

Summary of Business for  
**College Board Of Examiners Executive Committee**



Title	Equal Opportunities: an analysis of taught postgraduate student performance for cohorts entering the College between 2008 and 2012
Author/ Comments	Ewa Wszelaka, Strategic Planning and Projects Officer
Date	24 February 2014
Status	Freely Available
Document type	For Discussion
Summary	See attached
Paper referred from	-
Recommendation	The Committee is asked to consider the attached report.

# **Equal Opportunities; an analysis of taught postgraduate student performance for cohorts entering the College between 2008 and 2012**

## **Introduction and methodology**

- This paper draws together **information on student population and achievement** used for the annual review of taught postgraduate programmes. It seeks to examine trends relating to ethnicity, gender, age and disability; factors which are, or will be, implicated in equal opportunities legislation. Data are also examined relating to students' domicile (or, more accurately, their fee-region- UK, Other EU and Overseas).
- As with previous years, data was used covering **five entry cohorts, 2008 to 2012 on postgraduate taught programmes**. Students on MA/MMus/MBA/MSc programmes are all included, as are those studying for Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate degrees.  
The data excludes:
  - students on Masters by Research programmes;
  - students on Graduate Diploma programmes since these programmes are at final year undergraduate level, even though the students themselves may be postgraduates;
  - students on undergraduate MSci programmes, even though the final year of these degrees are at Masters level;
  - students studying on CAPITAL or inSTIL, or at the University of London Institute in Paris.
- The report draws on **headcount data at College level**. As such there are no Faculty or Departmental data available but it also avoids double counting students.
- Comparison with national data is practically impossible since there are no freely available data relating gender, ethnicity and disability to student progression and achievement. Admissions are beyond the scope of this paper since data on applicants' ethnicity, disability etc. are not available - however, the College's PGT population year on year can be examined for possible trends in admissions, although if there is a consistent bias against one particular sort of applicant, this would not be picked up by such an analysis.
- Since PGT programmes are single-stage, the analysis of performance focuses on the outcome achieved by students at the end of their study. Also note that, in the current data set, there is no record of number of attempts made by students to pass their programme. Additionally, as the year-on-year data sets are snapshots taken 12 months apart, there may be a number of discrepancies between the data over the years.

## **Analysis of postgraduate student population by ethnic origin, gender, age on entry and declared disability**

### *Ethnicity (Appendix, Fig. 1)*

- Figures for 2008-10 showed a year-on-year decrease in the percentage of non-white PGT entrants, which followed a significant increase in the percentage of non-white students to 60% in 2011. This was largely due to the over recruitment of Overseas students in the School of Management.

- The figure for 2012 presents a drop in the percentage of non-white PGT entrants to 52%, which might be due to no re-occurrence of over recruitment. Nevertheless, even ignoring the anomalous peak in the percentage of the non-white PGT students in 2011, the gradual decline observed between 2008 (43%) and 2010 (39%) has not continued in 2012 (52%).
- The percentage of white students has fluctuated between 41% and 49% with a drop to 35% in 2011. Since 2011 the percentage of white student population have been lower than of non-white student population (in 2012 the percentage of the white student population equalled 45%).
- The further reduction in the number of students failing to declare their ethnic origin (approximately 18% in 2009 to 4% in 2012) might contribute to a gentle drop in the percentage of the non-white PGT entrants observed in 2012. Students who fail to declare their ethnic origin are, disproportionately, Overseas (up to 60% of the non-declarers are from this region) and therefore likely to be mainly non-white. As has been alluded to, over 75% of entrants from outside the EU declare themselves as non-white (contrasting with UK students who are over 70% of white origin and other EU entrants where as few as 1 in 14 declare themselves non-white).

#### *Gender (Appendix, Fig. 2)*

- The gender balance of PGT entrants has tended to hover around 50:50 for the last few years with females in a small majority; however, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of females in two recent cohorts altering the balance to 56:44.

#### *Age (Appendix, Fig. 3)*

- The percentage of ‘mature’ entrants (here defined according to the HESA criterion of being 25 or over) has fluctuated over the years at approximately 40%. In 2011 the percentage of mature students fell to 31%. Despite the drop, the figures for the 2012 cohort show that the trend from before 2011 continues with the percentage of mature students at 44%.

#### *Disability (Appendix, Fig 4)*

- Whilst the percentage of entrants that declared themselves disabled in the 2012 cohort has slightly increased (from 3.64% to 5.48%), it is still in line with previous years and has remained very stable with an average of 5.20%.

