Setting the scene: Changing financial support for part-time students

A new deal for part-time and distant students Conference

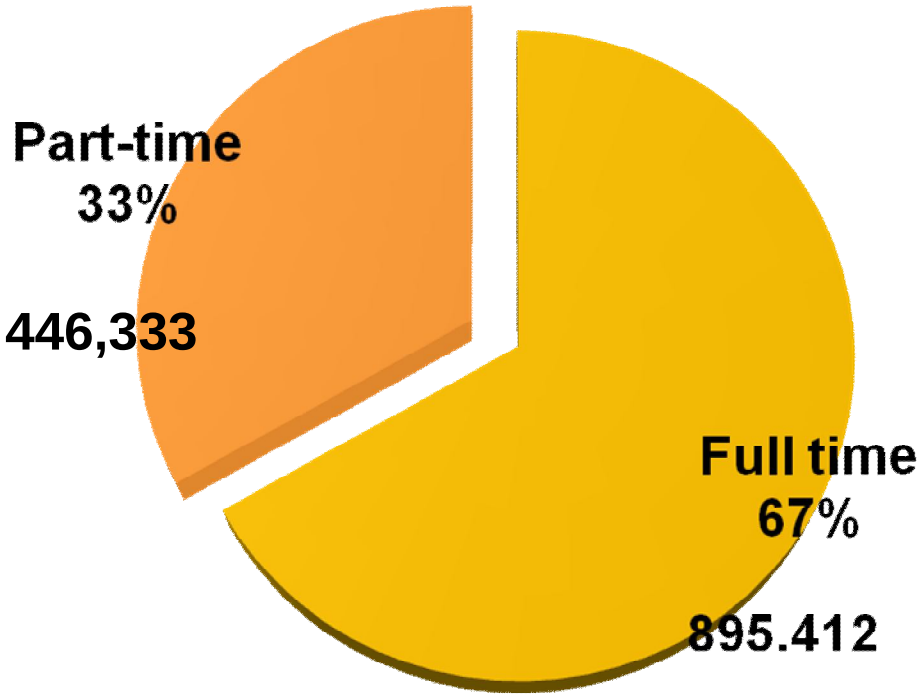
13 October 2011

Claire Callender
Birkbeck & Institute of Education
University of London
c.callender@bbk.ac.uk

Outline of talk

- The growing importance of part-time students and study
- Trends in enrolment
- Changing nature of part-time student financial support in England

UK-domiciled undergraduates in English higher education institutions, 2007-08, by mode of study

