

HEFCE's BLUNDER

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Key Points

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but without rectifying the public record. The incorrect figures became media headlines in September 2015 when HEFCE released the report. BBC News Online headed its SLHFH μ6WDWH VWXGHQWV RXWSTHUTIRESDSULYDWDHLE students output HUIRUP SULYDWH VWXGHQWV The Daily Mail DW XQLYHUVLW\

qualifications and were like their independent school counterparts in other ways, then they would get the better degrees

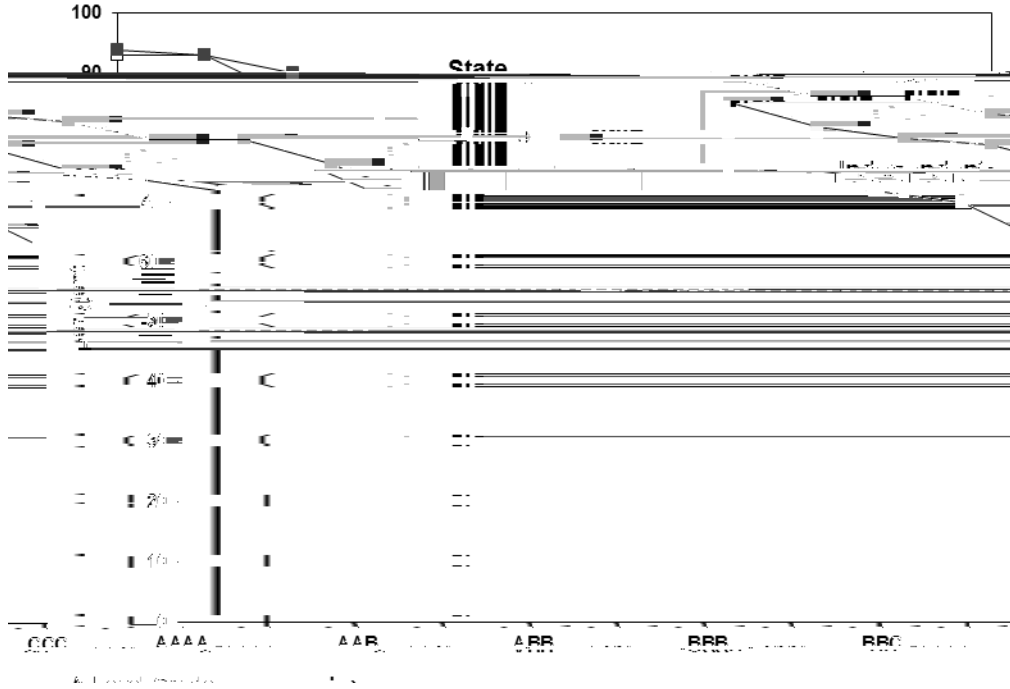
222,180, against a total population of 284,515. HEFCE told us it is mainly the mature students for whom the information on school attended is lacking.

10. Two things catch the eye in Chart 1: first, the relative performance at the various levels of entry qualification; and, secondly, the very different distributions of independent and state school students across the qualifications. The students from state schools were only ahead - by 83 to 80 percent \pm for A-level grades between AAB and CCC. At the level of straight μ , 93 per cent of both groups were awarded good degrees.
11. Elsewhere, it is those from independent schools who get more good degrees. There is a particularly large gap of twenty percentage points (80% against 60%) in favour of the independent schools. HEFCE has informed us that this category includes the IB and Pre U, as well as access courses, vocational qualifications and higher education qualifications. We do not have the details, but we can infer that students from the two sectors took different qualifications in this category.
12. The second important determinant of the overall result is the distribution of the students across the qualification levels. A third (34%) of the graduates from independent schools entered on straight μ against ten per cent from state schools. Altogether four-fifths (81%) of those from independent schools entered on A-levels of at least three C grades compared with less than half (47%) those from state schools. About a quarter from state schools came via UCAS points, double the proportion from independent schools. Another 10 per cent from independent schools.
13. Multiplying the performances at the qualification levels by the distribution of students across them yields the overall result that 82 per cent of those from independent schools were awarded good degrees compared with 73 per cent from state schools.