### **Analysis of postgraduate student achievement related to ethnic origin, gender, age on entry & declared disability**

#### *Incompletion*

- Examination of achievement profiles for the most recent cohort (2012) is rather distorted by the large number of students (nearly 1 in 4) who remain Incomplete, the proportion which remains stable when comparing to the 2011 cohort. This number comprises not only students who failed to gain an award at their first attempt but also those studying part-time, those who interrupted or deferred and those whose programme of study spans more than one academic year (e.g. MSc Social Work, PGDip Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, MA Screenwriting (Retreat)). Fairer profiles are typically obtained by excluding Incomplete students, implicitly assuming they will perform to a similar level to those who have already completed.

### *College level*

- At College level it can be seen that the proportion of students achieving a Distinction and Merit has increased from 13% in 2011 to 18% in 2012 and from 37% to 48% respectively. The rise in the number of students achieving a Merit is in part due to the change of the regulations in 2010 where the Merit band was changed from 65-69% to 60-69%.

### *Achievement and ethnicity (Appendix, Fig. 5)*

- Previous trends have shown that non-white students have been less likely to obtain a Merit or Distinction than white students. While the trend has continued, there has been a visible increase in non-white entrants achieving a Merit (from 30% in 2011 to 44% in 2012). An increase also relates to white PGT entrants although the rate of growth has been much more moderate (only by 3%). A significant increase in the proportion of both white and non-white students achieving a Merit may be the ongoing result of a change in the regulations in 2010 which was mentioned in the section above *College level*.
- The figures for non-white students achieving a Distinction have been fluctuating at approximately 6% a year, and in 2012 the percentage has risen to 10%. Correspondingly, the percentage of white entrants with a Distinction has been fluctuating at around 25% albeit with a slight upward trend over the last 5 years.
- The proportion of withdrawals from white and non-white students has been fairly consistent over the years at approximately 7%, with non-white students being slightly more likely to withdraw than white students (by 2%).
- Over the years the number of entrants who have withdrawn with an Exit Award has been consistently low with an average of just under 1%. Most students with an Exit Award are non-white and are Overseas students.

### *Achievement and gender (Appendix, Fig. 6)*

- The proportion of both male and female PGT students achieving a Merit has continued to increase (with a peak in 2011 which might be, again, due to a change in regulations in 2010). The trend has been more pronounced for male than female students.
- The figures for male and female students with a Distinction have been fluctuating at around 15% and in 2012 the numbers reached the all-time peak of 20% (male) and 17% (female).
- The percentage of withdrawals among male and female PGT entrants has been fluctuating over the years at between 5% and 7%. For the 2012 cohort the withdrawal rate is 4% (female) and 6% (male).

### *Achievement and age (Appendix, Fig.7)*

- In previous years the achievement of mature PGT students was notably higher than of those PGT students under 24. The figures for the 2012 cohort show that the proportion of achievement between both age groups has largely levelled. Both groups have experienced a sharp increase in the number of PGT students with a Merit (from 38% in 2011 to 49% in 2012) which means that nearly half of PGT students are now awarded a Merit.

- Over the years there has been a fluctuation for both age groups in terms of the number of Distinctions achieved. However, a very noticeable increase can be seen in 2012 of students aged 24 and under designated with a Distinction (from 11% in 2011 to 18% in 2012) which is almost equal to the percentage of mature students with a Distinction.
- Figures for withdrawals have been fluctuating over the last 5 years at approximately 7%. The gap between the proportion of withdrawals by mature students compared to those by younger entrants has continued to decrease (from approximately 5% to 2%).

