CLEARING FORECAST 2026

With Dave Penney, Jo Richards and Ed McClaran

METHODOLOGY

- Forecast created for expected 2026 Clearing size (applicants placed via Clearing).

- Based on January ECD applications data.

- Includes historic Decline My Place data for the first time.

- Model covers overall volumes plus UK regions, international, and major subject groups.

LAST CYCLE'S PREDICTIONS

- **More students met their Firm and Insurance choices**, resulting in fewer unplaced applicants on Results Day.

However;

- **Decline My Place usage rose slightly more than expected** and is now close to Main Scheme Clearing volumes.

- **More 18-year-olds entered via Direct to Clearing** than in the previous cycle.

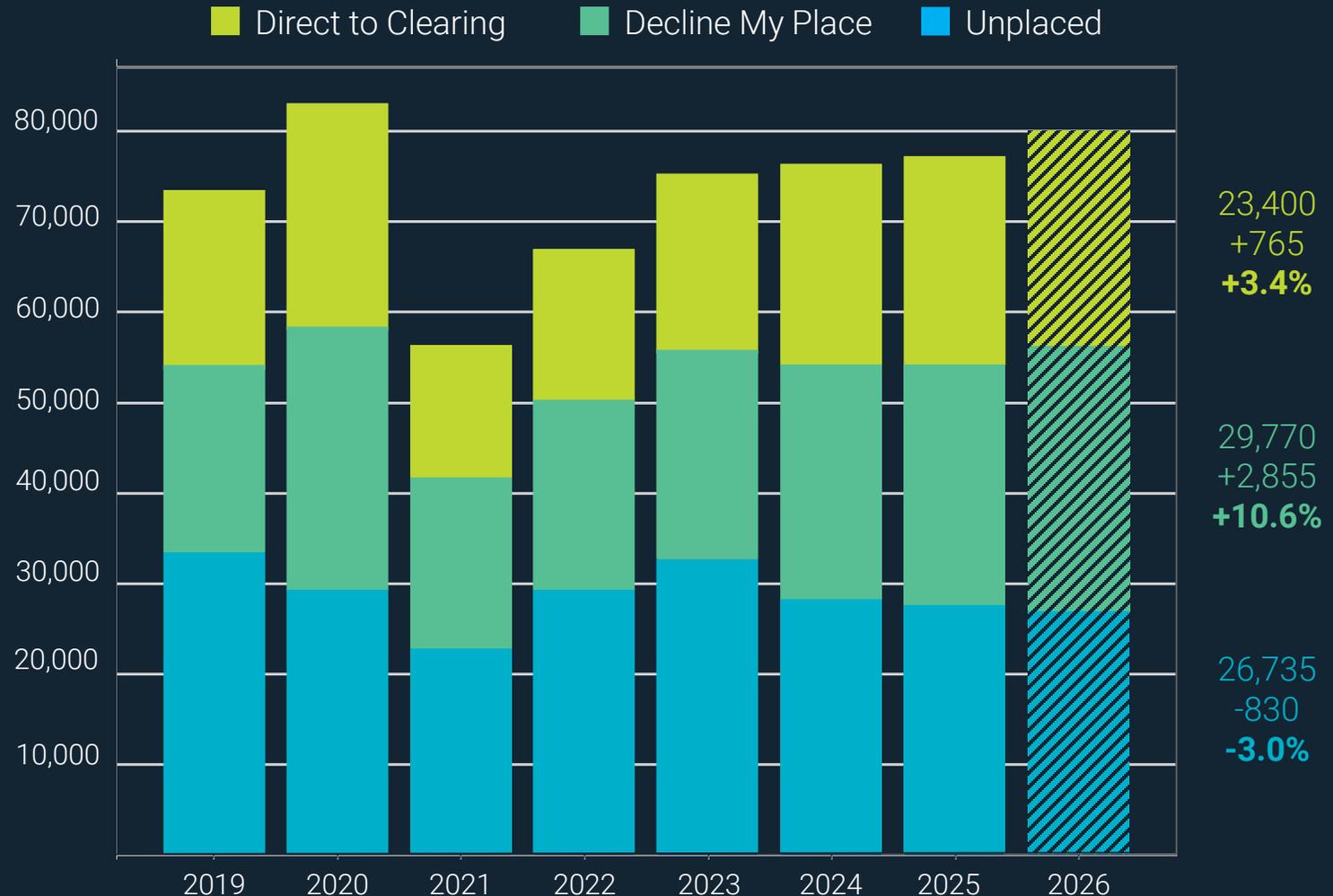- **Non-UK Clearing acceptances fell by less than expected** due to a surge in late applicants.

