

University of Cambridge

*Equality Impact Assessment
on Undergraduate Student Attainment*

February 2009

*Anjana Nathwani
Director, Knowledge & Practice*

SCHNEIDER~ROSS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) are a compulsory element of the Public Sector Equality Duties on Race, Gender and Disability. *"EqIA is the term given to a review of an institution's policies to ensure that the institution is not discriminating unlawfully and that it is making a positive contribution to equality. It is the process of assessing the impact of existing and proposed policies in relation to their consequence to equality of opportunity."* (Source HEFCE guidance on Equality Impact Assessments.)

The legislation emphasises that public authorities conduct EqIA's in a 'meaningful' way. The process has to be outcome focussed rather than one that is perceived to be desk based – 'just a paper exercise'. It is also important that the policies chosen are relevant and are also deemed as priority areas. Learning from the Race Equality Impact Assessment highlights that organisations can make the process inefficient by looking at policies or practices singularly. Experience has shown that this approach can result in inaccurate observations and conclusions. Whilst there is no set pattern on how policies can be grouped, it is important that organisations do consider grouping policies/practices with a view to gaining a fuller understanding of the impact on different groups of staff and service users.

In response to the legislation on age, sexual orientation and religion and belief, and also the imminent Single Equality Bill, many organisations are adopting a more integrated approach to include these strands of diversity as part of their equality schemes and impact assessment work.

In recent months, Schneider~Ross have been working with the University to develop an approach for impact assessments and carrying out full impact assessments of key policy areas, with a view to ensuring that the University implements its practices through the lens of equal opportunities as defined by the Public Sector Equality Duties and that there is no adverse impact or bias in relation to either student admissions or attainment.

The purposes of the student attainment impact assessment included:

- An analysis of the performance levels of students from different demographic groups;
- How the University supports students who may have particular requirements to achieve their best;
- How the University ensures that those involved in assessment are aware of the University's commitment to equal opportunities;

- Identify any potential areas for improvement and how this improvement can be achieved.

This report outlines the findings and next step recommendations of the equality impact assessment on student attainment levels for undergraduates only, and the data used refers to the formal examination performance.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this impact assessment included:

- Analysis of the student monitoring data on attainment provided by the Board of Examinations Office;
- Desktop review of:
 - Guidance notes for internal and external examiners.
 - A sample of student handbooks.
 - The University's Research on Indicators of Academic Performance and the undergraduate experience among three ethnic minority groups.
 - Special Exam Arrangements – information for Candidates.
 - Appointment process of Examiners and Assessors.
- Qualitative conversations with key academic staff who have College and also departmental and University-wide responsibility for supporting students in relation to their academic achievement as well as personal support.
- In addition, discussions took place with the Secretary of the Board of Examinations, the Welfare Officer at Cambridge University Students' Union and with staff based at the Disability Resource Centre.

The process of assessment looked at:

- What are the differences in attainment level between the different demographic groups? (Analyses by different subjects were not undertaken.)
- How does the University ensure that the assessment process is fair and that there is no adverse impact on particular individuals or groups?
- How do supervisors and tutors identify specific student requirements and respond to these?
- Are there areas of 'good practice' in departments or Colleges that can be applied in other parts of the University?

- How are concerns raised from minority groups addressed?
- What culture changes have been adopted by Colleges and departments to ensure that students are comfortable with both the academic and the social setting of the University?
- How does the University use the monitoring data to inform improvements or affirm good practice?
- Is the welfare support sufficient?
- How does the University support the transition from school to College – in particular, those students from state schools?

3.0 ANALYSIS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE LEVELS BY DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Presented in this section are the findings of the undergraduate examinations data analysed for the years 2007 and 2008. The data is analysed in three main categories:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability

Where possible the observations are substantiated by findings from the qualitative discussions and the desk top review.

3.1 Overall Trends

The data for all examinations for 2007 and 2008 indicate that:

- There were no significant variations in the overall spread of awards between 2007 and 2008.
- 23% (of all candidates) achieved a Class I qualification in 2008 (22% in 2007).
- 51% were awarded a Class II (1) qualification (50% in 2007).
- 7% achieved a Class II (undivided) qualification in both years.
- 15% were awarded at Class II (2) (a slightly higher figure of 17% was noted for 2007).
- 1% was classified as receiving other qualifications both in 2008 and 2007.