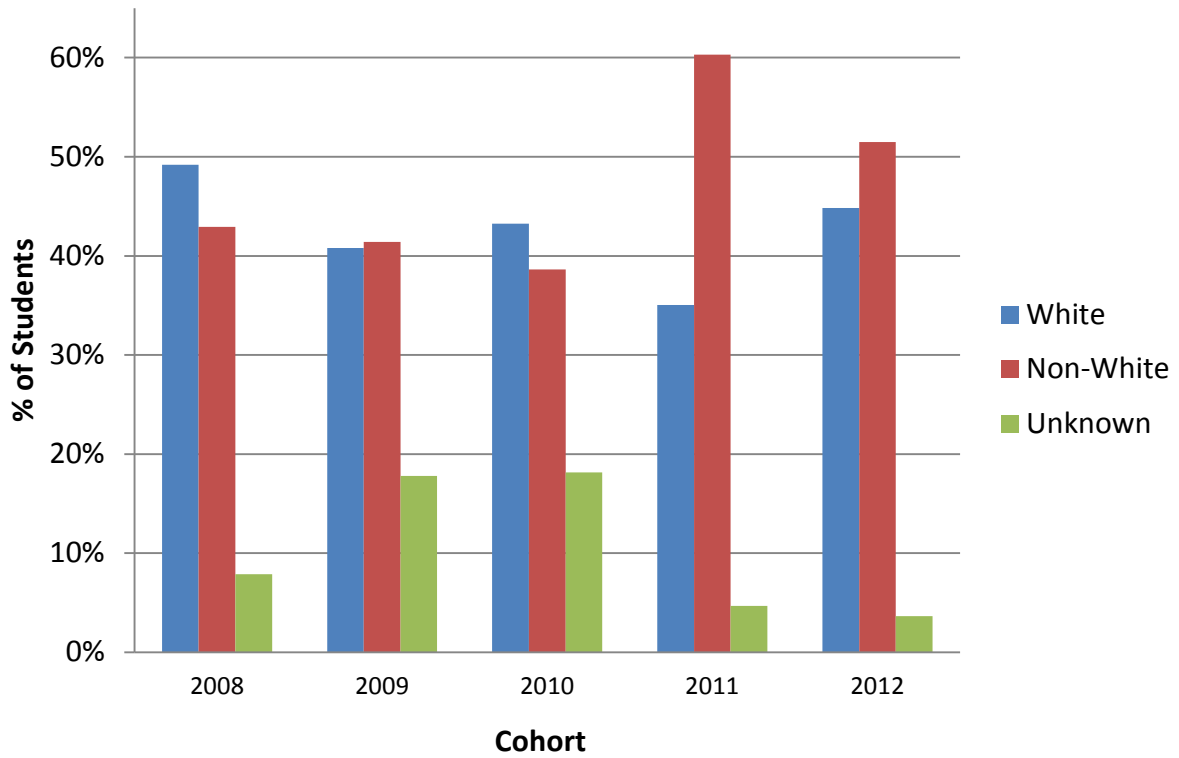
*Achievement and disability (Appendix, Fig.8)*

- There are very few declared disabled PGT students; therefore year-on-year comparison is not meaningful. A consolidated summary over 5 cohorts once again shows a higher level of withdrawals among disabled students but also a greater level of achievement at the top end of the scale. There is no serious matter for concern, although year-on-year fluctuations cannot be detected because of the small sample size.

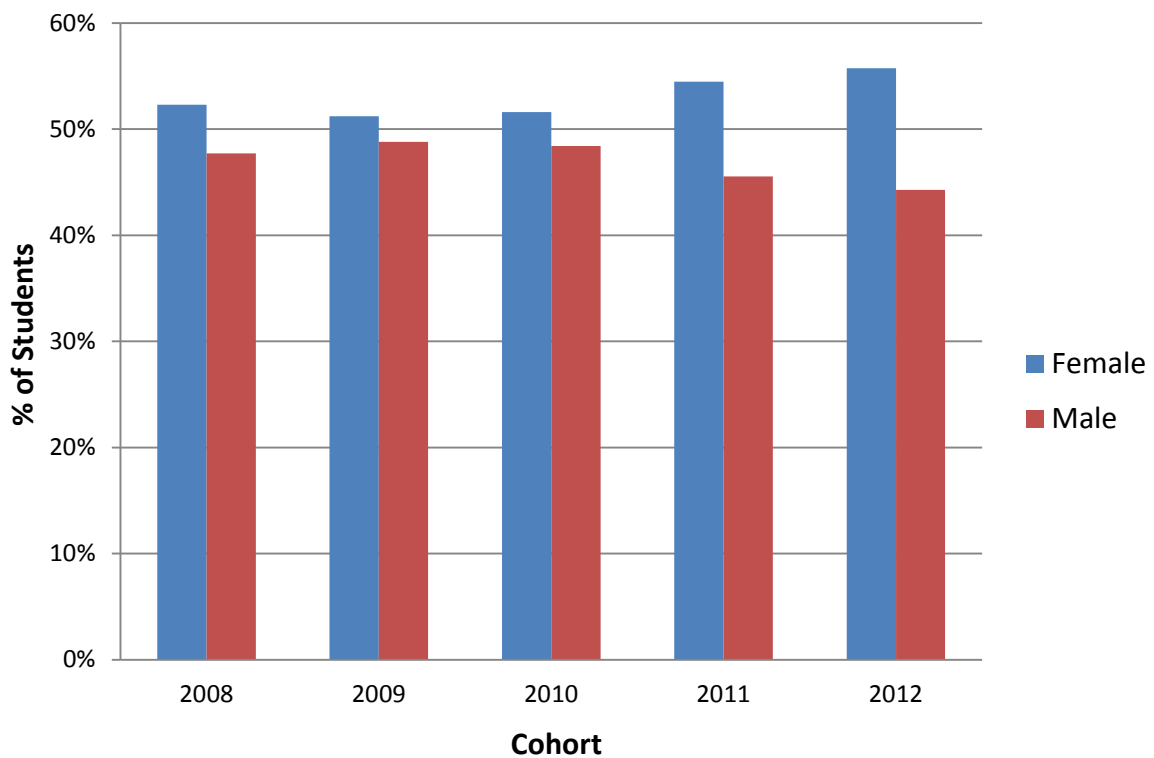
Ewa Wszelaka  
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4 February 2014