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Our Forecast
+0.3%

Final Volumes
+1.2%

DEMOGRAPHICS

- The overall predicted increase is driven mainly by UK 18-year-old acceptances (+2,600 / +6.6%), most of these coming via Decline My Place.

- UK mature (19+) growth is small (+285 / +0.9%).

- International acceptances show a minor decline (-85 / -1.6%).

Legend:
- ■ Direct to Clearing
- ■ Decline My Place
- ■ Unplaced

International
- -60
- +160
- -185

UK 18
- +530
- +2,500
- -435

UK Mature
- +295
- +195
- -205

x-axis: -500, 500, 1500, 2500, 3500

Change in Clearing acceptances, 2026 vs 2025
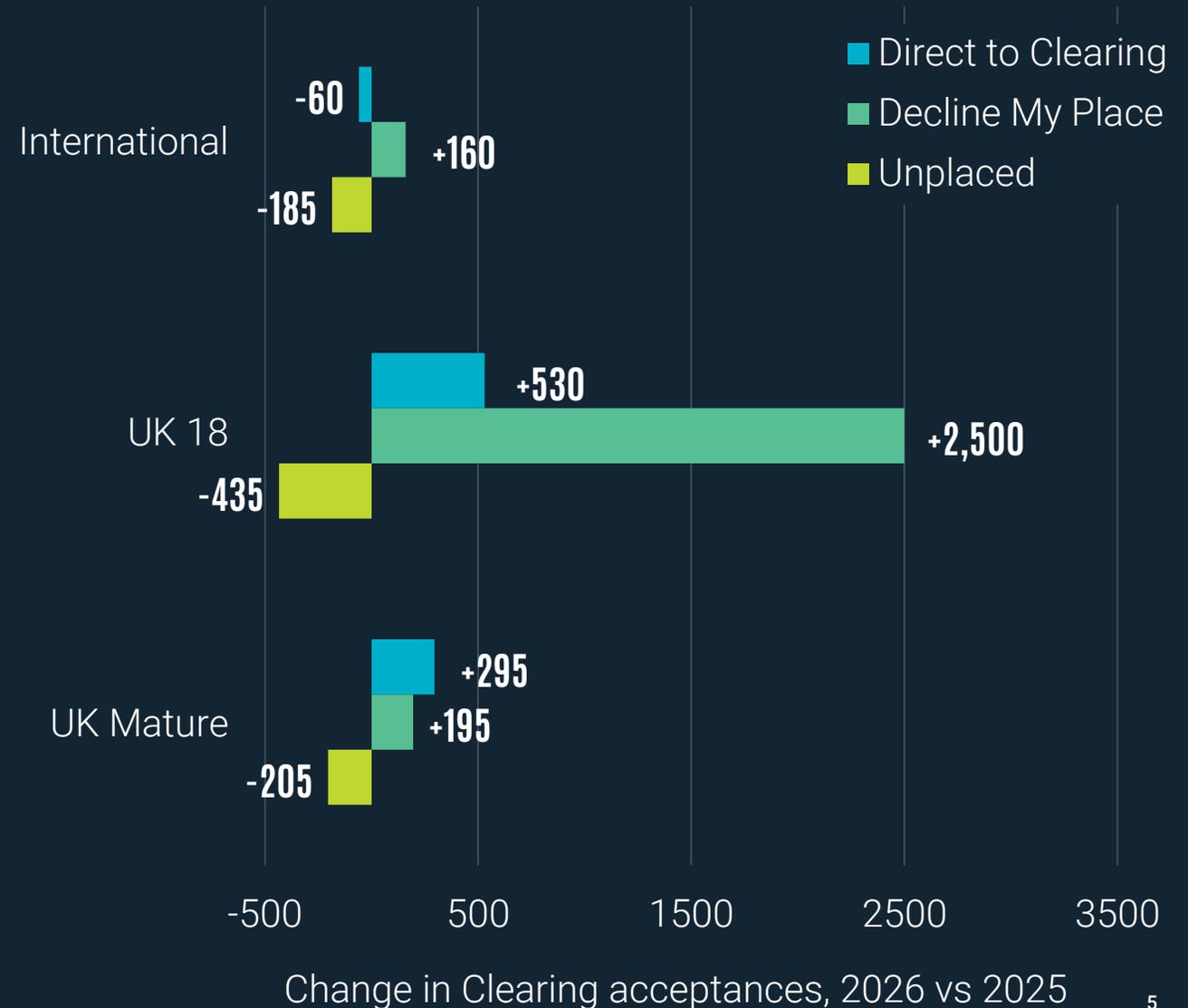
REGIONS

