE students for higher education. This is explored in Section 4.3 below.

Impacts on preparedness

In the follow-up survey, students who intended to go to university were asked to indicate how prepared they felt for different elements of a university education. Table 4.5 sets out the number and percentage of RfE and control students who ranked their levels of preparedness with a score of 1 or 2. These scores corresponded to the responses: 'very prepared' and 'quite prepared'.

Table 4.5: Levels of preparedness for university

Aspect of university education	Number of students feeling prepared		Percentage	
	RfE (n=64)	Control (n=89)	RfE	Control
Meeting new people	55	59	92	95
Getting used to a new university campus/place of study	54	47	90	76
University life in general	54	52	90	84
Independent study	50	54	83	87
Managing your finances	36	38	60	61
Possibly living away from home	27	44	45	71

Source: NFER Reach for Excellence Follow-up Survey, 2009.

Not all students responded to each question so percentages are based on valid percents.

Results demonstrate that there are some subtle differences between the levels of preparedness for university between the RfE and control students. However, having

no baseline data on levels of preparedness means that a full assessment of whether more or fewer gains have been made by the RfE students can not be made.

Table 4.5 shows that both RfE and control students appear to be less prepared for managing their finances and for living away from home than they do for other aspects of university study. The RfE students are more prepared for getting used to a new university campus or place of study, and for university life in general, whilst control students feel significantly more prepared for living away from home than their RfE counterparts.

Effects of RfE engagement on preparedness

Students with a 'high' level of engagement with the programme are significantly more likely to feel prepared for university life in general than those who engaged less. They were also more likely to feel very prepared for meeting new people, and for getting used to a new university. These are possibly results of the opportunities experienced by students for meeting new people on the RfE programme, and for getting used to the Leeds University campus during their involvement. Engaging more fully with RfE is therefore producing some beneficial results in terms of preparedness for university.

4.4 Satisfaction with information, advice and guidance received

Compared to the control students, RfE students are significantly more happy about the amount of information and guidance they have had to help them to make decisions about university. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: 'Overall, I am happy with the amount of information, advice and guidance I have had to help me to make decisions about university'. Eighty-nine per cent of the RfE students, as opposed to 69 per cent of the control students, stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. This difference is statistically significant.

When looking just at those intending to go to university, this finding remains significant.

This demonstrates that students who have been supported by RfE feel that they have been provided with sufficient information to equip them to make informed decisions about university. Those who have not been a part of the programme are less satisfied about the information, advice and guidance they have received. Therefore, involvement in RfE is better equipping students to make decisions about a university education.

5. Impacts of RfE on A-level achievement

Key findings

- The GCSE achievement of the RfE and control group was broadly similar. However, more RfE students achieved between 13 and 18 GCSEs at grades A* to C than control students. Conversely, less RfE students achieved 8 or fewer GCSEs than students in the control group.
- The largest proportion of A-level grades achieved by RfE students were A grades, whilst the largest proportion of A-level grades for the control group were B grades. RfE students were significantly more likely to have achieved at least one A-grade at A-level than their control counterparts.
- Proportionally, RfE students achieved more A and B grades than the control students. Only 12 per cent of their grades were lower than C grades (compared to 21 per cent of the control group).
- Different levels of achievement between the RfE and control students do exist. However, how far this is a result of the RfE programme can not be accurately determined. Further examination of this as the evaluation of RfE progresses will provide more insight into the role of the RfE programme in student achievement.

As well as gathering information on the destinations of the control and RfE students once they left year 13, their achieved A-level grades were also gathered²⁰. In total, data was provided for 223 of the original 295 students who had completed a baseline survey (a response rate of 76 per cent).