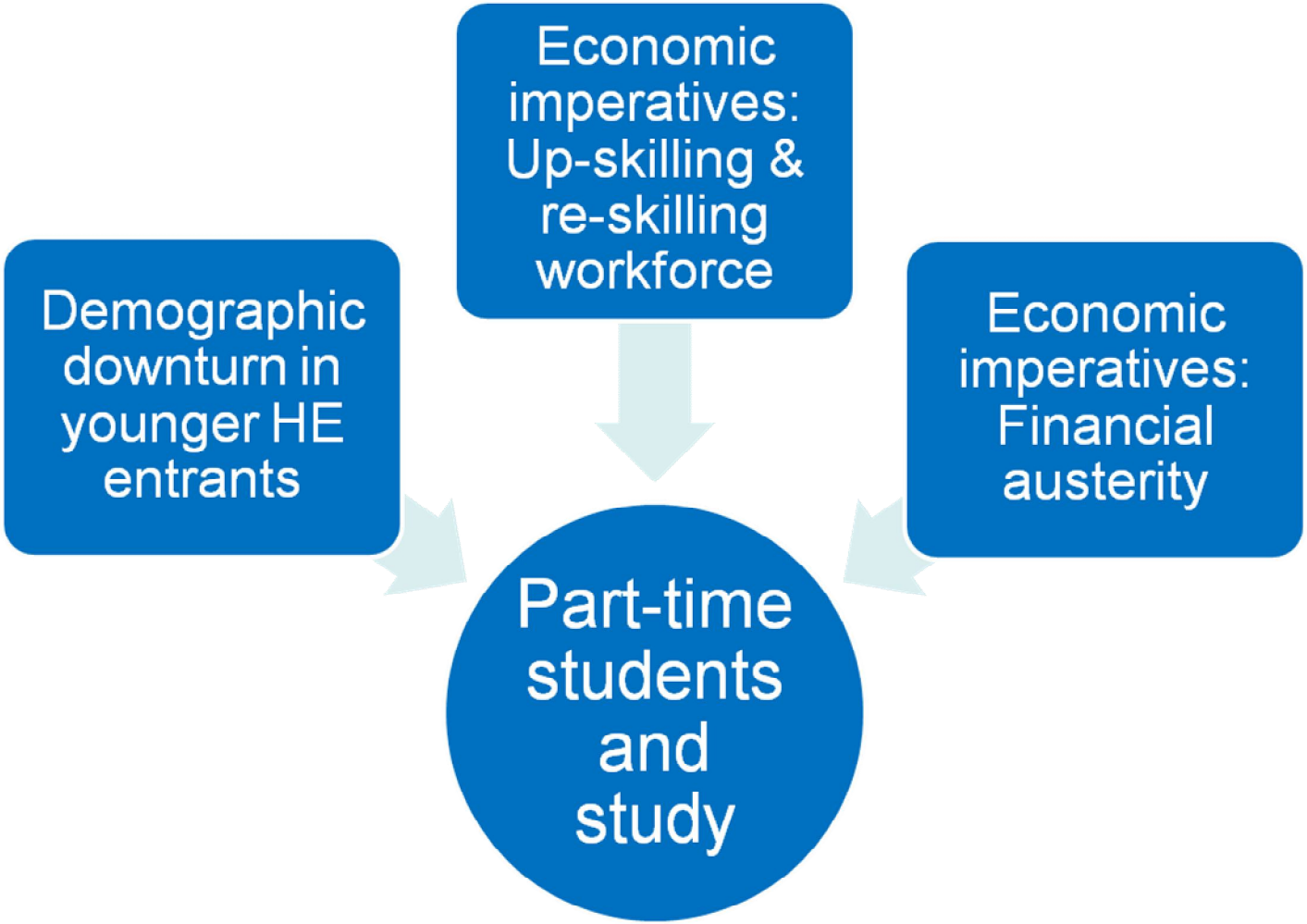


Source: HESA 2007/08

The importance of part-time study

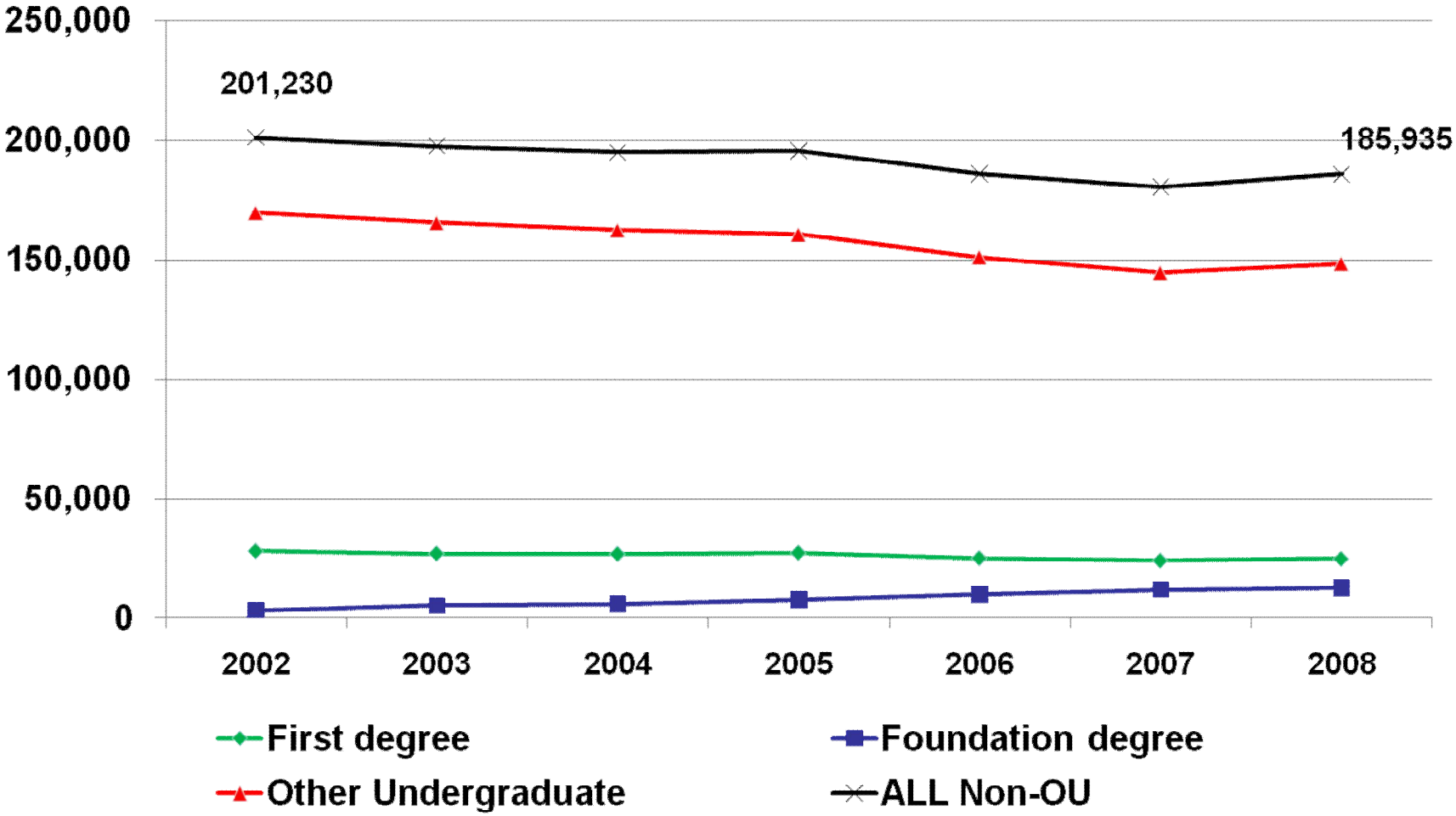
- Lifelong learning
- Meeting the higher skills needs of the economy
- Raising, updating, and improving the skills of people already in employment
- Creating a more flexible and diverse HE sector - responsive to the need of learners and employers
- Widening participation, broadening access, social mobility - enhancing social justice.
  - Second chance educational opportunities