## APPENDIX

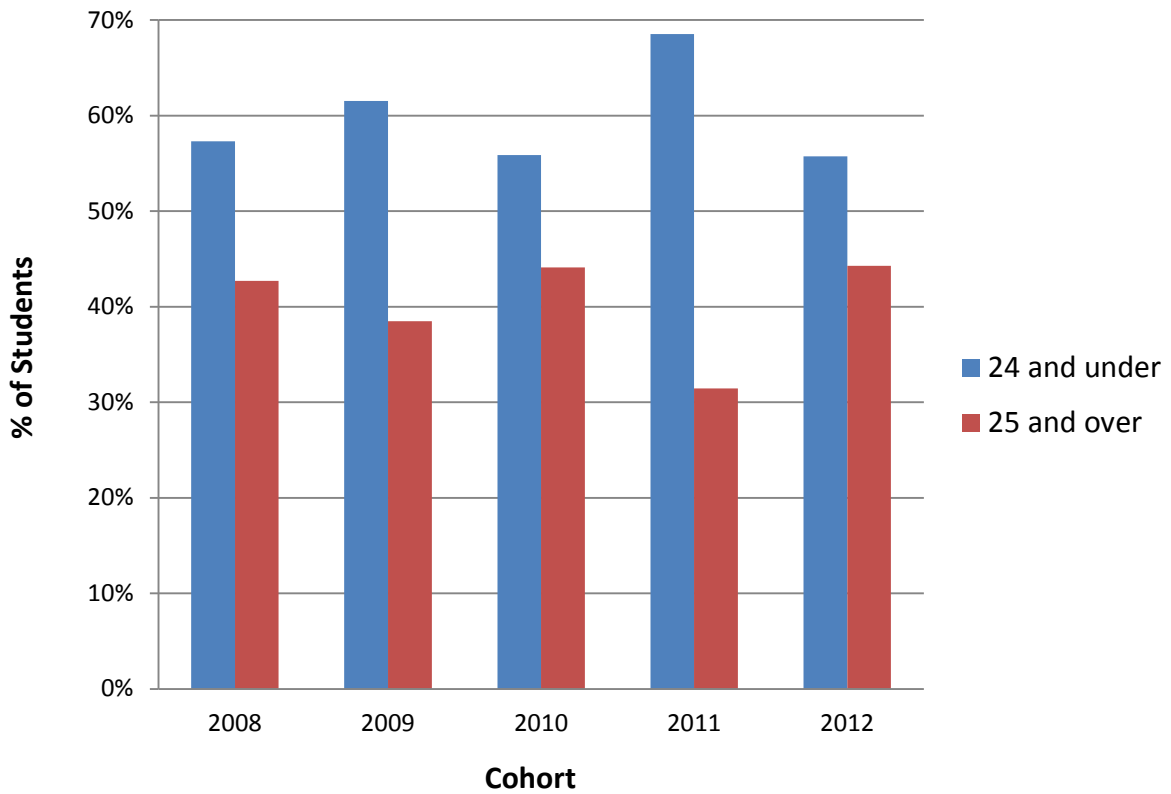
This Appendix contains tables and figures relating to the main paper.