Regional predictions vary across the UK.

- The strongest growth is expected in the South East and London.

- Yorkshire & The Humber is the only region forecast to see a year-on-year decline.

Region	Value
South East	610
London	420
West Midlands	340
East of England	340
South West	320
Scotland	310
North West	150
Northern Ireland	130
North East	105
East Midlands	105
Wales	105
Yorkshire and The Humber	-65
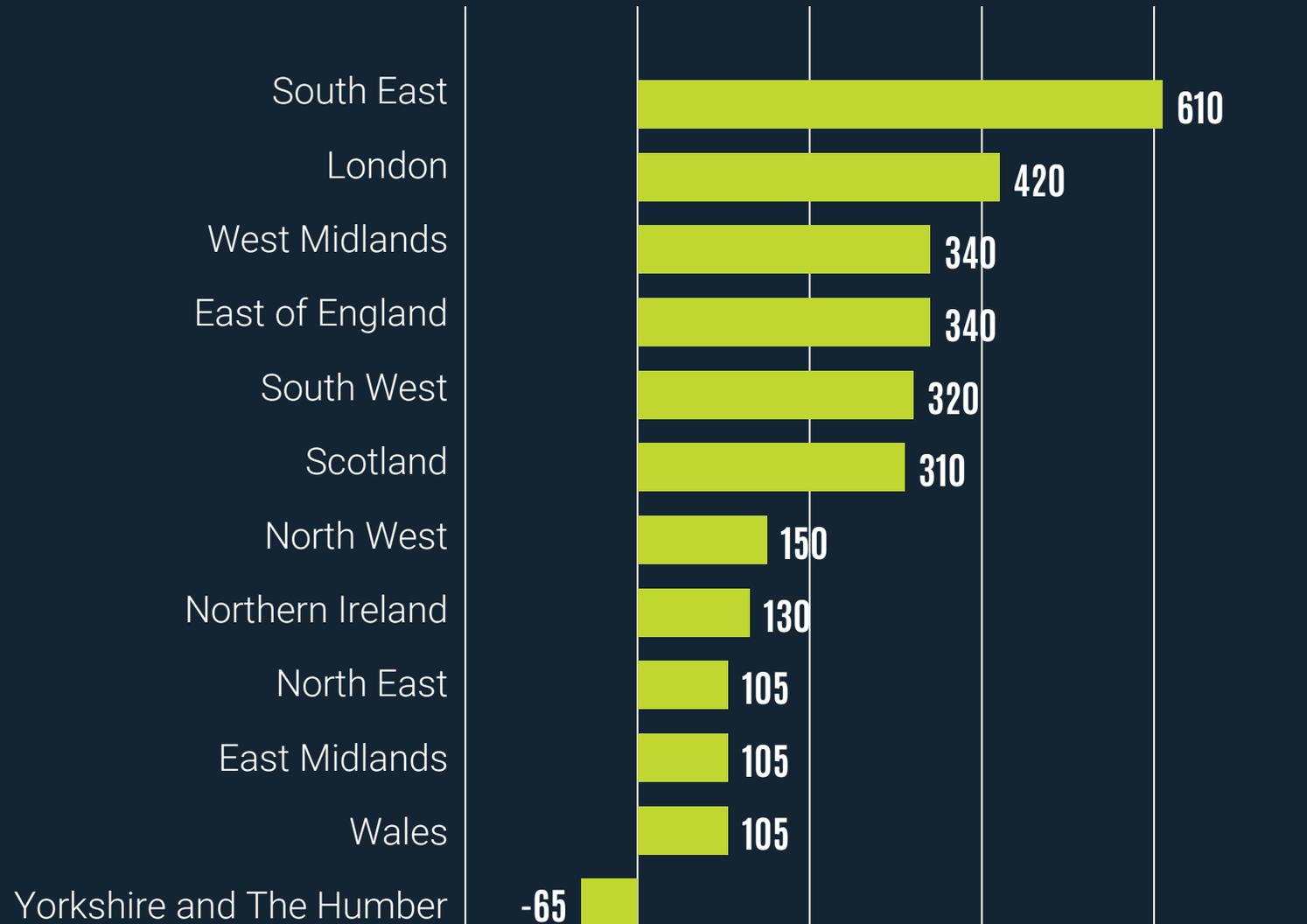
Change in total Clearing acceptances, 2026 vs 2025