This section looks at the achievement levels of RfE students compared to the control group. Although predicted A-level grades were not gathered as part of the cohort 1 evaluation²¹, the baseline survey provided information about the GCSE grades achieved by the control and RfE students. As set out in Section 2, the RfE group were high achievers (71 per cent achieved between ten and 12 GCSEs at grade A* to C). The equivalent rate for the control group was similar, at 67 per cent. However, more of the RfE students achieved between 13 and 18 GCSEs at A* to C than the control students (14 per cent versus seven per cent, respectively), and fewer achieved 8 or less GCSEs at this level (eight per cent versus 14 per cent). Therefore, in terms of GCSE achievement, the RfE group of students achieved marginally more GCSEs than the control students.

It is difficult to make any claims as to the role of RfE in the achievement levels of the students. However, it is likely that the RfE programme has encouraged students to reach their full potential and to strive to get high grades. The evaluation of cohort two (due to report in December 2010) will provide a more detailed overview of

²⁰ In some cases, AS levels or GNVQ gradings were provided for students. However, given the small proportion of students this represented, analysis has been based purely on A-level grades.

²¹ Predicted A-level grades have been gathered for cohort 2.

achievement levels, drawing on both predicted and actual achievement levels at an individual student level.

Table 5.1 sets out the percentage of A to U grades as a proportion of all grades received by RfE and control students.

Table 5.1: Percentage of A to U grades as a proportion of all grades received

Grade	Percentage	
	RfE (total number of grades n=267)	Control (total number of grades n=375)
A	43	22
B	29	33
C	16	23
D	9	11
E	1.5	8
U	1.5	2

Source: NFER Grades Data, 2009.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

Table 5.1 shows that the largest proportion of grades achieved by RfE students were A grades, whilst the largest proportion of grades received by control students were B grades. There is also a greater spread of achievement amongst the control group when compared to the RfE students (who tended to achieve higher grades). Indeed, only 12 per cent of the grades received by the RfE group were lower than C grades (compared to 21 per cent of the control group).

Analysis reveals that RfE students were significantly more likely to have achieved at least one A grade at A-level than their control counterparts. Indeed, 61 per cent of the RfE students achieved at least one A grade, compared to 38 per cent of the control group. However, no significant differences were evident in the proportion of students achieving three or more A-levels at grades A to C between the RfE and control group.

Different levels of achievement between the RfE and control students do exist. How far this is a result of the RfE programme can not be accurately determined. Furthermore, data gathered at baseline showed a marginal bias towards RfE students achieving more GCSEs at grades A* to C. Further examination as the evaluation of RfE progresses will provide more insight into the role of RfE in student achievement.

6. Conclusions

It is evident that the RfE programme is leading to beneficial outcomes for the young people involved. This is particularly so when the RfE students are compared to peers who have not been involved in the programme. There is always the possibility that some of the impacts observed could be due to factors beyond the RfE programme, but consistent messages have emerged which suggest that RfE is a valuable and effective tool for supporting students through the transition to HE.

The RfE programme intends to raise the university aspirations of those involved, and encourage more students to progress into higher education than might otherwise be the case. The research has shown that more RfE students have progressed on to university than students in the control group, and, furthermore, are more likely to have progressed onto research intensive universities.

There are observable differences in the achievement of the RfE students when compared to the control group. How far this is a result of RfE can not be established, but it is likely that the programme has encouraged students to aim high and to fulfil their potential.

RfE also aimed to prepare students for higher education, and to provide them with sufficient skills and knowledge to make informed decisions about their university choices. The programme has achieved this, and in many cases, the RfE students are more knowledgeable or prepared for university than their control peers. Furthermore, students involved with the programme feel more satisfied with the amount of information, advice and guidance that they have received than the control students. Information on the financial aspects of university has been of particular value.

Although engagement levels are lower than hoped, the programme is having tangible benefits for those who do engage, and in some cases, particularly for those who take up more of the opportunities on offer. Proposed plans to develop the programme look set to address some of the possible barriers to engagement, and in turn, this is likely to lead to positive outcomes for more of the RfE students in future cohorts. The evaluation of cohort two, specifically designed to gather more baseline data, will build upon these findings, and provide additional evidence to further explore the impacts of RfE as it evolves and matures.

