

Examining the Relationship Between Degree Apprenticeships and Widening Participation

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Research

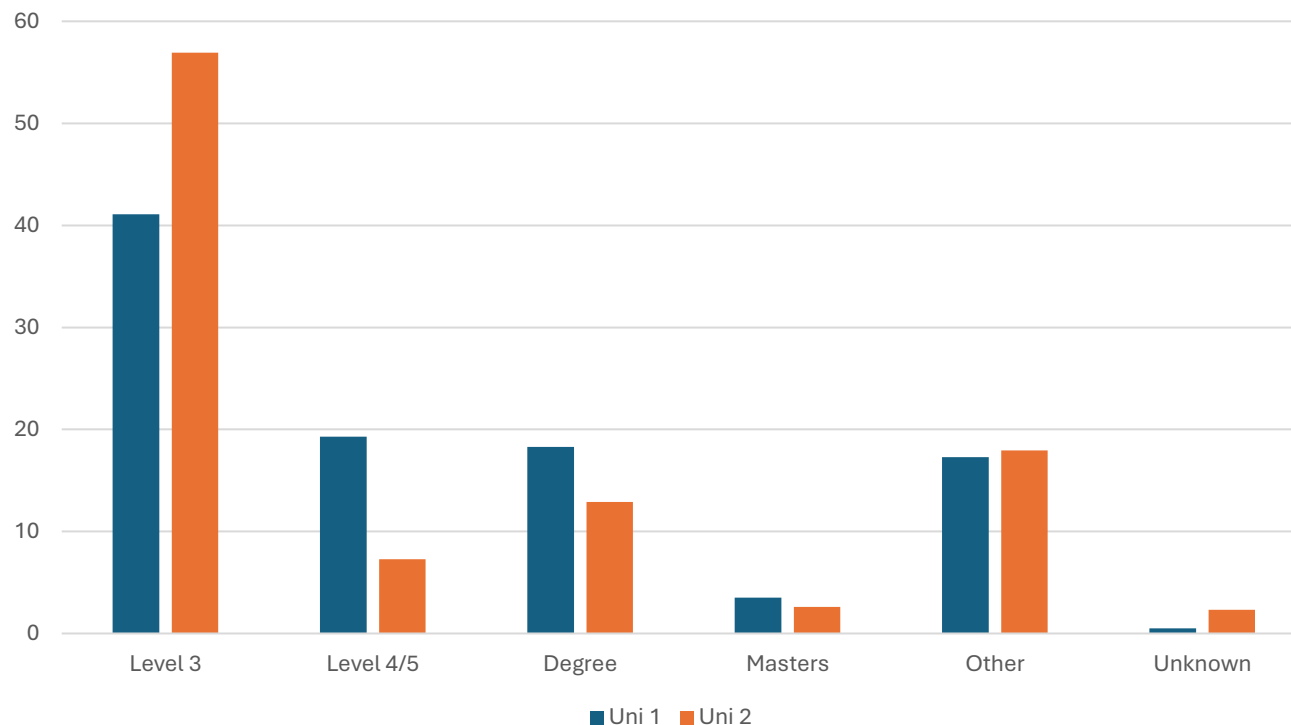
- This project was commissioned by the Edge Foundation, and conducted by Charlynn Pullen and Colin McCaig from Sheffield Hallam University, alongside Katherine Emms and Andrea Laczik from the Edge Foundation
- Case study approach at 2 universities
- Interviewed 3 types of staff in each institution: outreach and WP activities; employer engagement and degree apprenticeship recruitment; policy and strategy at the institution, notably the access and participation plans.
- We also analysed anonymised demographic data on the qualifications and profile of degree apprentices at each institution, and the publicly available access and participation plans.
- Alongside interviewing staff involved in DAs at institutions, we also interviewed two policy makers involved in policy and strategy around DAs. **Data derived from a total of nine interviews**

Employers as recruiters

- Upskilling existing staff vs taking new recruits
- Employers' priorities
- Changing mindset – employers doing own outreach and (some) have their own EDI mandates
- Sometimes SMEs but often new recruits in big cohorts
- Relationships with HEPs likely to be key...
- Fundamentally, employers make the offer to a degree apprentice with university approval

