



University and College Union

‘Further, higher, better’

**Submission to the government’s
second Comprehensive Spending
Review**

Section 26

26 Student:staff ratio

Over the past three decades, the student:staff ratio (SSR) in UK higher education has increased from 9 students to 1 teacher, to 19 students to 1 teacher. This is a rise of more than 100%.¹³⁸

Over the same period, the pupil:teacher ratio (PTR) across all UK schools has fallen from 19 pupils to 1 teacher to 18 pupils to 1 teacher. Since 2000-01 the higher education ratio has been higher than the schools ratio.

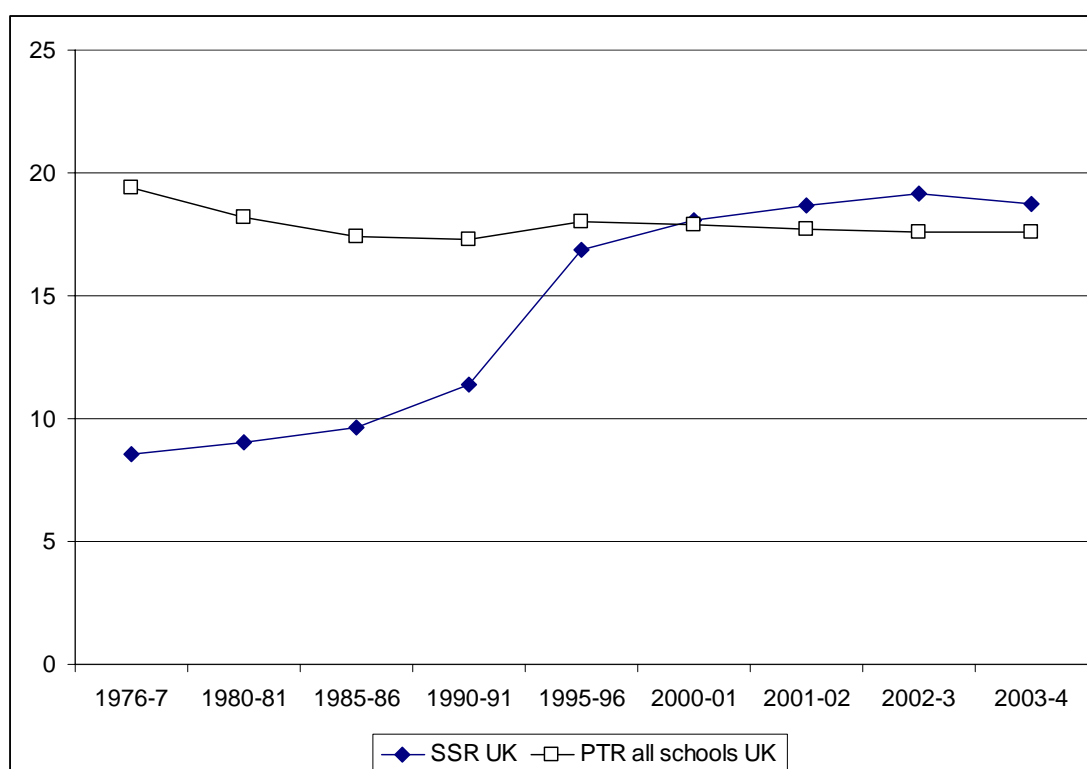
Higher education institutions in England are forecasting that the student:staff ratio will further increase in the period to 2008 – even though full-time undergraduate students will be paying up to £3,000 a year in variable top-up fees from 2006.¹³⁹