SUBJECTS

- Year-on-year changes for the largest CAH1 subject groups in Clearing are shown here.

- Subjects Allied to Medicine is expected to see the largest growth, while Social Sciences is forecasted to see a decline in Clearing volumes.
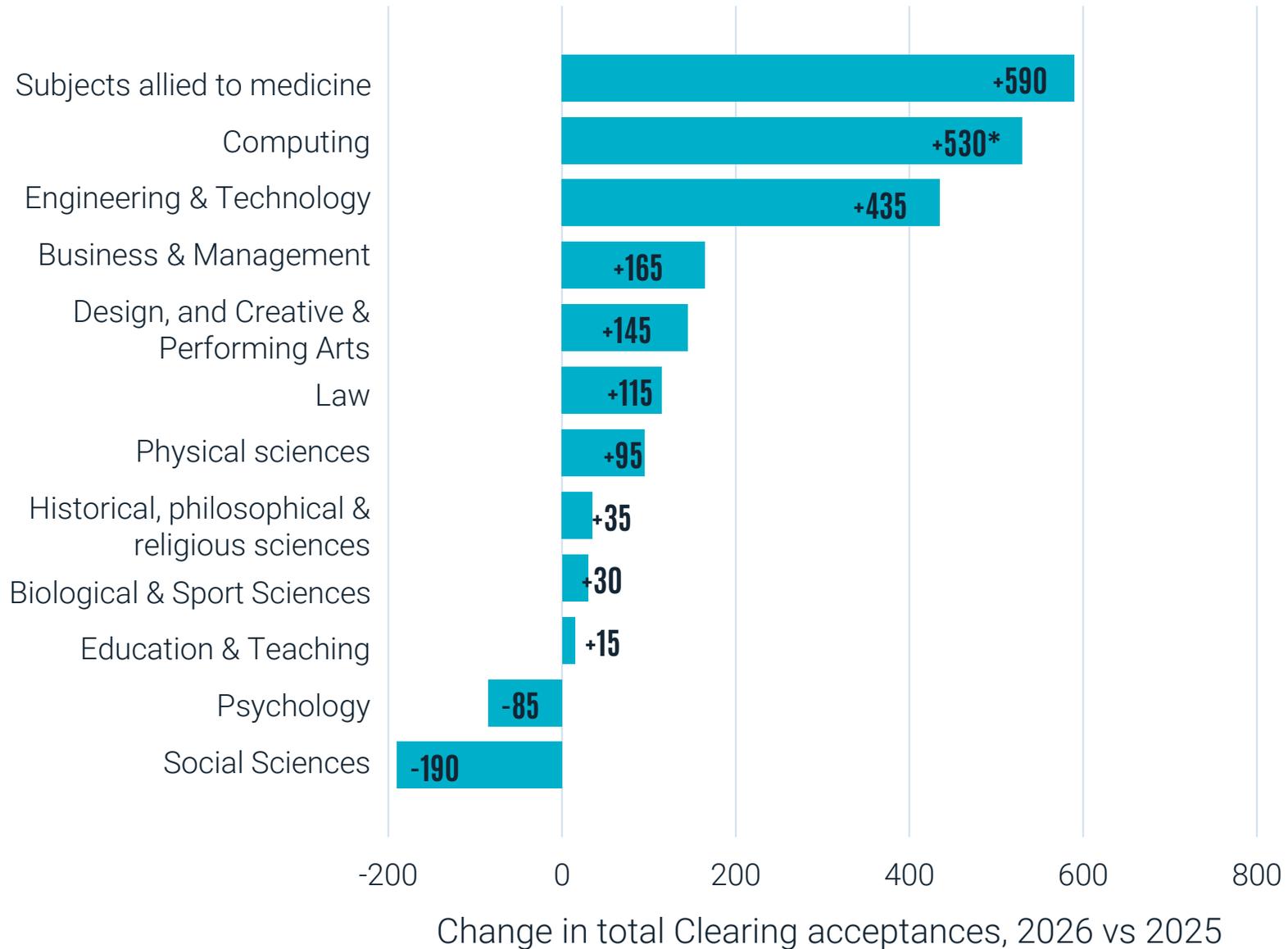
* Note the model takes long term trends into account, which may well be over-emphasising Computing's growth here.