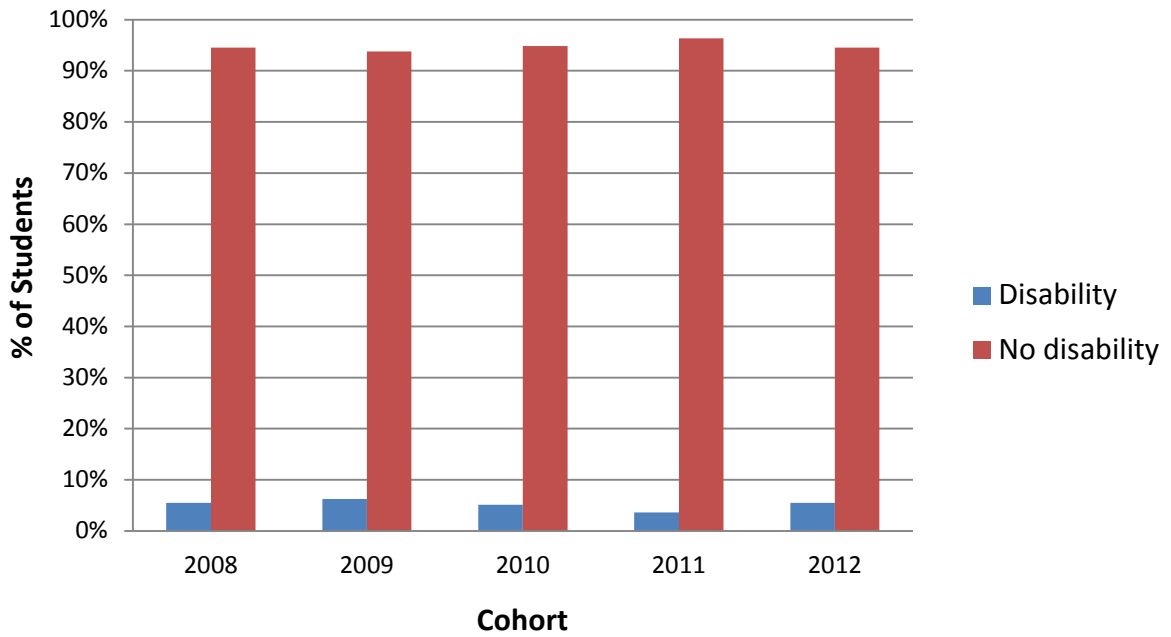
**Fig. 1:** Percentage of students by declared ethnicity and cohort, 2008-12.