Growing importance of part-time students/study

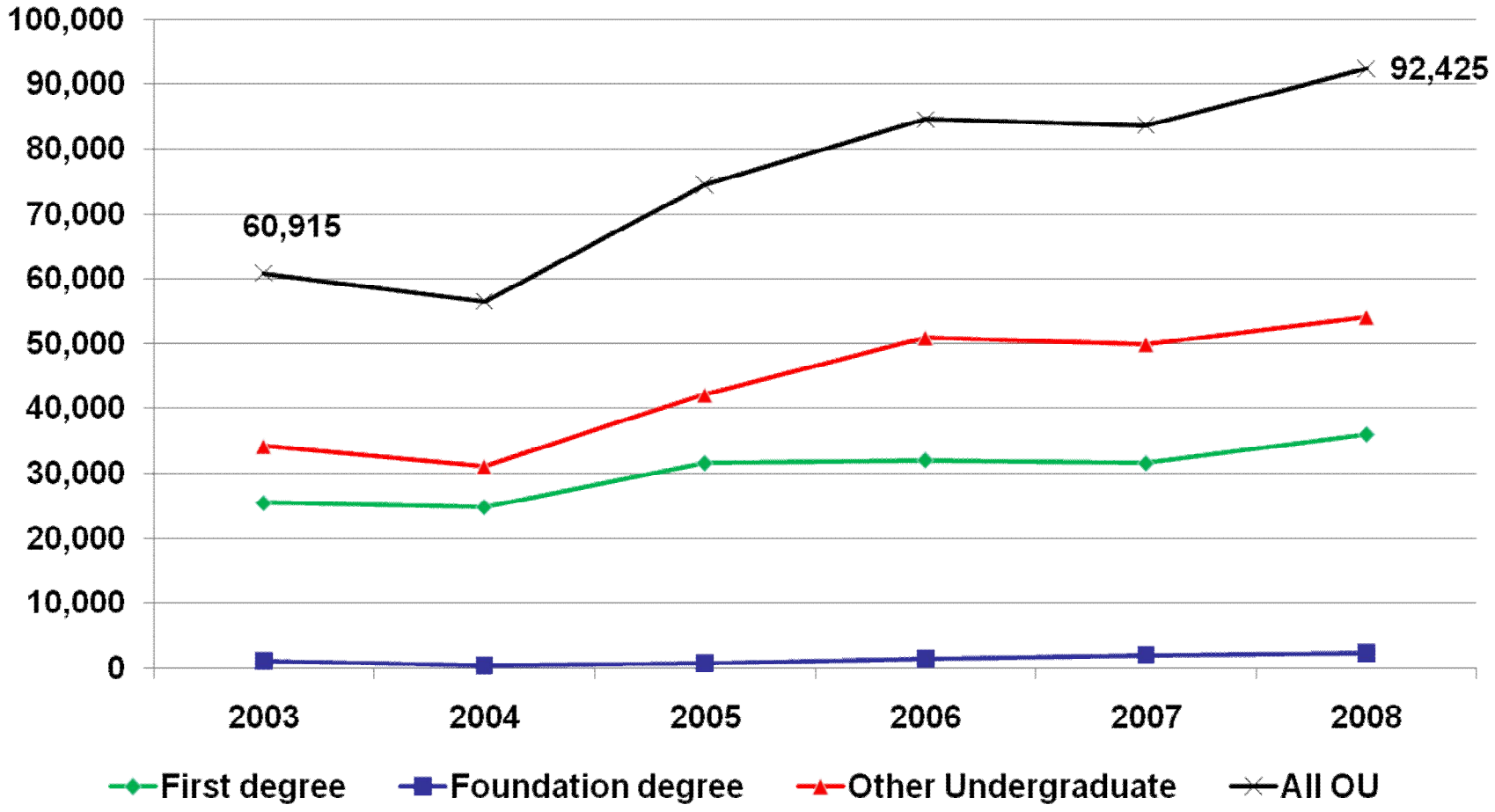


Part-time undergraduates: trends in enrolment in England

Trends in part-time non-OU enrolments 2002-2008, England



Trends in part-time OU enrolments 2002-2008, England



Part-time undergraduates: changing financial support in England

Problems with current part-time undergraduate student financial support

- No level playing field with FT students
- HE not free at the point of access – PT students pay tuition fees up front - FT student do not
- 15% PT receive a government funded fee or course grants – all full-time students receive some help with fees and study costs
- Government support inadequate - not cover fees or course costs in full – all FT students have fees covered in full
- Employers only support a minority of students – about 1/3 - highly selective who support – FT time high earning employees taking vocational qualifications

Browne Report and PT students

PRINCIPLE 06: Part time students should be treated the same as full time students for the costs of learning.

The current system requires part time students to pay upfront. This puts people off from studying part time and it stops innovation in courses that combine work and study. In our proposal the upfront costs for part time students will be eliminated, so that a wider range of people can access higher education in a way that is convenient for them. (p. 5)

Browne Report and PT students

The lack of support for part time study makes it much more difficult for this country to catch up with other countries on the skill levels of the existing workforce. Individuals who are already in work and do not have a higher education qualification are usually unlikely to give up their jobs and enter full time study. Part time study may be a realistic option for them, but access to part time study is hampered by the lack of Government support. The potential exists to combine the experience of individuals already in work with the skills that higher education can provide; but it is not being exploited. p22-23

Part-time student funding in England from 2012/13

- Cap imposed on PT tuition fees
- Maximum an HEI can charge = £6,750 irrespective of students' intensity of study
- All grants (fee and course) for PT students abolished
- Part-time students qualify for non-means tested fees loans if studying more than 25% FTE
- Terms and conditions of loan repayments including interest rates - same as loans for FT students **BUT**
  - Graduates from part-time study will start repaying their loans in the April three years after their course **begins**, or in the April after their course ends if their courses last for less than three years.
- Part-time students will qualify National Scholarship Programme – if university's fees over £6,000

Limitations of the 2012/13 reforms

- 1/3 students likely to qualify for loans
- Students studying more than 75% of a full-time course will not have fees covered in full
- PT students will start to repay their loans 3½ year after they **begin** their course, or earlier if course lasts less than 3 years - FT students start to repay course once they **leave** HE irrespective of the length of their course
- All part-time students taking a bachelor's degree will have to start repaying loans while still studying.
- Part-time premium to be withdrawn