Student:staff ratio and pupil:teacher ration in the UK

| | SSR | PTR |
|-------------------------------|----------|----------|
| 1975-76 | 8.6 : 1 | 19.4 : 1 |
| 1980-81 | 9.1 : 1 | 18.2 : 1 |
| 1985-86 | 9.6 : 1 | 17.4 : 1 |
| 1990-91 | 11.4 : 1 | 17.3 : 1 |
| 1995-96 | 16.9 : 1 | 18.0 : 1 |
| 1999-00 | 17.5 : 1 | 18.1 : 1 |
| 2000-01 | 18.1 : 1 | 17.9 : 1 |
| 2001-02 | 18.7 : 1 | 17.7 : 1 |
| 2002-03 | 19.2 : 1 | 17.6 : 1 |
| 2003-04 ¹⁴⁰ | 18.8 : 1 | 17.6 : 1 |

SSR (student:staff ratio) and PTR (pupil:teacher ratio) data based on full-time equivalents.
 Source: SSR data - AUT calculation based on USR data series and HESA Students and Resources series, including undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers and teaching-only and teaching-and-research academic staff, using a factor of 0.5 for part-time students and teaching staff, except 2003-4, when new HESA staff FTE used; PTR data - Education Statistics for UK, series; Education & Training Statistics for the UK, series. First year for SSR is actually 1976-7 as earlier data not available from USR. SSR data prior to 1990-91 were for the university sector only; data from 1995-96 are for all higher education institutions. The PTR ratio is for all schools.¹⁴¹

SSR and PTR in the UK



SSR and PTR data based on full-time equivalents (FTE).

Source: SSR data - AUT calculation based on USR data series and HESA Students and Resources series, including undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers, using a factor of 0.5 for part-time students and teaching staff, except 2003-4, when new HESA staff FTE used; PTR data - Education Statistics for UK, series; Education & Training Statistics for the UK, series. First year for SSR is actually 1976-7 as earlier data not available from USR. SSR data prior to 1990-91 were for the university sector only; data from 1995-96 are for all higher education institutions. The PTR ratio is for all schools.¹⁴²

International data

Over a five-year period to 2003, OECD¹⁴³ data show the student:teaching staff ratio in UK higher education fluctuating at around 18:1 (table 2, chart 2).¹⁴⁴

This was consistently higher than the mean ratio for OECD countries, and was also considerably higher over that period than for the USA, Germany and Japan. Of leading competitor countries, only France had a SSR comparable with the UK's.