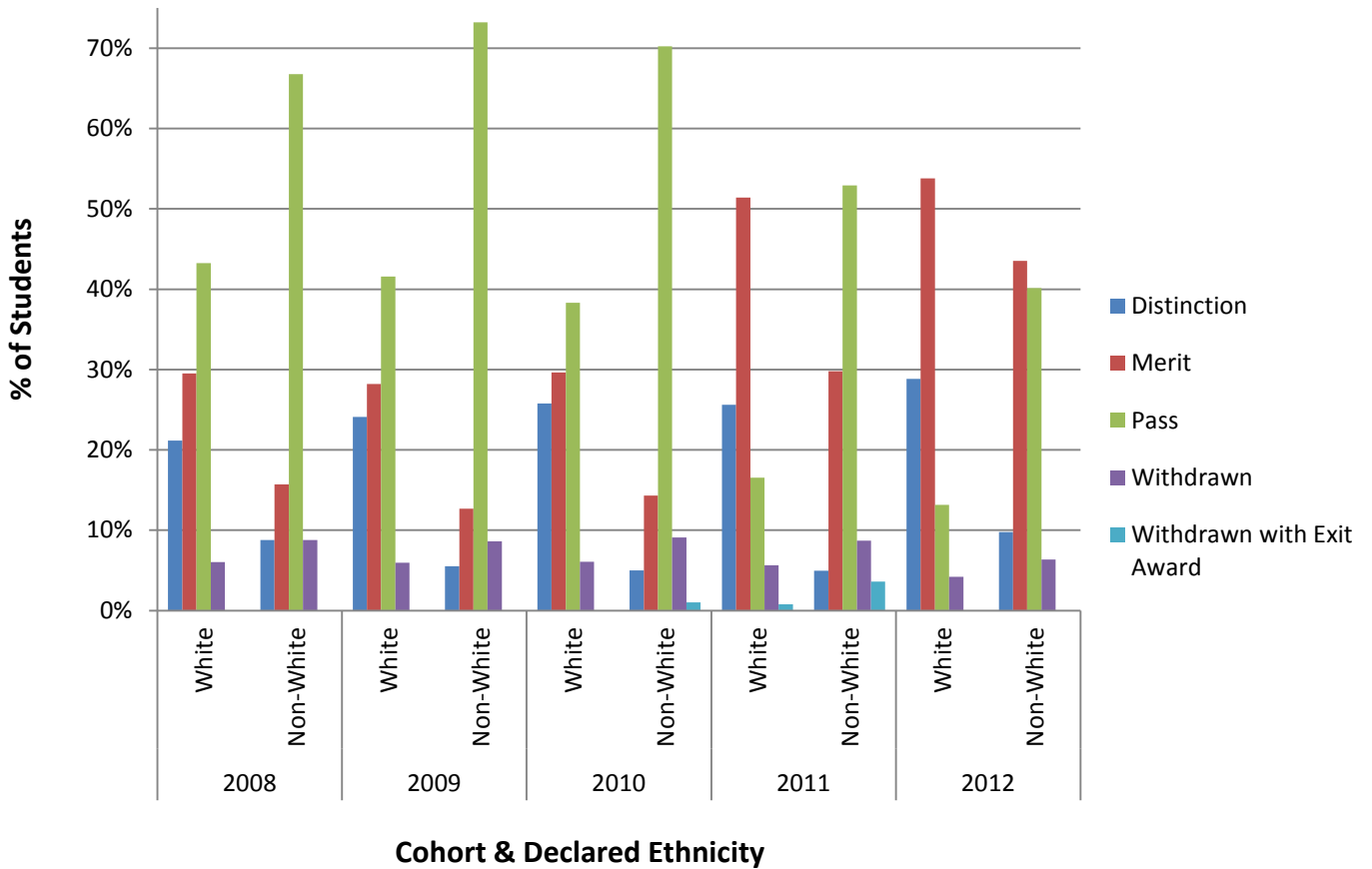
**Fig. 2:** Percentage of students by gender and cohort, 2008-12.



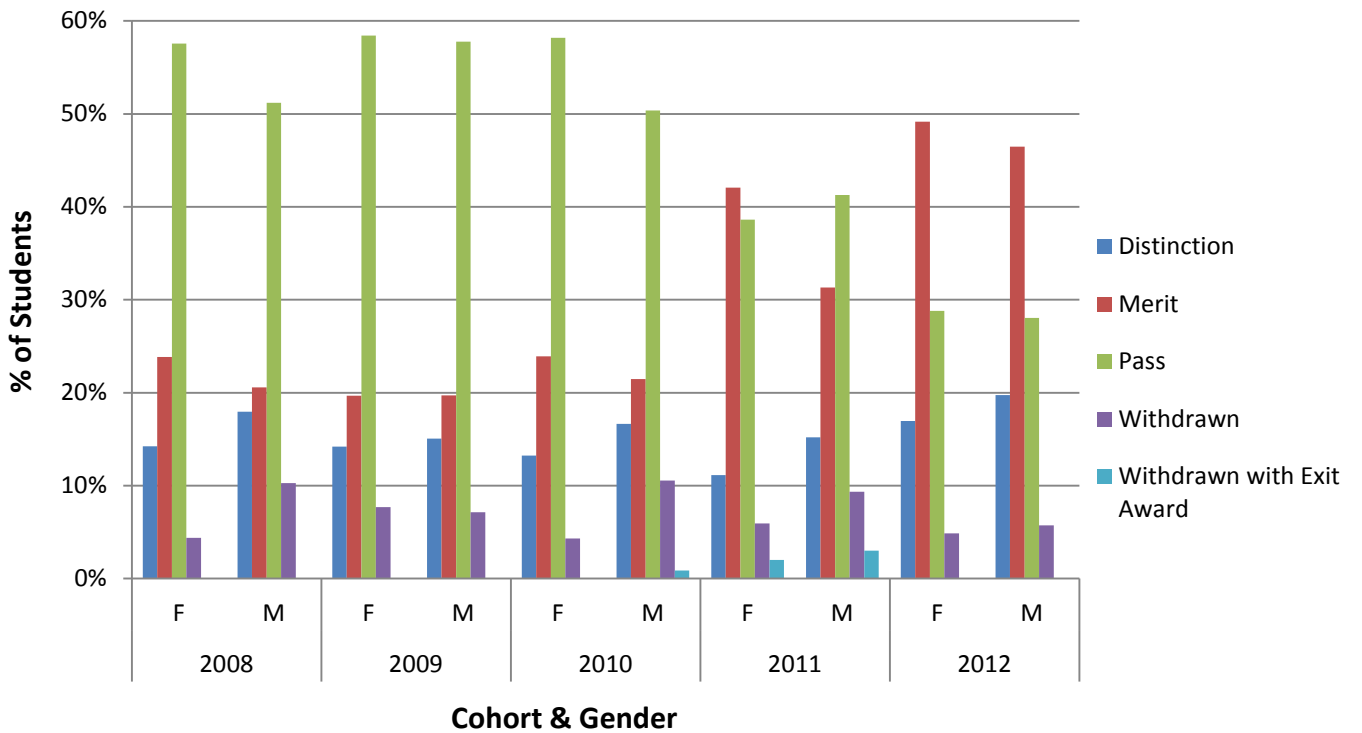
**Fig. 3:** Percentage of mature entrants by cohort, 2008-12.