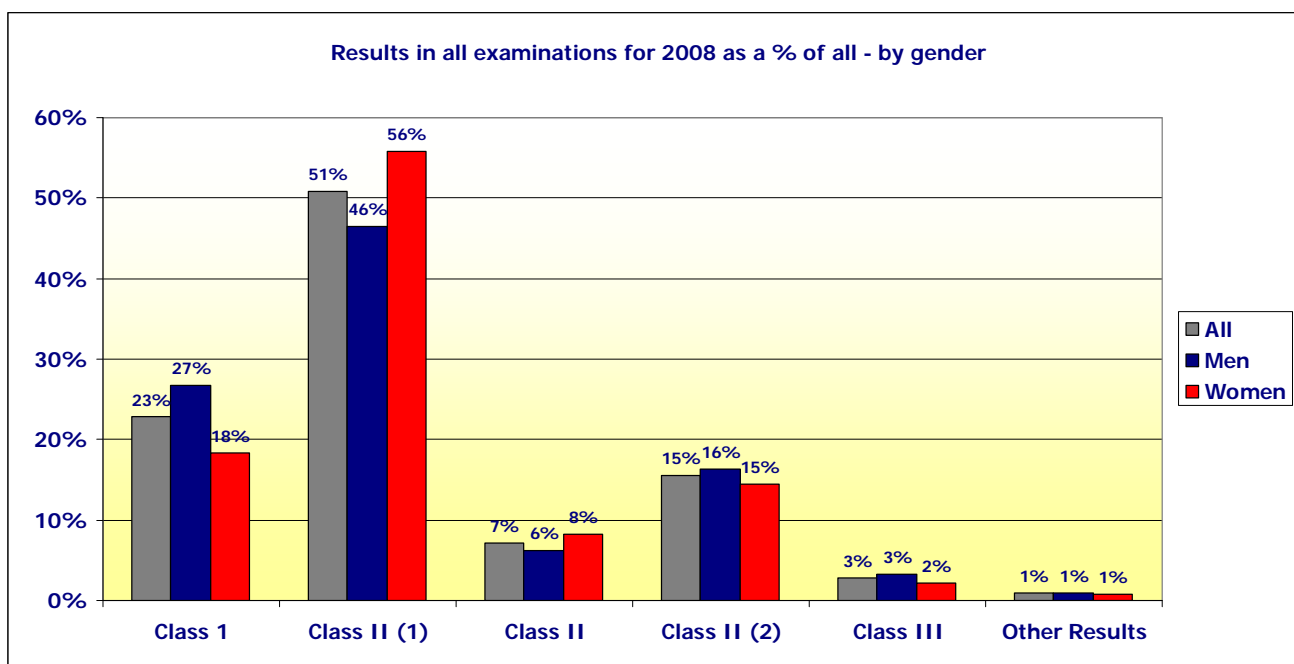
3.2 Gender

The large numbers involved in this analysis permit us to confidently draw the conclusion that female students do not receive as many firsts as male students; and in comparison female students receive more Class II (1) grades than male students. This issue is taken forward in the conclusion to this report.

A Head of Department commented:

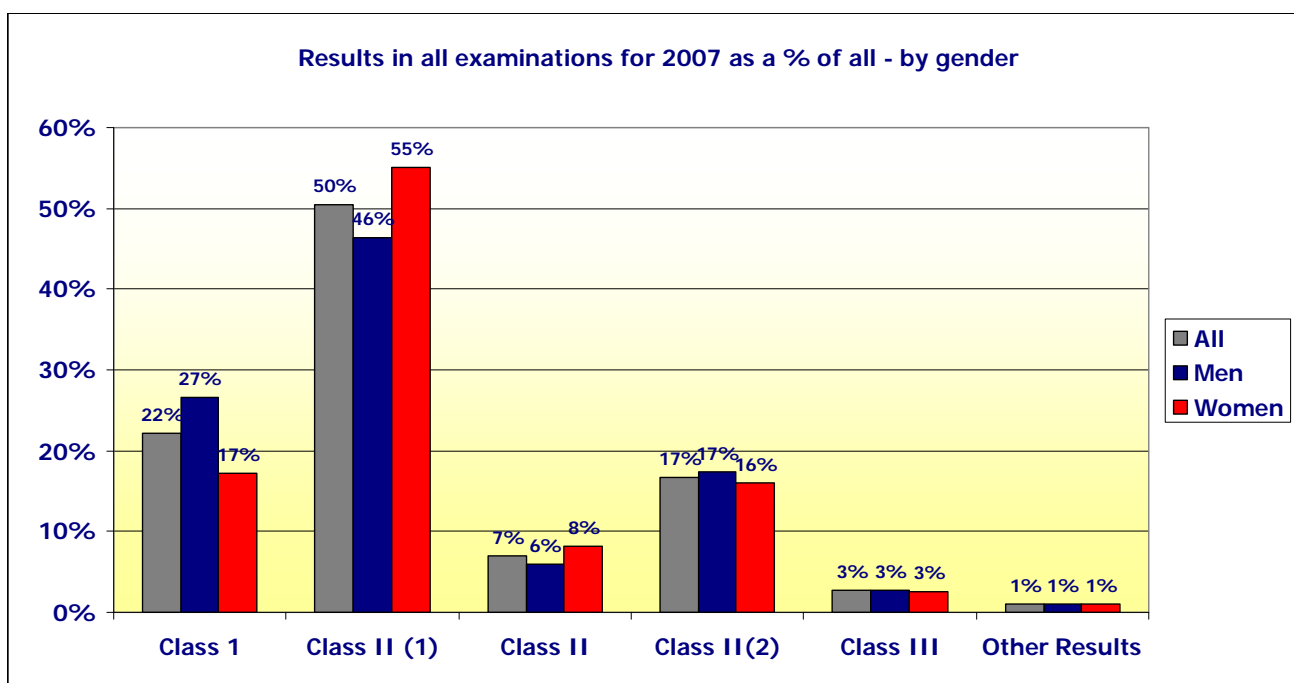
“Female undergraduates can be more under confident about what they can achieve. If this is not picked up earlier in their time at Cambridge, it can make a difference on the final result. The Springboard programme is there to support female students, as is the Navigator programme for male students.”

2008	Class I	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II (2)	Class III	Other Results	Total Candidates
All	23%	51%	7%	15%	3%	1%	100%
All	2,340	5,200	733	1583.5	283.5	93	10,232
Men	27%	46%	6%	16%	3%	1%	100%
Men	1,460	2,531	336	889.5	177.5	55	5,449
Women	18%	56%	8%	15%	2%	1%	100%
Women	879	2,669	397	694	106	38	4,783



Results for 2007 – Showing Similar Trends to 2008

2007	Class I	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II (2)	Class III	Other Results	Total Candidates
Men	63%	48%	45%	55%	54%	52%	53%
Men	1,423	2,480	318	927	146	54	5,348
Women	37%	52%	55%	45%	46%	48%	47%
Women	831	2,647	391	768	124	49	4,810
All	2,254	5,127	709	1,695	270	103	10,158



Overall the ratio of men to women for all examination results remained unchanged between 2007 and 2008 at 53% men to 47% women.