References

Lamont, E., White, R. and Wilkin, A. (2009) *An Evaluation of the Reach for Excellence Programme. Interim Report*. London: Sutton Trust. [online]. Available: <http://www.suttontrust.com/research/interim-evaluation-of-the-rfe/> [13 April, 2012]

Appendix 1: RfE baseline survey



Career Awareness and Intentions Questionnaire

NFER is an educational research organisation. We have been asked by the Sutton Trust, a charitable foundation, to conduct a study concerning young people's choices about university. This survey is the first part of that study. We are asking you to answer the questions below, most of which will only require ticking the appropriate box.

Your identity and your answers will not be made known to anyone other than the members of the NFER research team. These will not be shared with your school or the Sutton Trust. The questionnaire will ask you about:

- your personal details
- your attitudes towards university
- your understanding of your parents'/carers' or guardians' attitudes to university
- your aspirations and intentions
- matters that may affect your decisions concerning future education

We would also be grateful if you would provide contact details in case we should want to follow up this questionnaire with another to see if your career plans have changed.

A ABOUT YOURSELF

1a. Name

1b. Gender *(Please tick)* Male Female

2. School

3a. How many GCSEs have you achieved at grades A*-C?

(Please write the number in the box)

3b. Do you have English and Maths at GCSE grades A*-C? *(Please ✓ Yes or No)*

	Yes	No		Yes	No
English GCSE A*-C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maths GCSE A*-C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

RFE

4. What A-levels/GCSEs/other courses are you studying this year?

(Please list the subjects in the boxes below)

A-Levels	
GCSEs (additional/re-takes)	
Other courses <i>(Please provide details)</i>	

B CAREERS ADVICE RECEIVED TO DATE

5. Below is a list of people you might have spoken to about university.

(Please ✓ to indicate how useful their advice has been)

	Very useful 1	Useful 2	Not very useful 3	Not at all useful 4	No advice given 5
Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Careers Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connexions Adviser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sister/Brother/Other Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>(please specify below)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input style="width: 250px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>				

6. What are your parents'/carers' attitudes towards you going to university?

(For each statement, please ✓ the box that most applies to you)

	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Undecided 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
I don't know what my parents/carers think	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents/carers would like me to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents/carers cannot advise me as they don't know what university is like	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents/carers want me to get a job rather than go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents/carers want me to do some work-based training (e.g. apprenticeship)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents/carers want me to take some time out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My parents/carers are leaving the decision to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other- What else do your parents/carers think?	<input style="width: 250px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>				

C YOUR CURRENT INTENTIONS POST YEAR 13

7. Do you know what career you would eventually like to follow?

(Please ✓ Yes or No)

Yes

No

(If yes, please write what career you would like to follow in the box)

8. What do you intend to do when you leave school?

(Please ✓ the option below which most applies to you)

- | | |
|--|--|
| Go to college <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Take a year out then go to university <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |
| Get a job <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Do voluntary work <input type="checkbox"/> 7 |
| Go to university <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Don't know <input type="checkbox"/> 8 |
| Go on a training programme/
apprenticeship <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | Other - <i>(please specify below)</i> <input type="checkbox"/> 9 |
| Take a year out then get a job <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | |

(If you intend to go to university, please go to Qu.9. Otherwise, please go to Qu.11)

9. Do you know which universities you want to apply for? *(Please ✓ Yes or No)*

Yes

No

(If yes, please list the universities you are considering in the box)

10. Do you know which subject(s) you would like to study at university?

(Please ✓ Yes or No)

Yes

No

(If yes, please list the subject(s) you are considering in the box)