A-Level Grades

14. The claim, which HEFCE and others have made, that grade-for-grade, state school pupils do better at university has been based on just A-levels. The evidence is usually presented in the form of a graph where the performance line for state school students runs above that for independent schools.
15. Chart 2 shows what the A-level data from HEFCE 2015/21 look like graphed in this way. It does give the impression that students from state schools do better. But, although the difference looks clear-cut, it is, in fact, quite small. Exactly the same percentages, from the two sectors who entered on at least three C grades, 85.2 per cent. Students from state schools were ahead by 83 to 80 per cent.
16. Chart 2 looks as if the gap is bigger than that, but it must be remembered that the distribution of students from the two sectors is different. Chart 3 shows that those from independent schools are concentrated in the upper part of the A-level range where more good degrees are achieved, while there are more from state schools in the lower part of the range where fewer good degrees are awarded.

Chart 2: Good Degrees¹ by School Type and A Level Grades²

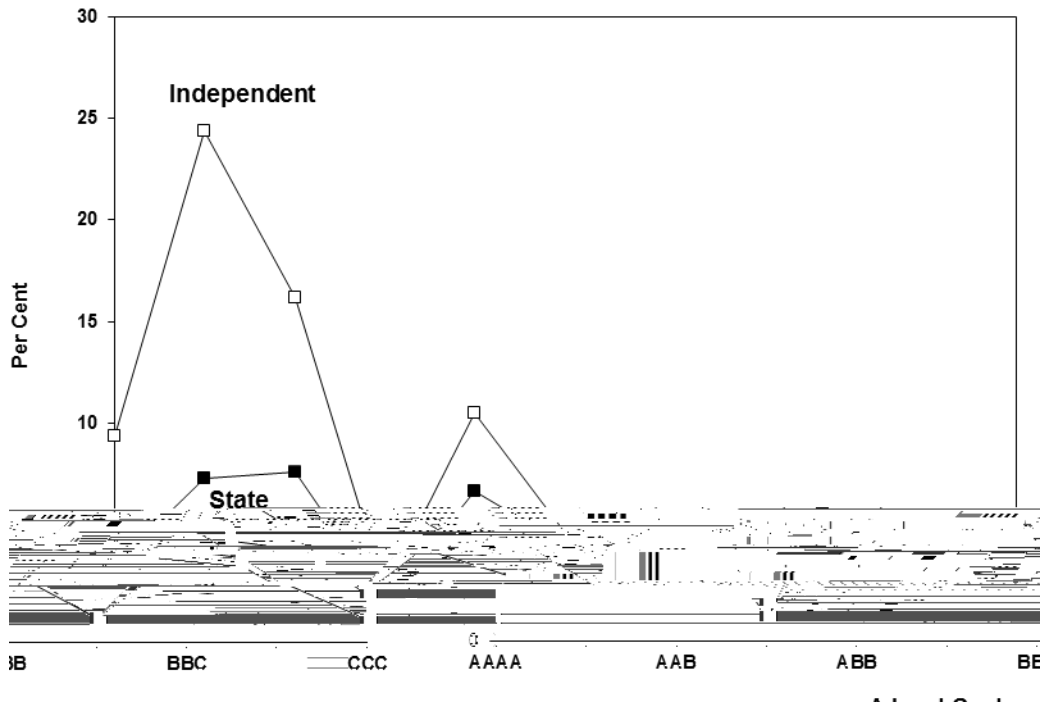


1. First or upper second.

2. Entrants with at least three A-levels at grade CCC and above. The others (18.6% of those independent schools and 52.5% from state schools) entered on fewer or poorer A-levels whose grades were not known, other qualifications, a higher education qualification, no recognition or qualification unknown.

Source: Table H1, Annex H, HEFCE 2015/21

Chart 3: A-Level Grades of Graduates by School Type



Actual Numbers

17. Chart 1 shows 73,395 from state schools entering on A-OHYHOV RI DW OHDVW
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be left to the judgement of universities, which have always looked at candidates in the round. Admissions tutors deal with real people not statistical constructs.

23. It will be hard to change the preconceptions of those who want to believe that state schools do better. But the evidence is that they are only ahead at some A-level grades, and this is often when there are few independent school students in the comparison. Among the 2013-14 graduates, the three percentage point advantage on the A-level grades has to be set against the overall nine percentage points lead of those from independent schools.

ORIGINAL VERSION

Annex H: Differences in degree outcomes by previous school

Proportion achieving first or

CORRECTED VERSION

Annex H: Differences in degree outcomes by previous school

Proportion achieving first or upper second class degrees
Observed results, split by entry qualifications

Table H1: Proportion of 2013-