3.3 Ethnicity

Examination results for 2007 and 2008 were also available analysed by ethnicity using the Census 2001 categories. Because of some small numbers these categories have been grouped into six key areas:

- All White
- All Asian
- All Black
- All Mixed
- All Chinese and Other
- All information refused/not known (and not sought for 2007)

From the table and graph below it can be seen that overall, 23% (22% in 2007) of all candidates achieved a Class I qualification. White students most closely reflected this average in 2008 but in 2007 a much higher than average proportion of Chinese students achieved this award: 27% in total (the figure in 2008 was 25%). Those from Mixed and Asian backgrounds were slightly less likely to achieve a Class I – with similar percentages for both 2007 and 2008. Students from a Black background were significantly less likely to achieve a Class I degree for both years – although the figure of 7% for 2008 is an improvement on 2007 when only 3% received this award. The actual student numbers involved are small, but this difference is sufficient to merit close attention. Black students' comparative under-achievement is a national trend, and sector studies are ongoing into possible causes and remedies – coordinated by the Equalities Challenge Unit (ECU) among others. Many universities are addressing this issue as part of their equal opportunities work, and the University of Cambridge may benefit from further investigation as to why black students do not perform as well as White and other minority ethnic students.

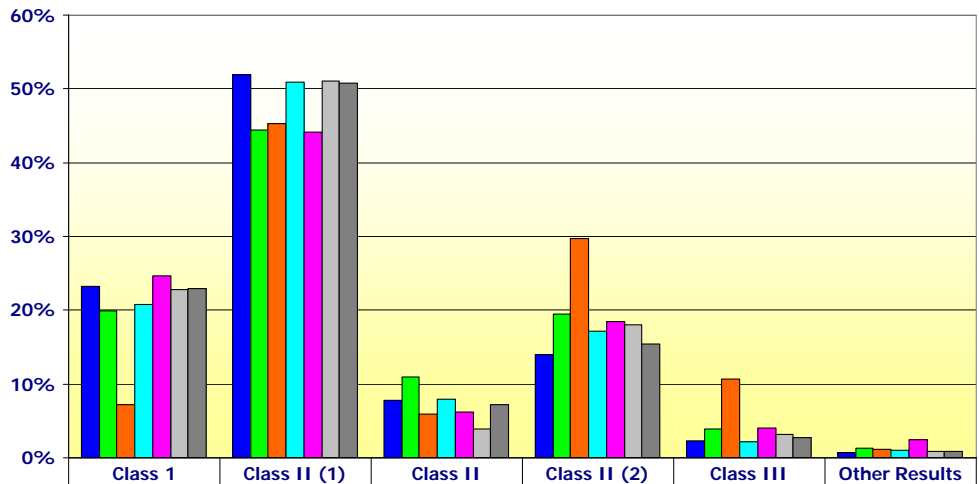
Class II (1) was the most common result for all Ethnic Groups in 2008. Asian, Black and Chinese students were less successful than average at this grade for both years, whilst students of Mixed ethnicity performed close to the broad average (which was two-thirds driven by White students' results).

The highest proportion of Black candidates (45%) achieved a Class II (1) qualification which was still slightly below average (51%), but this was a notable improvement on 2007 when the largest

proportion (42%) of Black candidates received a Class II(2) award. For both 2007 and 2008, the percentages of Black students that achieved a Class II (2) were at least twice the average.

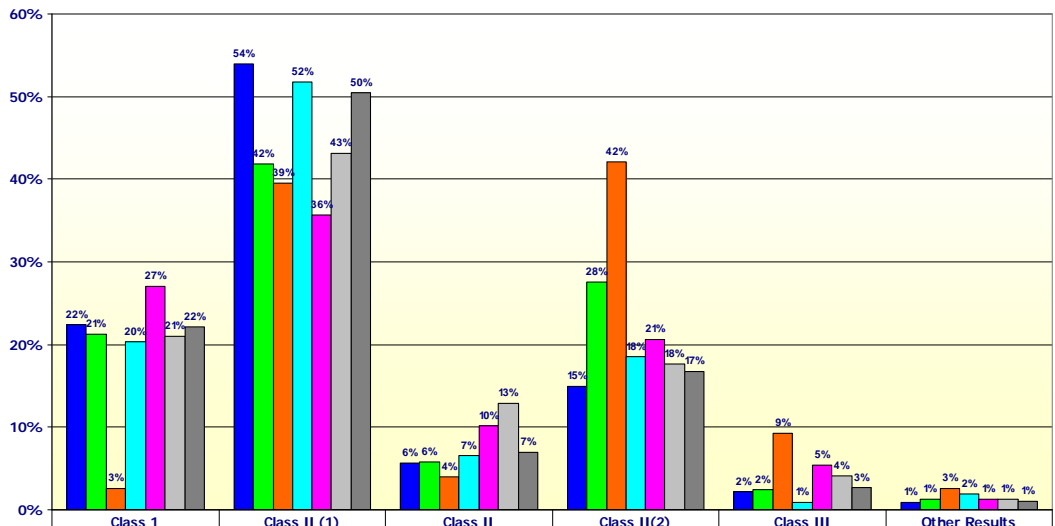
2008	Class I	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II (2)	Class III	Other Results	Total Candidates
All White	23%	52%	8%	14%	2%	1%	100%
All White	1,596	3,577	533	962	162.5	49	6,880
All Asian	20%	44%	11%	19%	4%	1%	100%
All Asian	107	238	59	104	21	7	536
All Black	7%	45%	6%	30%	11%	1%	100%
All Black	6	38	5	25	9	1	84
All Mixed	21%	51%	8%	17%	2%	1%	100%
All Mixed	65.5	160.5	25	54	7	3	315
All Chinese or Other	25%	44%	6%	18%	4%	2%	100%
All Chinese or Other	174	311.5	44	130.5	29	17	706
All information refused/Not known	23%	51%	4%	18%	3%	1%	100%
All information refused/Not known	390.5	874.5	67	308	55	16	1711
Total	23%	51%	7%	15%	3%	1%	100%
Total	2,339.5	5,199.5	733.0	1,583.5	283.5	93.0	10,232