11. Below are a number of statements about why you might want to or not want to go to university or be undecided.

(Please ✓ the response to the following statements that most applies to you)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
I'm not sure what university would involve	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I want to continue studying	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think I would enjoy the studying	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think I will get the grades needed for university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I want to get a higher qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I know what course I would do	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I want to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I don't need to go to university to do the job I want to do	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Going to university will enable me to get a good job	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Going to university will enable me to get a well paid job	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I think university study would be too hard for me	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I don't know what else to do at this stage	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would fit into student life well	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I don't want to leave home	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I want to start earning as soon as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I want to get a job soon	<input type="checkbox"/>				
None of my friends are going to university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I can afford to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I'm concerned I'll end up in debt	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I have heard good things about university from my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would find it easy to make new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I know people who have been to university	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Other - *(Please write any other reasons in the boxes below as to why you want to go to university or why you don't want to go to university.)*

====
====

Why you want to go to university

====
====

Why you don't want to go to university

12. What would encourage/further encourage you to go to university?

(Please ✓ the response that most applies to you)

	True for me	Not true for me	Don't know
Not to have to worry about being in debt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If my parents were more encouraging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I had more information and support to research the options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finding a course which really interested me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I knew it would enable me to get a good job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If I knew I would be better paid in the end	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If my friends were going	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nothing would encourage me to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other

13. Would you benefit from more information about what going to university would involve? (Please ✓ Yes or No)

Yes No

*If you answered Yes, please go to Qu.14.
Otherwise, please go to Qu.15*

14. What information do you require about university?

(Please ✓ as many options which apply to you)

How to find out about courses	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	How much it would cost	<input type="checkbox"/> 10
What different universities are like	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Student loans	<input type="checkbox"/> 11
How the study compares to school	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Financial support	<input type="checkbox"/> 12
The grades you need	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Other- Please specify below	<input type="checkbox"/> 13
How to apply	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input style="width: 200px; height: 40px;" type="text"/>	
What student life is like	<input type="checkbox"/> 6		
What the subject(s) I am considering would involve	<input type="checkbox"/> 7		
The best universities for the subject(s) I am considering	<input type="checkbox"/> 8		
What you need for the top universities	<input type="checkbox"/> 9		

OTHER INFORMATION

Please can you provide us with some additional information about yourself and your family on the next page.

15. Have any of the following members of your family been to university?

(Please ✓ the answers which apply to you)

Mother 1

Father 2

Step-mother 3

Step-father 4

Cousin(s) 5

Carer 6

Brother(s) 7

Sister (s) 8

None of my family have been to university 9

Other adult family members - 10
please specify below

16. Are you receiving an Educational Maintenance Allowance? If yes, please say how much you are receiving a week.

(Please ✓ the response below which applies to you)

YES £10 a week 1

YES £20 a week 2

YES £30 a week 3

I am not receiving an Educational Maintenance Allowance 4

17. Please can you give us your email address, mobile number and address so that we can keep in touch regarding your career progress.

Email address:

Mobile number:

Address:

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

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Genesis 4, Innovation Way, Heslington, York.
YO10 5DQ

Appendix 2: RfE summer school



Evaluation for the Reach for Excellence Programme

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is carrying out an evaluation of the Reach for Excellence programme. We are hoping to find out if being involved in the programme has had any impact on your choices about higher education.

We are really interested to hear your views and would appreciate it if you were willing to fill in this short questionnaire. All of your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

1. When you started RfE, how did you feel about applying to university?

Please tick one response.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| I wanted to go to university | <input type="checkbox"/> | I wasn't sure if I wanted to go or not | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I didn't want to go to university | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Now you are on RfE, what are your plans? Please tick one response.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I want to go to university | <input type="checkbox"/> | I am not sure if I want to go or not | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I don't want to go to university | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please explain below why your plans have/have not changed

3. If you are planning to go to university, where are you currently thinking of applying to? Please list:

- | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

4. Are these university choices different to those you had at the start of RfE?

Yes No Don't know Not applicable

If yes, what are the reasons behind the change(s)?

5. Has RfE helped you to decide which universities you might like to go to?

Yes No Don't know/
can't say

Please explain your reasons for this answer:

6. Please rank (from 1 to 6) how important each of the following factors are to you in deciding on your university choices. 1 would be the most important factor, and 6 the least important factor. Please put one number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6) into each box below to show how important each factor is.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Its closeness to home | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is the best university for my subject | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| My friends are applying/ I have friends there | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is a good student life there | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The university has a good reputation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The grades required to get in | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. Some of the things that RfE might have helped you with are listed below. Please circle one number on each line to indicate how helpful RfE has been for each of the areas.