**Fig. 4:** Percentage of students declaring themselves as disabled by cohort, 2008-12.

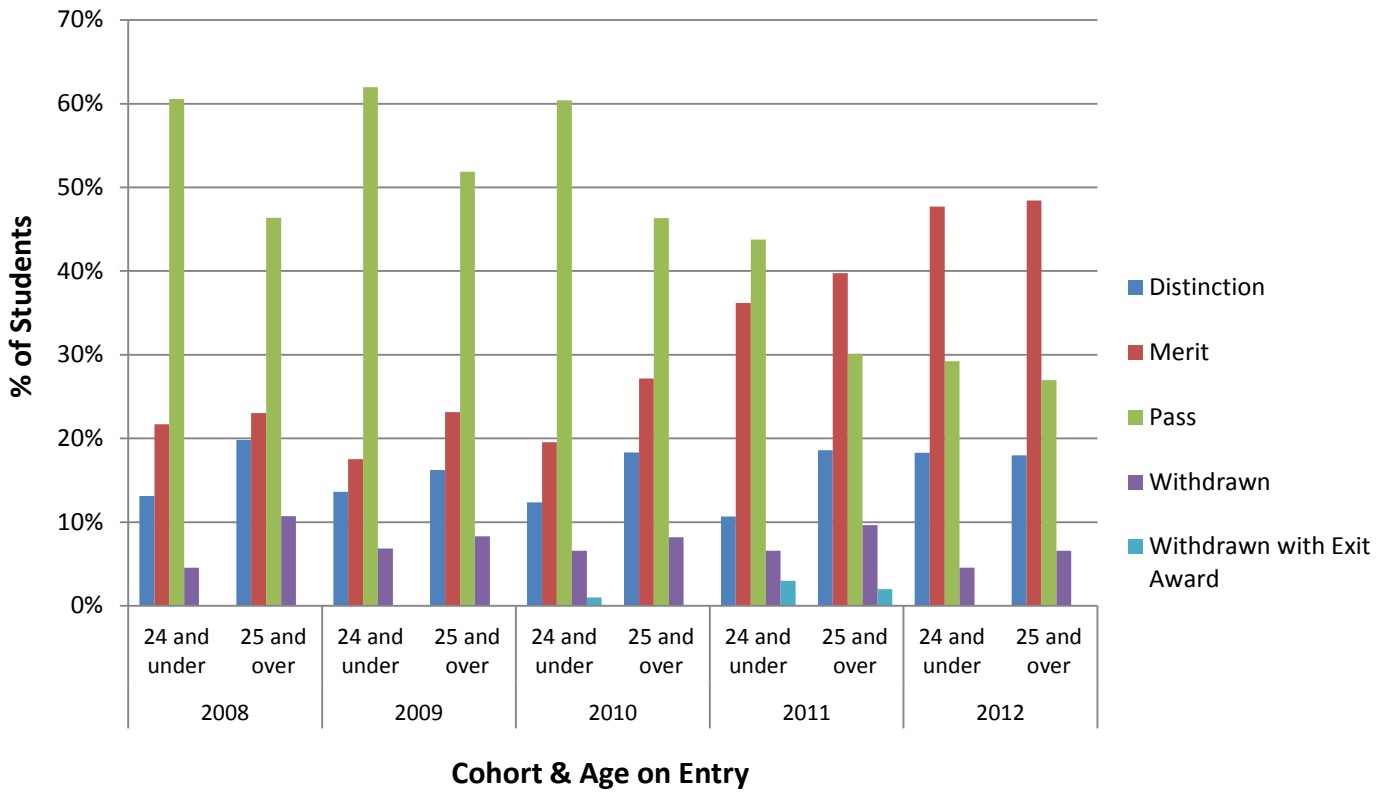


**Fig. 5:** Outcome by cohort and declared ethnicity for PGT students entering between 2008 and 2012. Incomplete students, and those who failed to declare their ethnicity, are excluded.

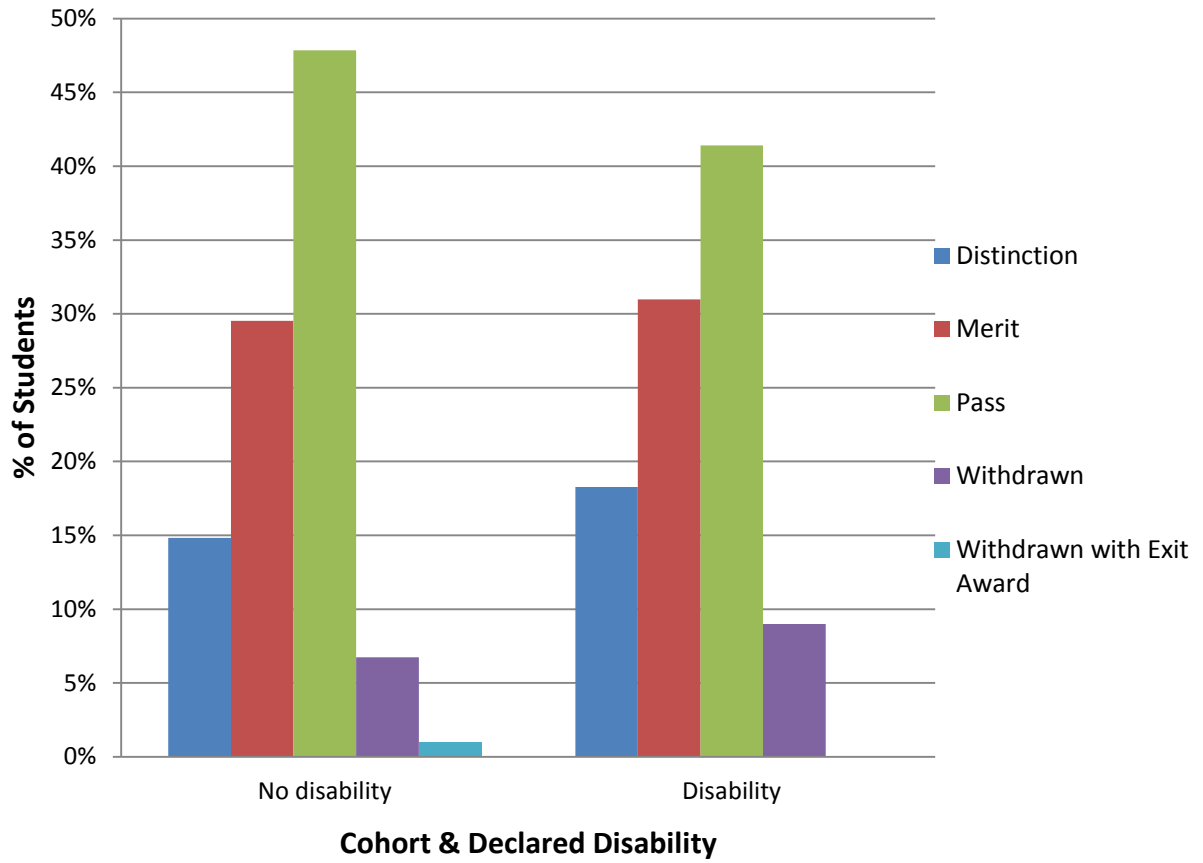




**Fig. 6:** Outcome by cohort and gender for PGT students entering between 2008 and 2012. Incomplete students are excluded.



**Fig. 7:** Outcome by cohort and age on entry for PGT students entering between 2008 and 2012. Incomplete students are excluded.



**Fig. 8:** Outcome by cohort and declared disability for PGT students entering between 2008 and 2012. Incomplete students are excluded.