Results in all examinations for 2008 as a % of all - by ethnicity



	Class 1	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II (2)	Class III	Other Results
All White	23%	52%	8%	14%	2%	1%
All Asian	20%	44%	11%	19%	4%	1%
All Black	7%	45%	6%	30%	11%	1%
All Mixed	21%	51%	8%	17%	2%	1%
All Chinese or Other	25%	44%	6%	18%	4%	2%
All Information refused/Not known	23%	51%	4%	18%	3%	1%
Total	23%	51%	7%	15%	3%	1%

Results in all examinations for 2007 as a % of all - by ethnicity



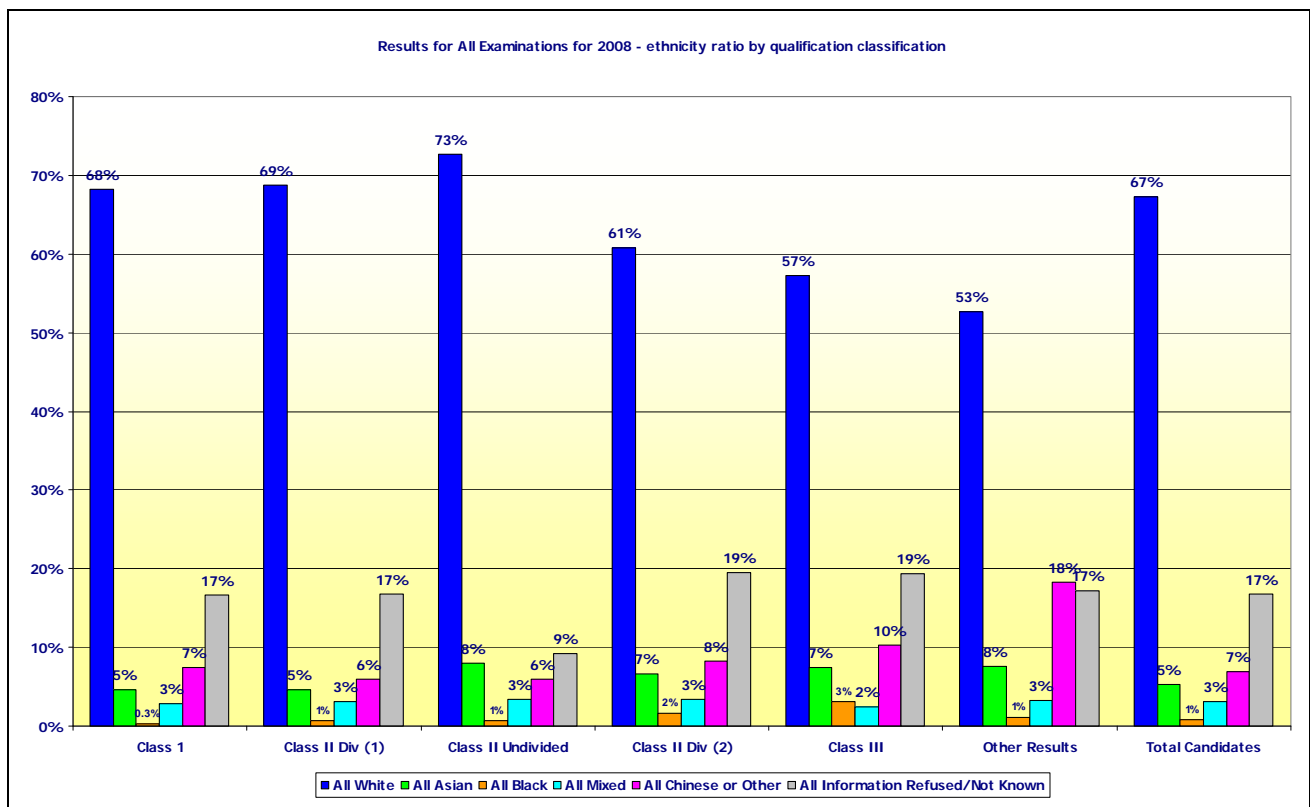
	Class 1	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II(2)	Class III	Other Results
All White	22%	54%	6%	15%	2%	1%
All Asian	21%	42%	6%	28%	2%	1%
All Black	3%	39%	4%	42%	9%	3%
All Mixed	20%	52%	7%	18%	1%	2%
All Chinese/Other	27%	36%	10%	21%	5%	1%
All Not known/refused/not sought	21%	43%	13%	18%	4%	1%
Total	22%	50%	7%	17%	3%	1%

