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## News

### Attainment gaps reinforce need for better student support

28 March 2014

**UCU has said today that more needs to be done to ensure that students are properly supported throughout their university career.**

The union was speaking in response to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) report entitled 'Schooling effects on higher education achievement', which looks at how students with similar A-level results perform differently in higher education depending on their background. It shows that students from state schools are generally outperforming students from independent schools with the same A-Level results. UCU says this provides welcome evidence that advantage does not have to be the sole predictor of educational outcome.

However, the report also shows that there is a 'significant variation in degree outcome for students from different ethnicities', with 72% of white students attaining a first or upper second degree compared with just 53% of black students. It also confirms that 'those from the most disadvantaged areas have consistently lower HE degree outcomes than those with the same prior educational attainment from other areas'.

UCU General Secretary, Sally Hunt, said: 'This report clearly shows that higher education isn't yet an even playing field for all students. Although students from state schools are generally outperforming their peers from independent schools, other background factors such as ethnicity are still major determinants of higher education success.

'Universities need to take a closer look at why students from different backgrounds are performing differently at degree level, despite having the same A-Level results. It is concerning that, just as HEFCE is publishing this report which highlights links between advantage and attainment, important funding for access and student support is being cut.

'Our members provide a great deal of pastoral support to those students who are struggling to fulfil their potential at university, but additional systemic measures are obviously needed to combat these deep-seated issues.'

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