

An Investigation into the relationship between entry and exit qualifications in Biomedical Science Honours degrees at the University of Portsmouth, England.

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The assumption, indeed the educational rationalisation and justification, has traditionally tended to be that students who enter a programme of study with higher grades at GCSE A level or A level equivalent tend to perform at a higher level throughout the course and exit with one of the higher degree classifications. All courses have a desirable and normative set of entry qualifications, in terms of grades and subject areas. Observation of student cohorts, studying Biomedical Science at the University of Portsmouth, by full time and part time modes have suggested that this may not always be a valid assumption. These observations may represent notable exceptions or they may indicate the importance of other aspects relating to the students or the nature of the course curriculum.

In order to test the validity of the assumption this study initially investigated the relationship between entrance qualifications and exit awards of two successive cohorts of students studying Biomedical Science as full time and part time students (n=101). Chi-square analysis using Fishers Exact test indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between entrance and exit qualifications for the combined part time and full time undergraduate students.

The current emphasis on widening participation and Lifelong learning within Higher Education further challenges the role of A level grades as predictors of academic success in the UK and highlights the importance of identifying further performance indicators –independent variables and motivational factors that influence the ‘value added’ of a particular course of study and encourage students towards a successful outcome. These factors include student demographic, course specific and motivational aspects which may have implications for student recruitment and curriculum design.

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