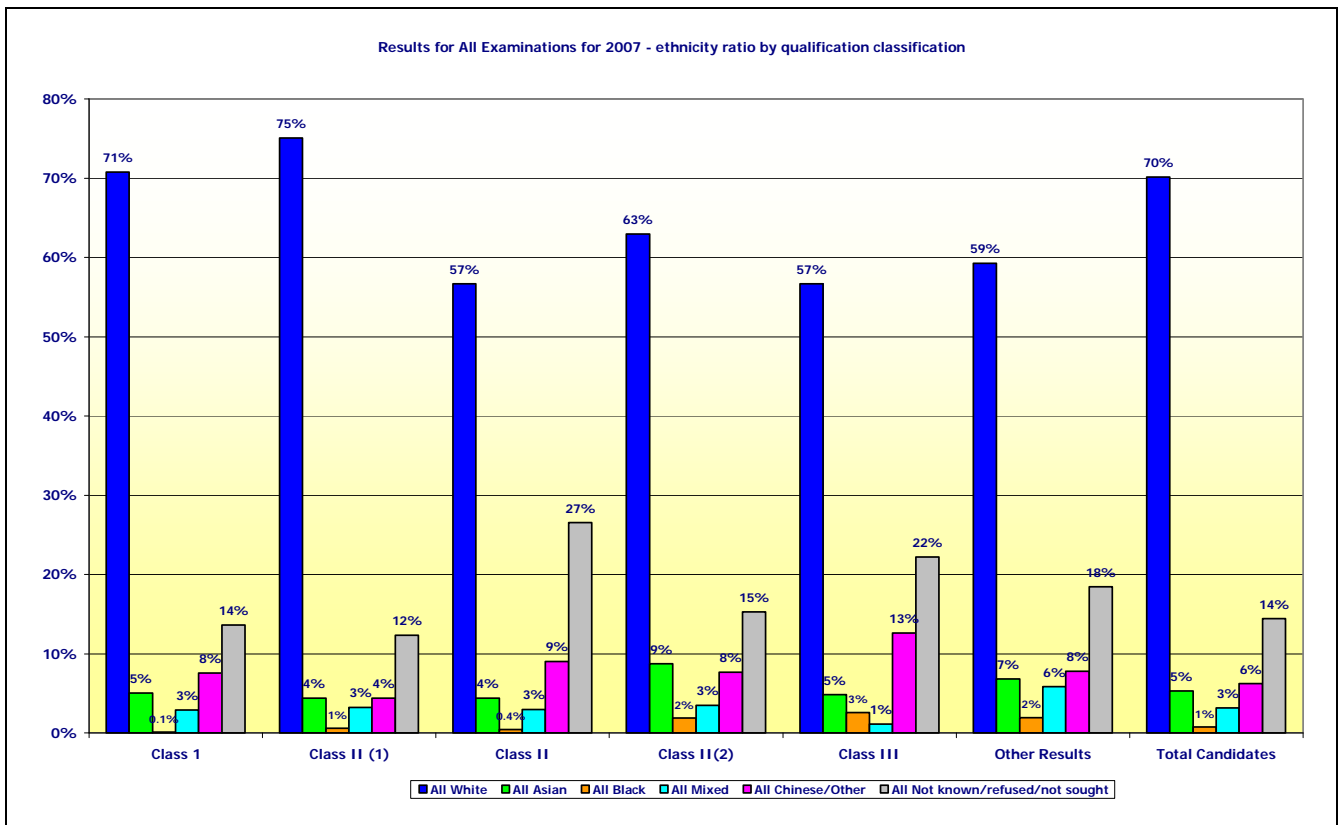
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students comprised 16% of students taking examinations in 2008 – slightly higher than in 2007 when the figure was 15%. Chinese students represented the largest

group after White (7% in 2008 and 6% in 2007), and the proportion of Asian, Mixed and Black students remained consistent for both years (5%, 3% and 0.8% respectively).

White students represented 67% of all candidates (70% in 2007), and White representation by result class is skewed toward Class II and above (White students claimed 73%, 69% and 68% of Class II, Class II(1) and Class I results respectively) – which represents a slight change on 2007 when the award with the highest proportion of White students was Class II(1) (75%).

Generally, the proportions of each result Class taken by each ethnic group are fairly consistent with the proportion of examinees in each ethnic group. The apparent lack of skew indicates similar performance profiles for all groups, with the above exception of White students, and also for Black students where a lower proportion than overall achieved a Class I and higher than average proportions achieved a Class II, Class II (2) or a III.





HESA statistics in recent years show clearly that all students at Cambridge perform well above the national average, whatever their Ethnicity. The following is an extract from a Notice for interest in the Cambridge Reporter of 15 March 2006:

“The three lowest performing groups at Cambridge (Black, Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani) not only perform well above the level of ethnic minority students nationally but also outperform White students too. It is also clear that the negligible gap between White, Chinese and Indian students at Cambridge is not a feature of the national picture. Part of the explanation for this must lie in the fact that students who come to Cambridge are all assessed consistently and are made aware of the highly pressurized environment.” [“The Undergraduate Experience of Cambridge Among Three Ethnic Minority Groups”, Dr J Scales & Dr J Whitehead, 2005]

The ethnicity monitoring data for achievement appears to indicate findings that warrant further analysis. Year-on-year data records show a disproportionately lower number of Class I and Class II(1) awards and a disproportionately higher number of Class II(2), Class III and Pass awards for ethnic minority first degree students - so at this level of aggregation not just Black students but all BME students appear to be affected. These issues are taken forward in the conclusion to this report.