OECD ratio of students to teaching staff in tertiary educational institutions*

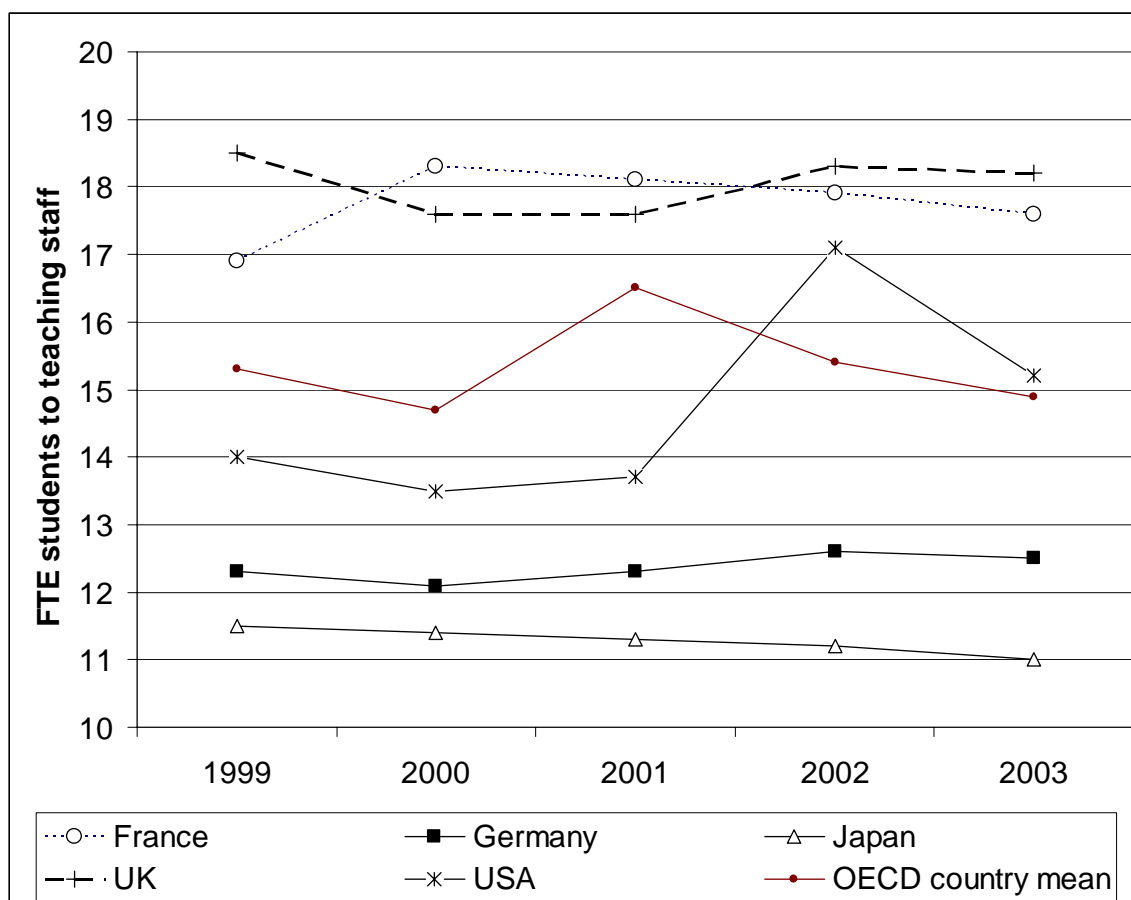
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| France | 16.9 : 1 | 18.3 : 1 | 18.1 : 1 | 17.9 : 1 | 17.6 : 1 |
| Germany | 12.3 : 1 | 12.1 : 1 | 12.3 : 1 | 12.6 : 1 | 12.5 : 1 |
| Japan | 11.5 : 1 | 11.4 : 1 | 11.3 : 1 | 11.2 : 1 | 11.0 : 1 |
| UK | 18.5 : 1 | 17.6 : 1 | 17.6 : 1 | 18.3 : 1 | 18.2 : 1 |
| USA | 14.0 : 1 | 13.5 : 1 | 13.7 : 1 | 17.1 : 1 | 15.2 : 1 |
| OECD country mean | 15.3 : 1 | 14.7 : 1 | 16.5 : 1 | 15.4 : 1 | 14.9 : 1 |

Based on full-time equivalents

* includes Type A 3+ year mainly theoretical degrees & advanced research programmes, and Type B shorter more practical courses

Source: OECD Education at a Glance, series, Table D2.2

International comparison of student:staff ratio*



Based on full-time equivalents

* includes Type A 3+ year mainly theoretical degrees & advanced research programmes, and Type B shorter more practical courses

Source: OECD Education at a Glance, series, Table D2.2

Comment

We are extremely concerned about the growth of the student:staff ratio. The rising age level of academic staff means that a growing number of staff will be retiring over the next 10 years. More staff will be needed to meet the government's aim of 50% of young people participating in higher education by 2010, at a time when the young adult age cohort in the population is increasing.

HEFCE has estimated that an additional 17,000 staff are needed to teach the extra students if the government achieves its target of 50% of young people participating in higher education by 2010. Professor Roderick Floud, vice-chancellor of London Metropolitan University and the then President of Universities UK predicted in 2002 that a further 19,000 staff would be needed in the UK to replace those about to retire.¹⁴⁵

We note the concern of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the 2006 Budget speech, that in schools, pupil teacher ratios should be improved. We call on the government to provide funding for the employment of additional staff to bring about reduction of the SSR in the UK to the level of the OECD country

mean over the coming decade.