

Impact Update: UCAS Control Group Evaluation

The Brilliant Club recently launched its new five-year strategy, *The Path to Outcomes*. Coinciding with this, the charity commissioned the Universities and Colleges Application Service (UCAS) to evaluate the impact of its programmes on progression to highly-selective universities.

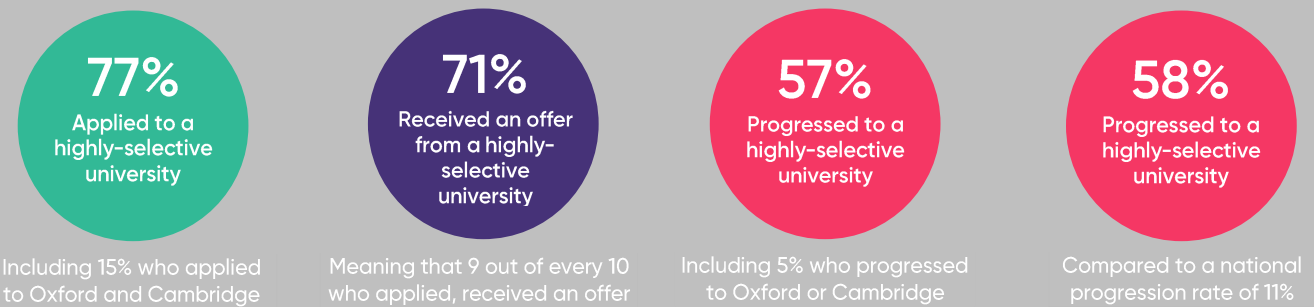
The project had two phases. First, UCAS analysed destination data from the cohort of school leavers who completed The Scholars Programme in 2015. Second, it compared the progress of these pupils against a control group with similar characteristics.

Phase 1: Destination Data

The UCAS data showed that pupils who completed The Scholars Programme were more likely to progress to a highly-selective university. Pupils eligible for Ever6FSM were more likely to progress to a highly-selective university than their peers.

Of the total cohort of pupils, UCAS reported the following impact:

And of Ever6FSM pupils:



Phase 2: Control Group Comparison

To ensure that this impact was not the result of bias in school or pupil selection, UCAS evaluated the effect of The Scholars Programme against a control group.

To provide a counter-factual analysis, pupils in the control group were matched for a range of characteristics, including ethnicity, postcode, and prior attainment at GCSE.

When compared to a control group, pupils who had completed The Scholars Programme were:



This analysis found that pupils who completed The Scholars Programme were significantly more likely to progress to a highly-selective university, having made the conditions of their offer including their A-Level grades.

Technical Notes

Control Group Analysis

UCAS compared the intervention group to multiple matched groups with similar characteristics. The position of the intervention group within the sample is represented in terms of a percentile, which is then assessed for statistical significance. The headline statistics for the intervention group are reported below:

Measure	Total	Cohort	Applicants	Percentile	Significance
Initial Cohort	323	-	-	-	n/a
Applied: All HE institutions	275	85%	-	99	Very significantly high
Applied: Higher tariff group	235	73%	-	99	Very significantly high
Offered: All HE institutions	270	84%	98%	90	Mildly significantly high
Accepted: Higher tariff group	135	42%	57%	99	Significantly high

Definitions

UCAS STROBE	UCAS completed this work as part of their evaluation service called STROBE. Further information about the STROBE service can be found here . The Brilliant Club took part in this evaluation alongside another education charity, The Access Project.
Intervention Group	UCAS conducted an analysis of university destinations for 323 pupils who participated in Year 12 (Key Stage 5) placements of The Scholars Programme in Summer 2015, and left school the following year.
Control Group	UCAS used two data sources to build their control groups: First, a database of potential applicants was used to benchmark the application rate of the intervention group. Pupils were matched in terms of age, socio-demographics of the home address, and proportion of their nearest school being eligible for free school meals. Second, the UCAS application database was used to benchmark the progress of the intervention group through the application process (offer and acceptance rates). Pupils were matched by age, ethnicity, gender, socio-demographics of the home address, proportion of their school being eligible for free school meals, and GCSE attainment.
Significance Level	A significant result refers to a difference between groups, which is not due to chance. This suggests that there is a 'real difference' between groups and the populations they are drawn from. A mildly significant result is more than 1 standard deviation away from the mean, a significant result is more than 2 standard deviations from the mean, and a very significant result is more than 3 standard deviations from the mean.
Percentile	A percentile is a number where a certain percentage of scores fall below that percentile. For example, the 99th percentile is the point in the data where 99% of the data falls below this point, and 1% falls above it.
National Average	National data has been taken from the DfE's statistical report 'Destinations of KS4 and KS5 pupils: 2015 (provisional)', published in 2016.
Highly-selective Universities	For phase one, UCAS used the DfE's definition of 'top-third' universities. For phase two, the higher tariff, medium tariff, and lower tariff groupings were used.

Further Information

For more information about this impact evaluation, or about how The Brilliant Club measures its impact for pupils and stakeholders, please email the charity's Monitoring and Evaluation Director, Dr Lauren Bellaera at lauren.bellaera@thebrilliantclub.org.