3.4 Disability

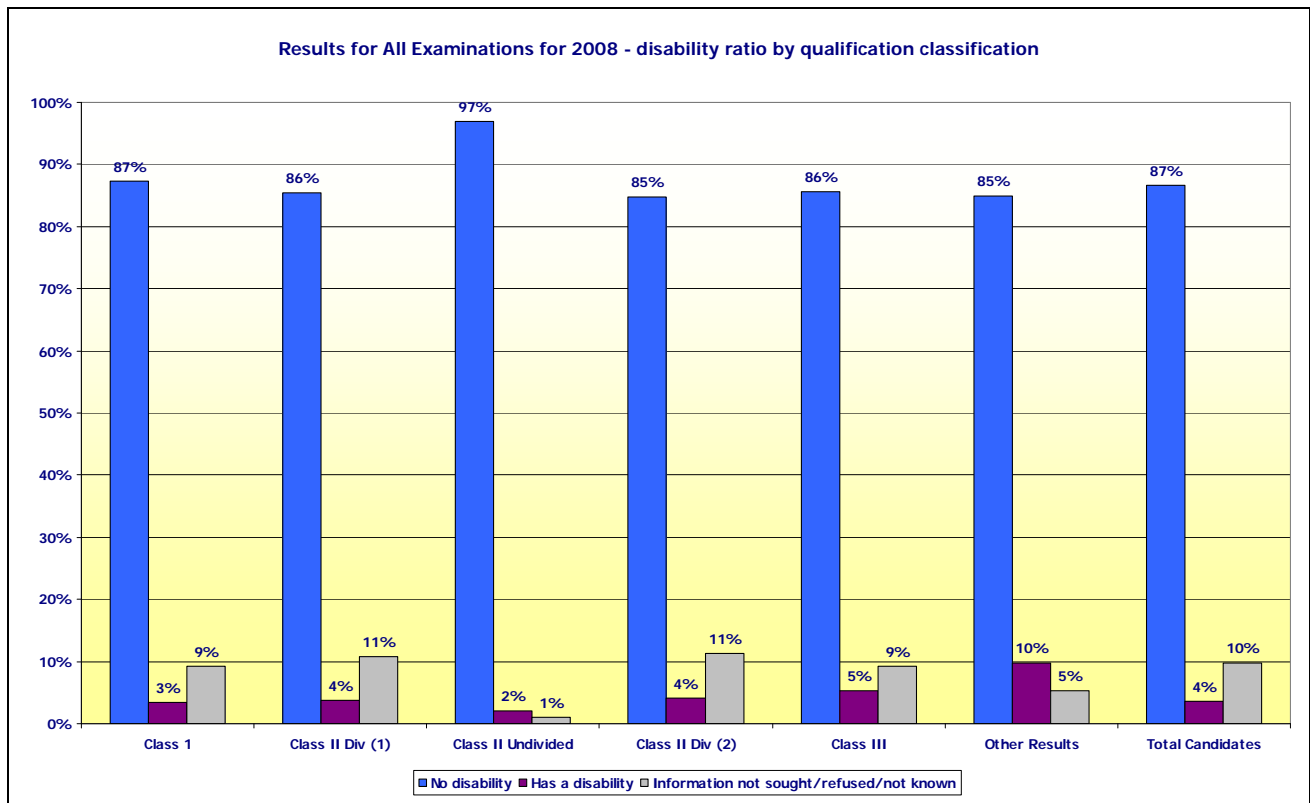
Four per cent of all candidates for all examinations had a declared disability in both 2007 and 2008. More candidates were identified as not having a disability in 2008 than in 2007 (87% and 71% respectively). The proportion of those for whom information had not been sought/refused or was unknown fell between 2007 (25%) and 2008 (10%).

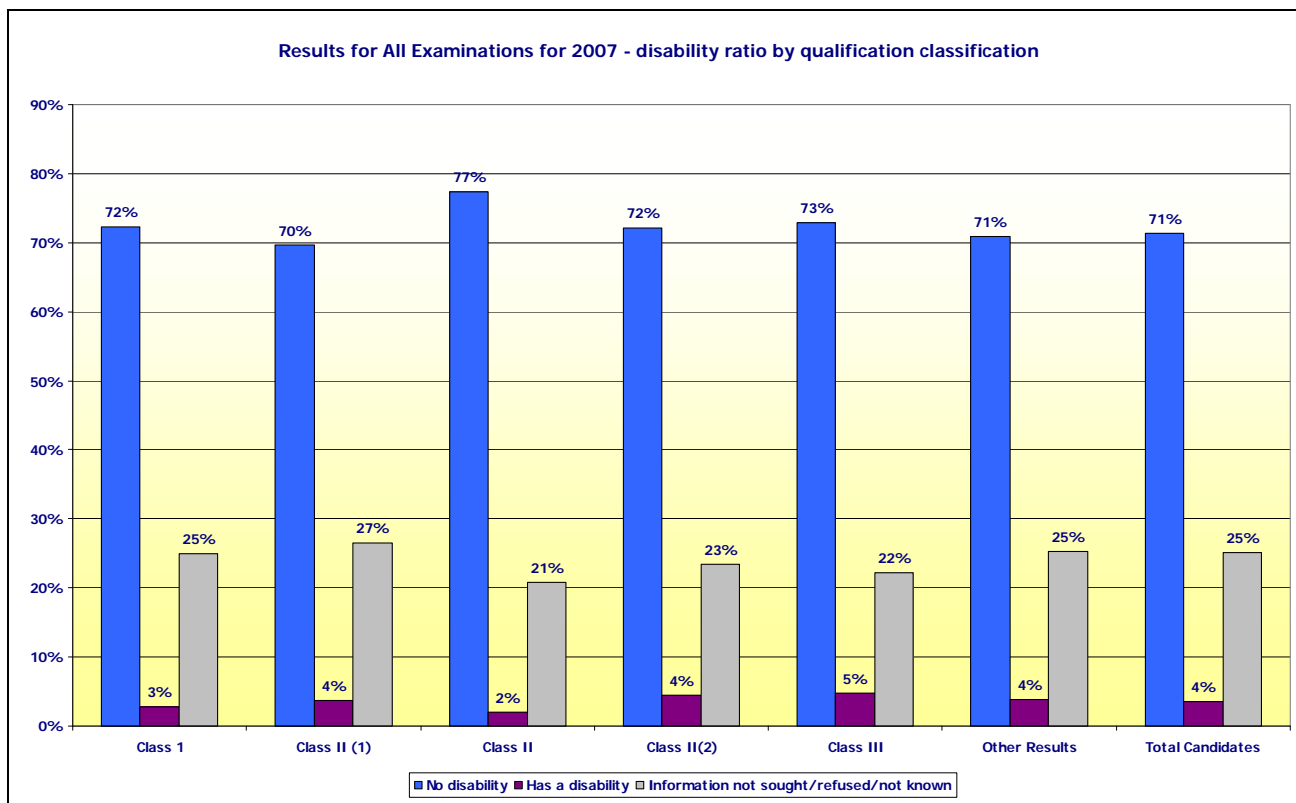
- Overall, Disabled students received slightly better results in 2008 across the board than in 2007, with 21% achieving a Class I award (compared to 17% in 2007). Nonetheless, this proportion is slightly lower than the average for all candidates in 2008.
- As with all the other categorisations, Disabled and non-Disabled students were both most likely to receive a Class II (1) award in 2008.
- There appears to be an overall pattern, however, that a higher than average proportion of Disabled students received Class II(2) or lesser awards than the average in both 2008 and 2007 (with a corresponding lower proportion receiving Class II or higher awards). In 2008, an average of 19% of all students received Class II(2) or lesser award compared to 23% of Disabled students (in 2007 the figures were 26% compared to an average of 21%).