Qualifications on entry

Entry qualifications of degree apprentices

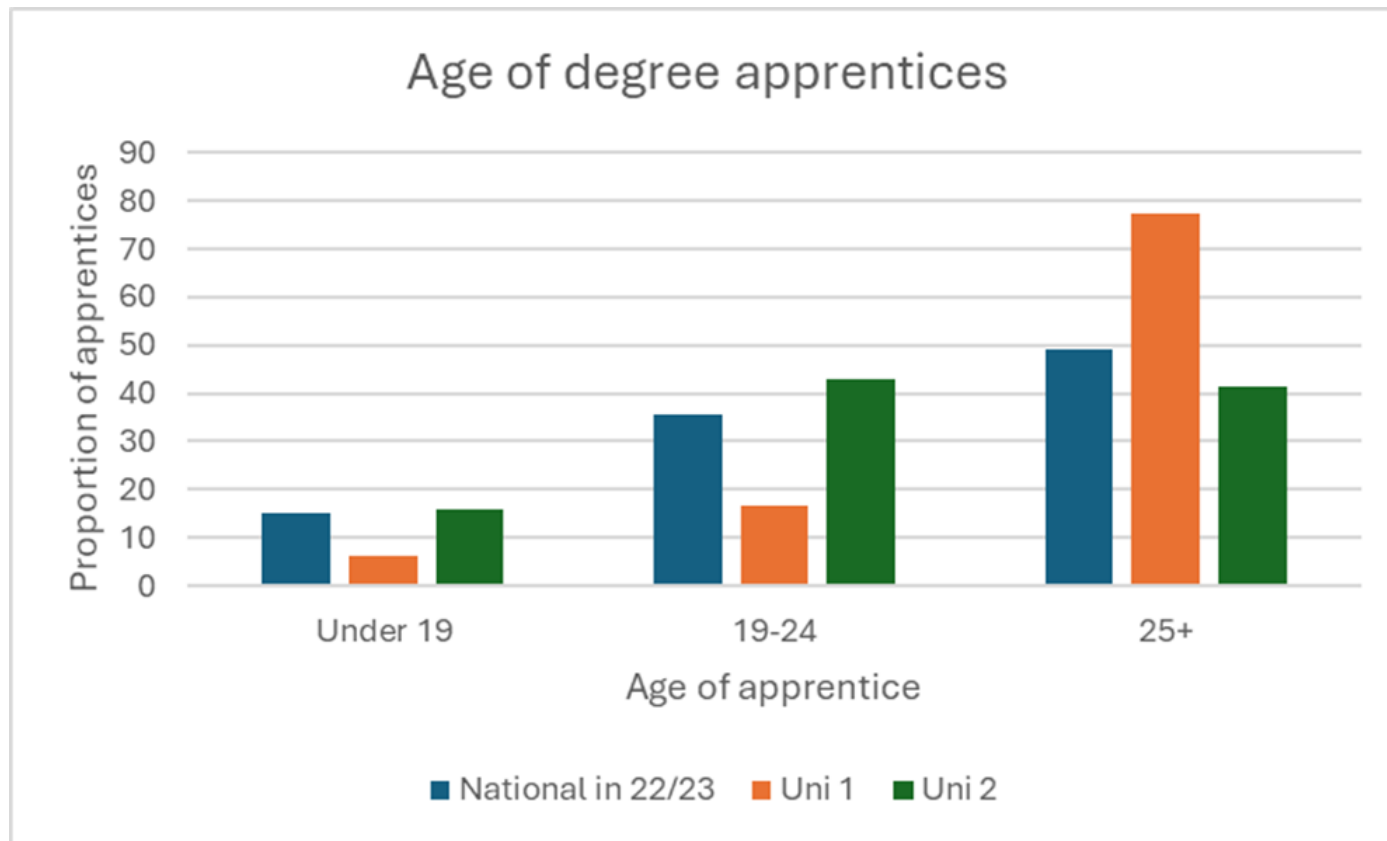


Majority of degree apprentices have a Level 3 as their highest prior qualification – some variation in subject.

Around 20% have a degree or higher qualification before starting

Maths and English is a concern – both universities had to provide additional support to some apprentices