	Not at all helpful				Very helpful
Providing insight into what university life is like	1	2	3	4	5
Providing information on financial arrangements/ support for university	1	2	3	4	5
Raising awareness of university choices available	1	2	3	4	5
Helping you choose universities to apply to	1	2	3	4	5
Helping you choose subjects to apply for	1	2	3	4	5
Helping to identify the top universities to apply for	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching you study skills	1	2	3	4	5
Building your confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Raising your aspirations for your future career	1	2	3	4	5
Developing your social skills	1	2	3	4	5
Giving your parents information about university	1	2	3	4	5
Practical advice/information about applying to university	1	2	3	4	5

Please could you fill in your name and contact details. This is for NFER's use only and your answers will not be shown to anyone on the RfE programme or your schools.

Name:

E-mail:

Phone:

Thank you very much for your time

Appendix 3: RfE follow-up survey



Career Intentions and Awareness Questionnaire

Your chance to win a £50 High Street Voucher

NFER is an educational research organisation. We have been asked to conduct a survey concerning young people's choices about their career intentions and university choices. You may remember that back in autumn 2007 you kindly filled in a questionnaire very much like this one.

We are interested in finding out what your current career intentions are, and would appreciate it if you were willing to fill in this follow-up questionnaire. Most of the questions only require ticking the appropriate box.

To thank you for your time, all questionnaires returned will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 High Street voucher.

Your identity and your answers will not be made known to anyone other than the members of the NFER research team. They will not be shared with your school.

The questionnaire will ask you about:

- ✦ any careers advice you've received to date
- ✦ your current intentions after leaving year 13
- ✦ how you made decisions over whether or not to go to university

We would also be grateful if you could please provide us with your contact details. We would really like to follow your progress over the next few years if you would be willing to continue to help us out with the research.

Please complete the questionnaire in either black or blue ink. If you have any questions, please contact Emily Lamont at e.lamont@nfer.ac.uk or on 01904 433435.

ABOUT YOU

1. Name

2. School/college

CAREERS ADVICE RECEIVED TO DATE

3. Below is a list of people you might have spoken to about university.
(Please tick to indicate how useful their advice about university has been. If you have not spoken to these people, please tick 'not asked'.)

	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful	Not asked
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) School Careers Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) Reach for Excellence staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) Connexions Advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e) Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f) Other family member (e.g. sister/brother/other)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g) Employer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
h) University Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>				
i) Current university student	<input type="checkbox"/>				
j) Other (please specify below)	<input type="checkbox"/>				

4. What are your parents'/carers' attitudes towards your decision about whether or not to go to university? (For each statement please tick the box that most applies to you)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
a) I don't know what my parents/carers think	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) My parents/carers would like me to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) My parents/carers cannot advise me as they don't know what university is like	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) My parents/carers want me to get a job rather than go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e) My parents/carers want me to do some work-based training (e.g. apprenticeship)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f) My parents/carers want me to take some time out	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g) My parents/carers are leaving the decision to me	<input type="checkbox"/>				

YOUR INTENTIONS AFTER FINISHING YEAR 13

5. What do you intend to do when you finish year 13? (Please tick the option which most applies to you)

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Get a job | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 | Take a year out then go to university | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 |
| Go to university | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | Do voluntary work | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 |
| Go on a training programme/apprenticeship | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 | Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 |
| Take a year out then get a job | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 | Other - (please specify below) | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8 |

If you intend to go to university, please go to question 6. Otherwise, please go to question 10.