2008	Class I	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II (2)	Class III	Other Results	Total Candidates
No disability	23%	50%	8%	15%	3%	1%	100%
No disability	2,042	4,447	710	1,341	243	79	8,861
Has a disability	21%	51%	4%	17%	4%	2%	100%
Has a disability	79	193	15	64.5	15	9	376
Information not sought/refused/not known	22%	56%	1%	18%	3%	1%	100%
Information not sought/refused/not known	218	560	8	178	26	5	995
Total	23%	51%	7%	15%	3%	1%	100%
Total	2,340	5,200	733	1,584	284	93	10,232

2007	Class I	Class II (1)	Class II	Class II (2)	Class III	Other Results	Total Candidates
No disability	22%	49%	8%	17%	3%	1%	100%
No disability	1,629	3,574	548	1,223	197	73	7,244
Has a disability	17%	53%	4%	21%	4%	1%	100%
Has a disability	61	191	14	75	13	4	358
Information not sought/refused/not known	22%	53%	6%	16%	2%	1%	100%
Information not sought/refused/not known	564	1,362	147	397	60	26	2,556
Total	22%	50%	7%	17%	3%	1%	100%
Total	2,254	5,127	709	1,695	270	103	10,158

The proportions of Disabled and non-Disabled students for 2008 was 4% to 87% (4% to 71% in 2007) and overall, this ratio varies only very slightly across the different awards – with the notable exception of Other Results where 10% were Disabled.





The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) has 1,035 students that have disclosed a disability in the past 12 months. This includes undergraduate and graduate students. The DRC commented that in many instances - *"the disclosure is after the student has arrived at Cambridge and this results in a lack of adequate support at the start, which can potentially impact on the student's experience for the whole duration at Cambridge. In some instances, in particular learning difficulties (dyslexia) become apparent as a student starts to produce work or even in the final year. This can cause significant problems and can impact on the final result"*.

3.5 Overall Observations

- Male undergraduates are approximately 50% more successful in achieving Class I awards than female undergraduates (27% and 18% of candidates respectively). This finding is taken forward in the conclusion to this report.
- Overall, ethnic minority students perform a little less well in comparison to White students. However, a breakdown into different ethnic categories does indicate that the Black student group performs least well on average. A Senior Tutor reflected:

“Black students are sometimes a single minority in a College and there can be potential for isolation which can impact on how the student achieves within Cambridge. Tutors are aware of this and do where possible help with social networks to minimize isolation.”

- There is no clear evidence that Disabled students perform less well than the average. The apparent slight under-performance is thought to be attributable to insufficient provision of assistance, solely caused by late disclosure of the existence of a disability. The staff in the DRC confirmed that: *“Once a disability is disclosed, there is a lot of guidance and support for both students and tutors. Adjustments and adaptations are made so that the student can enjoy both the academic and social setting at Cambridge”*. There are many instances of good practice. The School of Medicine, for example, is perceived as one of the leading schools by the General Medical Council to be taking proactive measures in improving access to students with Disabilities.
- During the qualitative discussions, Tutors and Heads of Departments confirmed that drop outs are very rare and few. Before a student decides to leave, all possible measures are taken to ensure that the student is offered the relevant support. The University is legally obliged under the DDA to ensure that all students with mental health and stress related problems are assessed and supported to complete their studies. A Head of Department reflected:

“People know as soon as they have a place that it is pressurised environment and they are psychologically prepared. The reasons for the ‘odd’ drop out are usually very personal or mental health problems.”

4.0 ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE ATTAINMENT PROCESSES

This section outlines the findings in relation to the support students receive, communications and the assessment process. As outlined in the methodology a range of documents were reviewed and some of the assumptions relating to fairness in application of the processes were clarified during the qualitative conversations.

4.1 Communications

A sample of student handbooks was reviewed to assess how well students are informed about the assessment process. The University Student's Handbook is very comprehensive and the Colleges also provide comprehensive guidance too. This is either online or in hard copy. Handbooks are also available in Braille if required.

The University Handbook covers all the essential guidelines and procedures that inform students on the assessment processes and also how to raise complaints. The Handbook covers:

- Conduct of examinations.
- Rules for the guidance of candidates and for the prevention of misconduct in examinations.
- Special examination arrangements.
- Illness and disability.
- Appealing against the outcome of an examination result.
- The complaints procedure has three elements; discussion and advice, informal process and a formal process.
- The University's Policy on Equal Opportunities and also the procedure for Dignity in Study are succinctly explained. There are clear definitions on sexual and racial harassment and what actions can be taken if someone is victimised. Tutors and Heads of Departments do handle incidents of harassment and bullying, and in most instances complaints are dealt with fairly swiftly and appropriate action is taken to support the victim and to discipline the perpetrators. The Student Union commented:

"There are occurrences of sexual harassment, some tutors are very skilled at handling complaints; there are those who also say 'well just don't go to the common room or avoid the

person' – as result perpetrators are not disciplined. This affects morale and performance - some guidance and training for tutors in this area will be beneficial."