Subject	Change
Subjects allied to medicine	+590
Computing	+530*
Engineering & Technology	+435
Business & Management	+165
Design, and Creative & Performing Arts	+145
Law	+115
Physical sciences	+95
Historical, philosophical & religious sciences	+35
Biological & Sport Sciences	+30
Education & Teaching	+15
Psychology	-85
Social Sciences	-190

Change in total Clearing acceptances, 2026 vs 2025

END OF CYCLE: DECLINE MY PLACE

5.8%
USED DMP

5.8% of all applicants used
Decline My Place
43,810
+1.4% since 2024

59.5%
DMP USERS PLACED

59.5% of those who used
Decline My Place were placed at the
end of the cycle
26,085
+2.9% since 2024

33.8%
CLEARING USED DMP

33.8% of people placed in
Clearing were Decline My Place
users
33.3% in 2024

DECLINE MY PLACE REASONS

DECLINE FIRM CHOICE
(59% of Decline My Place respondents)

DECLINE INSURANCE CHOICE
(30% of Decline My Place respondents)

DECLINE CHANGE OF COURSE
(10% of Decline My Place respondents)

Focus group findings

Want to change university only
Study the same course at a different university.

Want to change course/subject
Previous university is 'collateral damage' in the bid to find a new course, likely to look at local alternatives or those considered/applied to previously .

Don't want to go to insurance choice
(57%)

Offered a course they don't want to study
(40%)

Likely driver: choosing an option closer to home.

New course pull:
Have an alternative course they want to change to, potentially this was always a consideration.

Old course push:
Don't want to study the course they applied to or follow that career path so looking for an alternative course.

Changed their mind about the subject
(21%)

Changed their mind about the subject
(36%)

PROVIDER CLEARING INSIGHTS

- If you find the Clearing Forecast useful, consider our full Clearing Insights report for your institution.

- 4 sections (including the forecast), see below

- Ask your Customer Success Director or the Insights Consultancy team for more information