Profile of degree apprentices



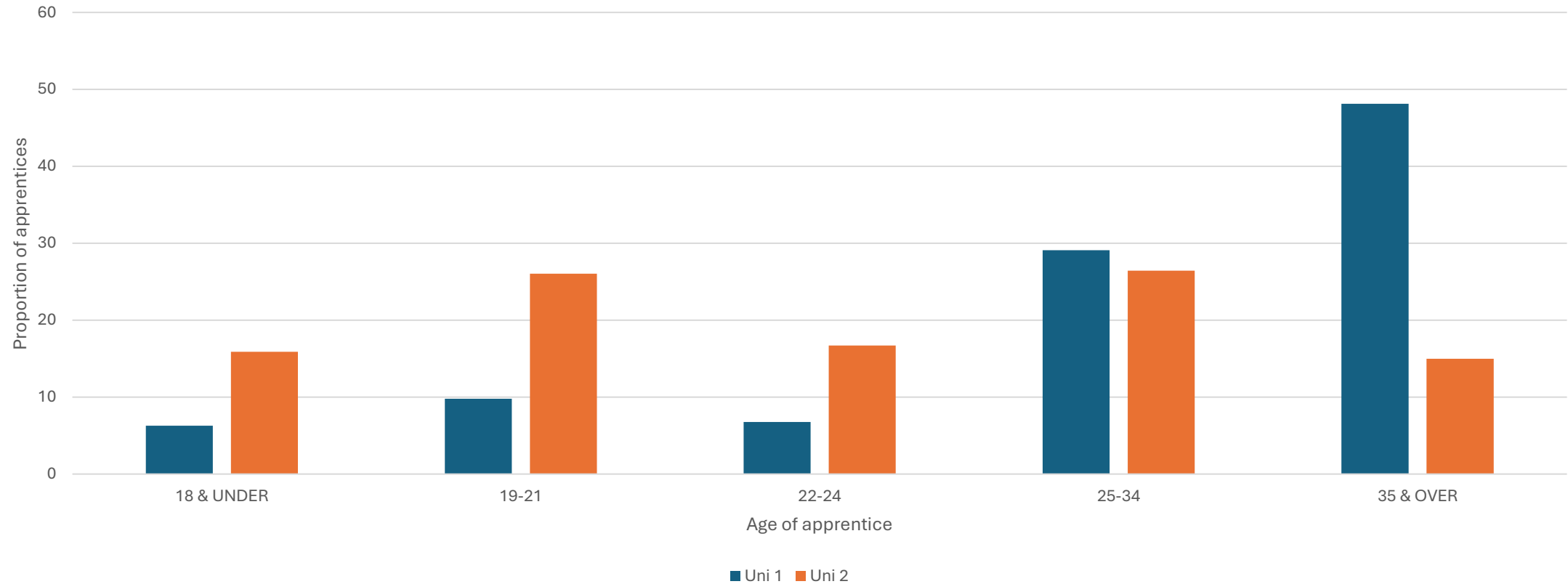
Most degree apprentices are 19 or older

Variation often by subject e.g. older in health-related programmes, younger in digital programmes

Older apprentices less likely to have parents who went to university

Profile by age category (case study providers)

Proportion of current apprentices by age category



Outreach for degree apprenticeships?

- DAs not central to university outreach – but growing demand for IAG about them
- Outreach to schools/colleges based on relative ease of access to captive disadvantaged & underrepresented audiences
- Often invited into high achieving schools just to talk about DAs
- Barriers for young applicants: high entry requirements; parental scepticism; private schools better at prep for assessment centres
- Indirect recruitment – providers have less influence and cannot target specific cohorts that satisfy their mission

Awareness of degree apprenticeships

- Increasing number of schools request information about degree apprenticeships – particularly high achieving schools
- Misconception about
 - a) whom DAs are suitable for
 - b) effort needed to secure DAs
 - c) effort needed to complete DAs
 - d) on the job and off the job training
 - e) different learning/training venues including geography
 - f) DAs are employees
- Private schools have been more pro-active about utilising the benefits of DAs
- Misinformed: Working class families/parents reject DAs and prefer UG programmes

Support for degree apprentices on programme

- Academic skills support sometimes needed more (compared with traditional UG students) - e.g. theoretical learning rather than practice-associated elements.
- Maths/academic writing refresher skill courses – especially mature age groups who have been out of learning environment for many years.
- Degree apprentices (esp as mature students) more likely to have more personal/family responsibilities, so they engage with the university in a different way and sometimes ‘hard to reach’ - So important to ensure the support systems respond to this and apprentices know where/how to access support.
 - ‘Support triangle’ - both a student support careers advisor and academic advisor allocated to apprentices.
 - Importance of work-place mentors.
 - Monitoring systems in place to check if issues with engagement/retention/progression of apprentices.

Conclusions

- Some support for the idea that DAs widen participation among mature and PT students in work
- Young DAs do not come from as diverse backgrounds as those on full-time undergraduate students – Unis not in control of recruitment
- Everyday outreach increasingly involves generic IAG about DAs but no direct link between outreach and recruitment

Thank you

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