4.2 Student Support

- All Colleges are renowned for providing excellent personal support to students. All students are assigned a Tutor. *"The Tutors carry overall responsibility for the welfare of all students and give help or advice on personal problems that may arise. They handle administrative matters relating to student life and educational arrangements in both the College and the University. They are able to advise students about travel and vacation grants and of any scholarships and bursaries available from the College or the University."* (Source Lucy Cavendish College Blue Book.)
- Supervision: students also receive supervision in relation to their academic assignments. A Head of Department said: *"In some subject areas the level of supervision support is excellent – one supervisor to two students – this is how Cambridge maintains high standards."*
- Welfare: there is the Welfare and Finance sub group of the Senior Tutors' Committee. This group considers special cases in relation to bursaries, scholarships, family support and any other requirements. Bursary support is there for students from low income families and this has proved to be invaluable, and helped to reduce stress which can affect achievement.
- tranSKILLS Project: The Learning and Teaching Strategy (2006-2009) outlines the University's commitment to making suitable provision for students to develop their study skills. The aim of the tranSKILLS project is *"to ensure that appropriate study skills training is provided for first year students in order that they are able to achieve their potential..."*
- Personal Development Planning: *"The aim of PDP is to help you to make the most of your time at Cambridge. It provides a range of specific targeted techniques that you can use to think about your talents and achievements and identify goals and plan your study workload and/or your future career."* (Source University Student Handbook)

4.3 Students with Disclosed Disabilities

The University is aware that the Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against students with disabilities. There is a commitment to supporting all students that have disclosed a disability and the nature of the disability is covered by the legislation. The following facilities are available:

- The Disability Resource Centre is the focal point for the provision of support services for disabled students.
- Disability Advisers: there are three disability advisers – one for Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) and two for disabilities other than SpLD. Advisers provide support, guidance and information, and also co-ordinate any adjustments that may be required.
- Special examination arrangements are made where required, though this is based on a medical assessment and also advice from the Disability Resource Centre.
- Home/UK students are also entitled to Disabled Students' Allowance to cover for any additional costs; the DRC gives advice on this and the University also has some limited supplementary funds. There also a Disabled Students' Bursary Fund.

4.4 Exams

All exams are anonymised – each student is given a number and the names are not identified until the papers have been marked and the classes are awarded.

4.5 Examiner's Guide

The Secretary to the Board of Examinations has produced a guide for Examiners. *"The guide is intended to be a helpful reference for Chairmen and their Examiners in undertaking their duties. It is also intended to be a source of reference for those with associated responsibilities..."* The guide is comprehensive and covers the following to ensure a fair and bias free process:

- Setting and Preparing Examination Question Papers and Marking Schemes
- Classing criteria
- Candidates with Disabilities and Practical Examinations
- Marking and Dyslexia
- Adjustments
- Deferment of deadline for dissertations
- Plagiarism
- Extenuating Circumstances and Examination Allowances

Observations

It is apparent from all the policies and the online guidance that the University and Colleges are committed to ensuring that all students have equal access to all the support facilities that are available to help them achieve their potential. Further data is required from students and Colleges to assess that the policies are implemented consistently and that there is no adverse bias or impact on any particular groups of students.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS RECOMMENDATIONS

The University of Cambridge does much to ensure that all students can achieve their maximum potential through its policies and support systems. Tutors and Heads of Departments interviewed as part of this process confirmed that all possible avenues are explored and applied to support students and in particular, those that have raised concerns or require specific forms of support. From this assessment and analysis, it is apparent that the University and Colleges do try to ensure that the processes for student assessment and attainment are fair and any potential for bias is minimal. However, from the data and documents analysed, it has not been possible to assess consistency in application, therefore the possibility of any potential adverse impact cannot be ignored.

We recommend the following next steps.

- a) The University to collaborate with Colleges in supporting and developing initiatives such as the Springboard Programme, targeted at assisting female students to achieve their full potentials (see sections 3.2 and 3.5). Additional analyses focussing on specific subject areas is recommended, which may help to identify where the gaps are and prioritise action.
- b) Students from Afro-Caribbean communities do not do as well as other students; this finding is aligned with national trends (see sections 3.3 and 3.5). Further investigation is recommended into Black students' experiences at Cambridge, and what factors (such as isolation) are significant to attainment. Local investigation may be attempted through a targeted confidential survey and/or focus groups. Adoption of appropriate best practice developed by other institutions with larger Black student populations may ease the low numbers/significance barrier to change in this area.
- c) Many students delay disclosure of their disability which hampers efforts to accommodate needs, which may impact upon attainment (see sections 3.4 and 3.5). Recommend supporting the DRC plan to work with Colleges to promote positive practice that encourages students who are offered a place to disclose earlier so that the adjustments and adaptations are made in time, thereby making their arrival and the stay at Cambridge much more comfortable and successful.
- d) Harassment and bullying does take place (see section 4.1) and this can potentially impact on attainment. In collaboration with Welfare Support, it is recommended that a

training programme for Tutors on the Dignity at Study procedures is offered by CPPD. The primary purpose of the training sessions would be to reinforce and develop skills to support students who are harassed or bullied.

- e) The University does participate in national activity relating to student surveys, but this data does not deal in sufficient detail with issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. It would be useful to seek student perception through surveys to identify what is working well and what improvements can be achieved to create inclusive cultures that promote the best learning environment for all.