LOOKING BACKWARD IN TIME

1. RECENT HISTORY OF CLEARING, FOR YOU AND THE SECTOR

2. OVERVIEW OF YOUR APPLICANTS' SWITCHING BEHAVIOURS

LOOKING FORWARD IN TIME

3. FORECASTING THIS YEAR'S CLEARING VOLUMES

4. SCENARIO PLANNING SUBJECTS OF OPPORTUITY & CONCERN FOR YOU THIS CLEARING
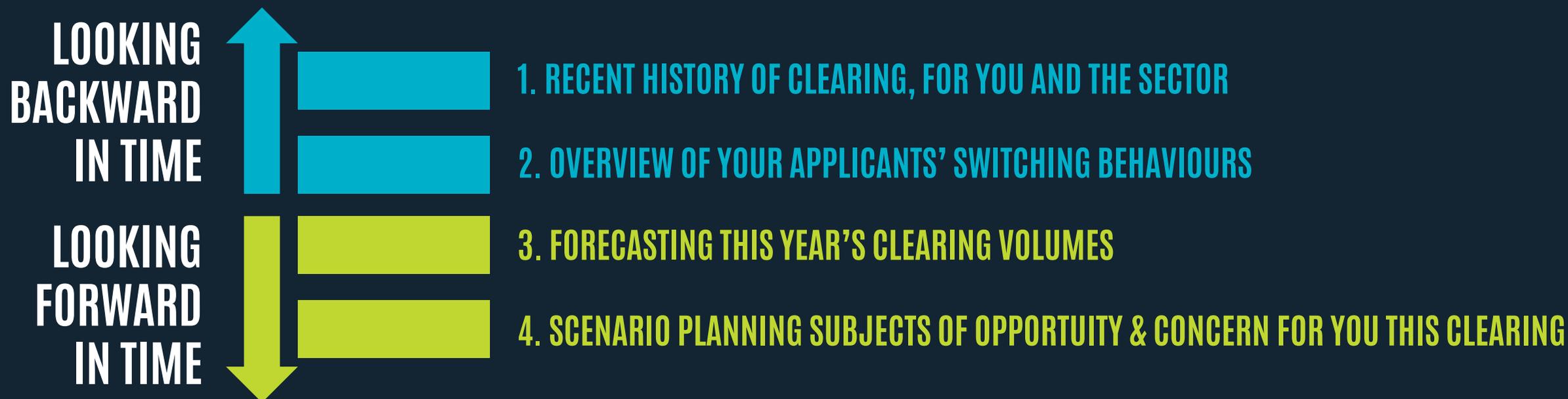
PROVIDER CLEARING INSIGHTS

We can generate scenario planning for you in this year's clearing, subject by subject, using a combination of:

- **Your January ECD position**

- **Your competitors' ECD position**

- **Sector forecast volumes**

For these top five subject areas we have combined our predictions with your competitors' ECD position and the sector availability forecast to establish where competitiveness in clearing is likely to be highest.

Competition in clearer is higher if:
- Your requirement is larger than last cycle;
- Competitors received fewer application applications; or
- Sector availability is lower than other areas

Subject area	Your estimated requirement	Change vs last cycle	Competitors' position	Sector availability	Competitive rating
Business & management	118	+79%	-2.1%	+8.5%	Average
Computing	88	+110%	-12%	-2.6%	High
Psychology	54	+120%	-4.0%	-2.8%	High
Sociology, social policy & anthropology	42	+73%	-12%	-9.2%	Very high
Sport & Exercise sciences	35	+110%	-5.8%	-6.8%	High