6. What universities have you applied for? (Please list in the box below)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7. What course/subject have you applied for? (Please list in the box below)

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

8. Below is a list of factors that you might have considered when choosing a university. Please rank how important each of the factors were in deciding on your university choices. 1 would be the most important factor, 2 the next most important and so on. (Please put one number (1,2,3,4,5 or 6) into each box below to show the level of importance to you of each factor)

- | | | |
|----|--|--------------------------|
| a) | The university's closeness to home | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) | How good it is for my chosen subject | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) | Whether my friends are applying/already attend | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) | The quality of student life there | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) | The reputation of the university | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) | The grades required to get in | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. This question aims to see how 'prepared' you are for a university education. Being 'prepared' would mean you felt you had the necessary experience, knowledge, confidence or skills to handle the elements of university education that are listed below.

How prepared/ready do you feel you are for the following aspects of a university education? (Please tick the box that most applies to you)

	Very prepared	Quite prepared	Not very prepared	Not at all prepared	Don't know/not applicable
	1	2	3	4	5
a) Meeting new people	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) Independent study	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) Managing your finances	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) Possibly living away from home	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e) Getting used to a new university campus/place of study	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f) University life in general	<input type="checkbox"/>				

10. Below are a number of possible statements to describe why you may or may not have chosen to go to university. (For each statement, please tick one box to show your level of agreement)

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		1	2	3	4	5
a)	I'm not sure what university would involve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b)	I want to continue studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c)	I think I would enjoy the studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d)	I think I will get the grades needed for university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e)	I want to get a higher qualification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f)	I know what course I would do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g)	I want to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h)	I don't need to go to university to do the job I want to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i)	Going to university will enable me to get a good job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j)	Going to university will enable me to get a well paid job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k)	I think university study would be too hard for me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l)	I don't know what else to do at this stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m)	I would fit into student life well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n)	I don't want to leave home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o)	I want to start earning as soon as possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p)	I want to get a job soon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q)	None of my friends are going to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r)	I can afford to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s)	I'm concerned I'll end up in debt	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t)	I have heard good things about university from my friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
u)	I would find it easy to make new friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v)	I know people who have been to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. **Regardless of whether or not you plan to go on to university** how much do you feel you know about the following aspects of university study? (Please tick on a scale of 1 to 5 to indicate how much you feel you know. Don't worry if you haven't heard about these before).

	A lot	A bit		Nothing	
	1	2	3	4	5
a) How to find out about courses	<input type="checkbox"/>				
b) What different universities are like	<input type="checkbox"/>				
c) How university study compares to school	<input type="checkbox"/>				
d) The grades you would need to get into university	<input type="checkbox"/>				
e) How to apply	<input type="checkbox"/>				
f) What student life is like	<input type="checkbox"/>				
g) What the subject(s) that interest you involve	<input type="checkbox"/>				
h) The best universities for the subject(s) that interest you	<input type="checkbox"/>				
i) What you need to get into the top universities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
j) Applying for student loans	<input type="checkbox"/>				
k) What student loans provide/offer	<input type="checkbox"/>				
l) Repaying student loans	<input type="checkbox"/>				
m) Course fees	<input type="checkbox"/>				
n) Student bursaries/scholarships/awards	<input type="checkbox"/>				
o) Maintenance grants	<input type="checkbox"/>				

12. Please tick to indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
Overall, I am happy with the amount of information and guidance I have had to help me to make decisions about university.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

OTHER INFORMATION

13. Your ethnicity (Please tick as appropriate)

Black Caribbean 1 Black African 7 Black other 10

Bangladeshi 2 White 8 Chinese 11

Pakistani 3 Indian 9

Mixed race 4 Please specify

Other 5 Please specify

Prefer not to say 6

14. We would really appreciate it if you could give us your email address, mobile number and postal address so that we can keep in touch with you regarding your career progress.

Email address:

Mobile number:

Address:

Thank you very much for your time.

Providing independent evidence to improve education and learning.

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**National Foundation for
Educational Research**
The Mere, Upton Park,
Slough, Berks SL1 2DQ

T: 01753 574123
F: 01753 691632
E: enquiries@nfer.ac.uk

www.nfer.ac.uk

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