



# How do prospective students make decisions about HE?

A Nuffield Research Placements  
case study

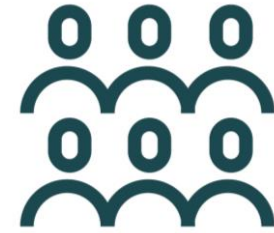
# Nuffield Foundation

- Established by Lord Nuffield in 1943.
- An independent charitable trust with a mission to advance social-well-being.
- We value independent thinking and believe in using evidence to change people's lives for the better.
- Our commitment to rigorous evidence is echoed in our student programmes.

# Strategy 2017-2022

We fund research that informs social policy, primarily in **Education, Welfare and Justice**.

Our **student programmes** provide opportunities for young people to develop their skills and confidence in quantitative and scientific methods.



# Decision making and pathways to HE

- The 'choices' young people make
- Role of school, attainment, place, family background, gender...
- Careers information e.g. maths and earnings information
- Expectations, aspirations
- Context
  - Alternatives to HE
  - Access for who and why?
  - Different measures e.g. area based, first in family

# HE progression and success

- Pre-18 qualifications & attainment, persistence of family background
- Design of policy & practice - 'traditional', 18/19, geographically mobile student
  - e.g. combining with caring responsibilities– embedded support, flexibility, practicalities
  - Credit transfers, bridging across routes
  - Better data to understand and evaluate
- Labour market outcomes vary by institution & subject
  - Issues of supply & demand
  - Post HE 'choices'

# Work in progress

- Understanding different admissions policies
- Importance of evaluating options, likely impacts and outcomes of reforms
- Data quality and use
- Moving beyond 'understanding' to identifying and evaluating promising programmes

# Case Study: Nuffield Research Placements

- Nuffield Research Placements provide up to 1200 placements a year, for students to work alongside practising scientists, technologists, engineers and mathematicians.
- Projects take place during the summer holidays, giving students an insight into the world of STEM research.



# Case Study: Nuffield Research Placements

- All students receive travel payments and an additional bursary of £100 per week is available to eligible students to support them during their project.
- Placements are available across the UK in universities, industry or research institutions.
- The programme has a focus on supporting students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.





# What are the main objectives of Nuffield Research Placements?



To give students' first-hand experience of authentic STEM research to inform and support future learning and career development



To broaden and deepen students' understanding of STEM subjects and STEM research



To provide these opportunities to a wide range of young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and the schools and colleges that serve them



To target schools, colleges and potential project providers in areas where students are currently underserved

# How are Nuffield Research Placements being evaluated?

- In 2016 longitudinal study commissioned to evaluate the impact of Nuffield Research Placements on participating **students' education and career outcomes**
- Evaluation is being undertaken over seven years until 2022
- Comprises of a **qualitative element** (led by CFE Research) and a **quantitative element** (undertaken by Frontier Economics)

# How are Nuffield Research Placements being evaluated?

## Study aims:

- Track the progress of students that participated in the Nuffield Research Placements (NRPs) scheme in 2014, 2015 and 2016 to evaluate and understand the impact of the programme on education and employment outcomes.
- Provide insights into the views and experiences of placement providers, schools/colleges and students.
- Identify and develop a set of impact measures, which can be implemented as the project continues.

# Some key questions explored in the longitudinal evaluation:

- How does participation in the placement influence student decision-making , aspirations and views about STEM subjects and career plans?
- To what extent is the programme perceived to: Influence students' aspirations, improve their confidence and ability to work independently , and enhance their science capital and networks?

## Some key questions explored in the longitudinal evaluation:

- Which types of students are likely to apply for NRPs and to be successful in their application?
- What impact do placements have on choices about post-school study and career paths in STEM?

# What impact do placements have on choices about post-school study and career paths in STEM?

Nuffield Research Placements increase the likelihood of enrolling in a STEM course at a Russell Group higher education institution

The placement experience is perceived to enhance transferable skills

Students report that placements improve their understanding of what STEM researchers do on a day-to-day basis

Nuffield Research Placements increase the number and quality of STEM A levels achieved

The programme is successfully targeting disadvantaged pupils

***To download the Nuffield Research Placements evaluation interim report for findings to date and preliminary estimates of impacts on the 2014 cohort please visit: [www.nuffieldfoundation.org](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)***

# What are the next steps for the evaluation?

Report in Spring 2020 which will extend the preliminary impact analysis and provide analysis of the impacts of the placements on key stage 5 (A level) results and HE outcomes using:

- HESA data for three cohorts of placement students (2014,2015 and 2016), building on preliminary analysis for 2014 cohort.
- combined HESA data and all four waves of the student survey data for the 2016 cohort of placement students

# What are the next steps for the evaluation?

A further report in spring 2023 will include an analysis of the impacts of the placements on post-HE study and employment using the graduate outcomes survey for all three cohorts.



# Further information

For general information about the evaluation contact Cheryl Lloyd, Programme Head (Young People), Education:

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For information about Nuffield Research Placements contact Sharmila Metcalf, Head of Nuffield Research Placements:

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Download the Nuffield Research Placements Longitudinal Study interim report:

- [www.nuffieldfoundation.org](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

# References

Jake Anders <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/socio-economic-status-subject-choice-14-and-university-access>

Morag Henderson <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/first-family-higher-education-choices-and-labour-market-outcomes>

Peter Davies <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/effect-graduate-earnings-16-year-olds%E2%80%99-subject-choices>

Catherine Dilnot <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/educational-choices-16-19-and-adverse-outcomes-university>

Gill Wyness <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/undermatch-higher-education-prevalence-drivers-and-outcomes>

Vikki Boliver <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/fair-admission-universities-england-improving-policy-practice>

Crawford, C., Dearden, L., Micklewright, J., and Vignoles, A. (2017). Family Background and University Success, Differences in Higher Education Access and Outcomes in England. Oxford University Press.

FE to HE – supporting student parents' transition (Brightside) <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/fe-he-supporting-student-parents-transition>)

Investigating the support available to student parents in HE Led by Dr Marie-Pierre Moreau  
<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/supporting-student-parents-he>)

A cross-national comparison of student parents and HE in the UK and Denmark Led by Professor Rachel Brooks  
<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/student-parents-and-he-cross-national-comparison>)

Tracking student mothers' HE participation and early careers: Led by Dr Clare Lyonette  
<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/tracking-student-mothers-he-participation-and-early-careers>

An evaluation of innovative HE courses for student parents run by Birkbeck and the Open University Led by Professor Claire Callender <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/evaluation-innovative-he-courses-student-parents>

# References

Other relevant projects

FutureTrack project (Warwick university) <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/longer-term-investigation-careers-uk-graduates>

Adeline Delavande <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/information-expectations-and-transition-higher-education>

Care leavers education and employment at age 21 <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/care-leavers%E2%80%99-transition-labour-market-england>

Education spending and pressures (IFS) <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/education-spending-pressures-and-challenges>



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