PROVIDER CLEARING INSIGHTS
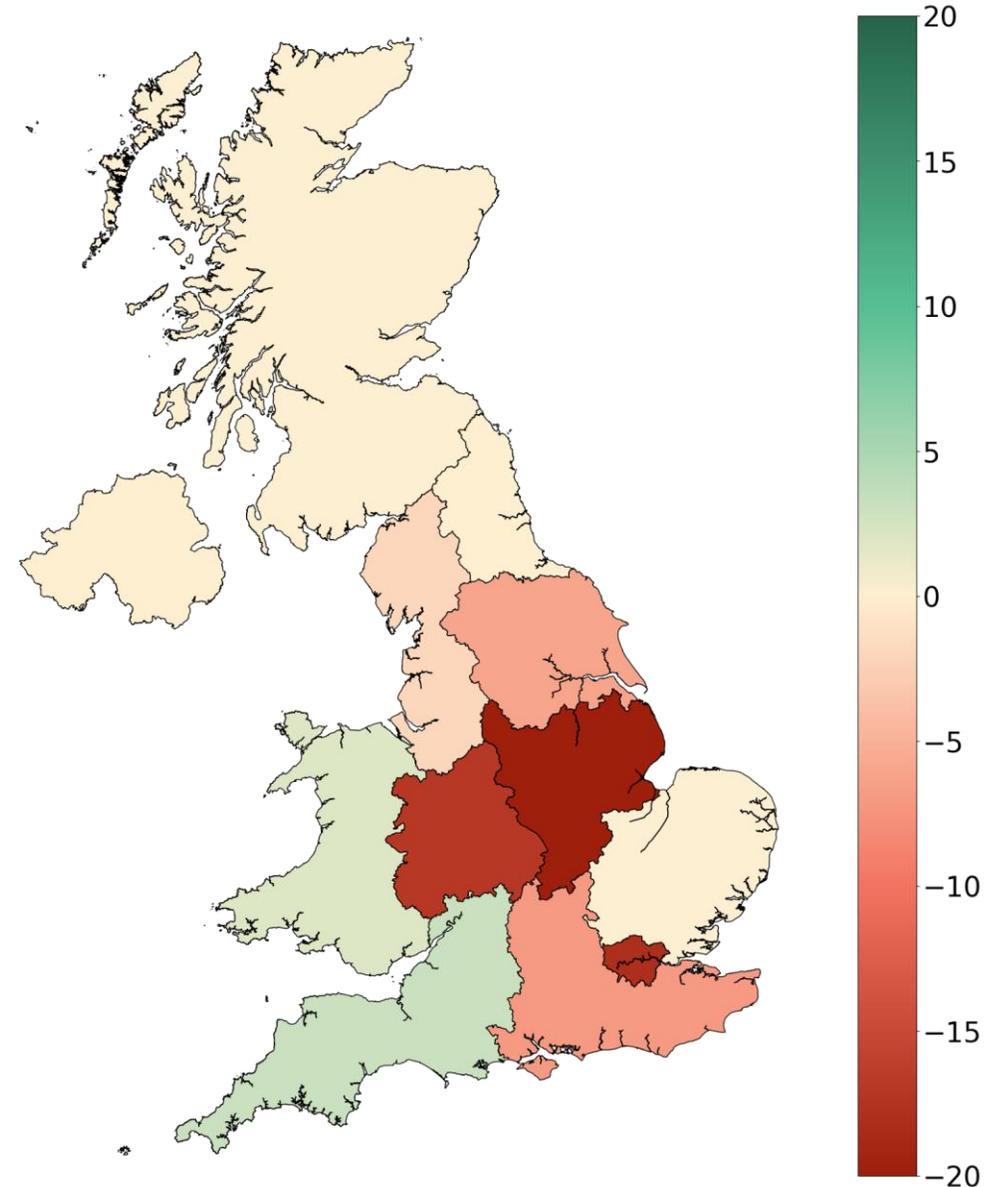
REGIONAL FOCUS

**Switching applicant rates by Destination**

- Last cycle, you saw the largest net gain in switching applicants from providers in the South West (**+3**) and Wales (**+2**).

- On the other hand, you saw the largest net losses to HEPs in the East Midlands (**-20**), London (**-18**), and the West Midlands (**-17**).

COMPETITORS FOCUS

How have these trends changed in recent cycles?

- **Competitor D** made gains last cycle in switching applicants from you returning to 2022 levels.

- **Competitor C** increased their gains in applicants from you last cycle going from an overall gain in 2023.
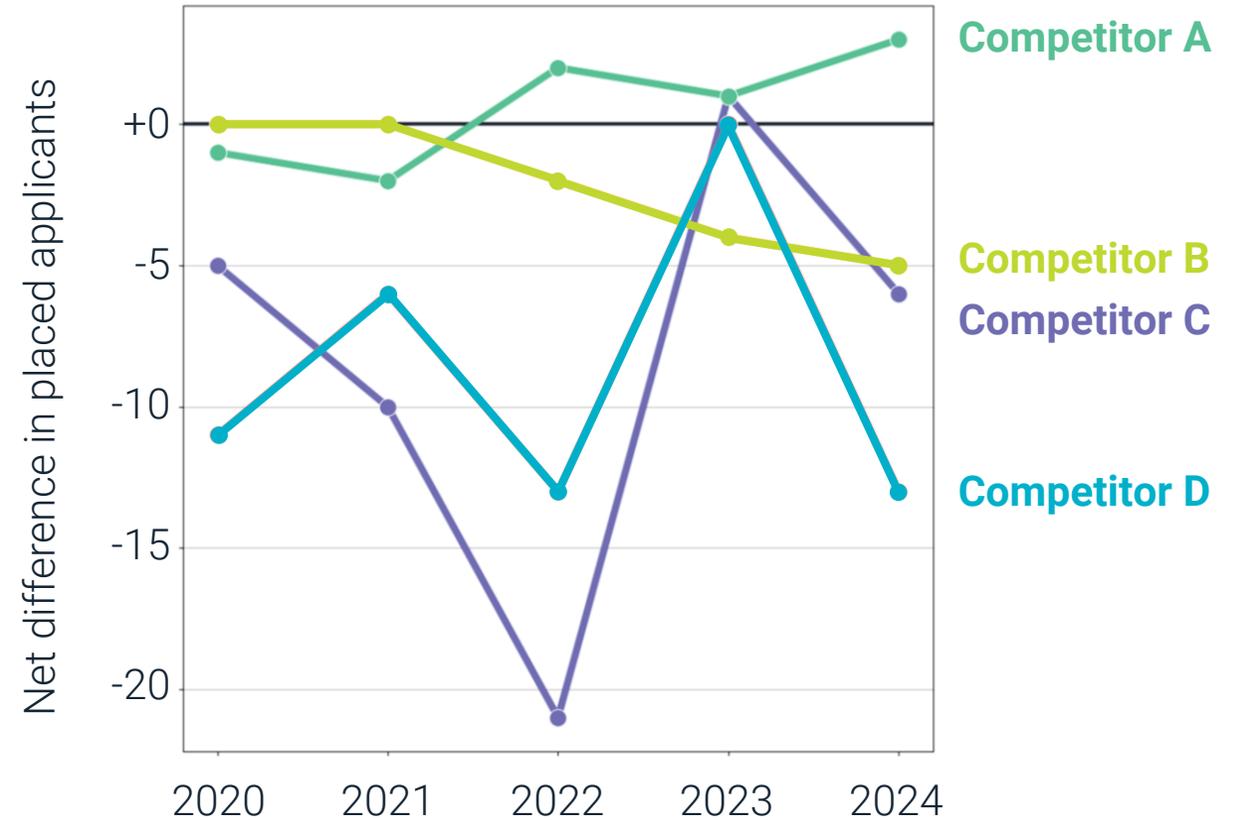
SUMMARY: A BUSIER CLEARING EXPECTED OVERALL THIS CYCLE

- **2,800 additional applicants** to be placed in Clearing this cycle, vs 2025.

- This is largely driven by **increased January Deadline applications**.

- We also anticipate yet another cycle of **increased switching activity**, with those placed after self-releasing expected to rise over 10%.

- **All UK regions except for Yorkshire & Humber are expected to see more placed via Clearing this year**. The South East is forecast to have the highest volumes available in Clearing this year, by far.

- **Medicine, Engineering and Business** are expected to be the subjects with the highest Clearing volumes.

- We expect to see lower volumes of unplaced **Social Science & Psychology** applicants, and therefore those subjects are likely to be more competitive.

- Finally, we're expecting slightly less from international territories (though keep in mind potential for late appliers here).

CLEARING RESOURCES

THE CLEARING CONNECTION - Real choices. Real signals. Real outcomes.

[Together we make it real.](#)

DECLINE MY PLACE 2025 - Discover the motivations, triggers, and decision-making pathways behind Decline My Place behaviour among 2025 entry students.

[Explore the findings.](#)

MARKETING AND STUDENT RECRUITMENT WEBINARS - Discover how to sign up to upcoming webinars and play back the ones you missed.

[Discover more.](#)

PROVIDER LEVEL REPORT- Learn what's inside the report and the impact it could have on your institution.

[Discuss your options.](#)

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THANK YOU

Reach out to your Customer Success Director or email us at **educationservices@ucas.ac.uk** today.

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ucas.com/2026-clearing-solutions

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