

# Family Background and University Success

Monday 5 December 2016

12.45pm – 4.30pm

## Background

Individuals who go to university still earn substantially more, on average, than those who don't. But the socio-economic status of your parents may affect how likely you are to go to university – and how well you do once there. In this case higher education may strengthen, rather than reduce, the links between the circumstances in which you grow up and your own socio-economic status as an adult, thus undermining the government's aim of increasing social mobility.

This event will bring together the latest quantitative evidence on the size of the socio-economic gaps in university access and success in England, and – more importantly – what drives them. In particular, it will consider the importance of exam results from primary and secondary school, as well as the latest evidence on whether higher tuition fees have put off those from poorer backgrounds from applying.

The discussion will focus particularly on drawing out the insights from this research for policymakers, universities and schools, including how much focus should be placed on getting students from lower socio-economic backgrounds into university – and how best to do this – and how much needs to be placed on what happens to them once they are there, and indeed after they have left.

Today's presentations will be based on the findings of a major new study, *Family Background and University Success*, by Claire Crawford, Lorraine Dearden, John Micklewright and Anna Vignoles, published by Oxford University Press. Drawing on research funded by the Nuffield Foundation and others, the authors dissect in a concise, clear way why it is that young people from poorer families in England are less likely to go to university than their counterparts in richer families, the impact of the 2006 and 2012 funding reforms, who does best at university once they are there, and who succeeds in the labour market following graduation.

## Programme

- 12.45pm**      **Registration and lunch**  
*Served in the Dining Room*
- 1.30pm**        **Welcome and introduction from the Chair**  
Tim Gardam, Chief Executive, Nuffield Foundation
- 1.45pm**        **Setting the scene: How large are the returns to university and how do they vary by institution/subject?**  
Professor Anna Vignoles, University of Cambridge  
*Fifteen minute presentation followed by audience discussion*
- 2.05 pm**        **How large are the socioeconomic status gaps in higher education participation and what drives them?**  
Professor Lorraine Dearden, UCL Institute of Education and Institute for Fiscal Studies  
*Fifteen minute presentation followed by audience discussion*
- 2.25pm**        **Socioeconomic status gaps in degree outcomes**  
Dr Claire Crawford, University of Warwick and Institute for Fiscal Studies  
*Fifteen minute presentation followed by audience discussion*
- 2.45pm**        **Tea and coffee break**
- 3.10pm**        **Policy implications**  
Professor Emeritus John Micklewright, UCL Institute of Education  
*Fifteen minute presentation followed by audience discussion*
- 3.30pm**        **Panel discussion: Part 1 – The panel’s view**  
Professor Nicholas Barr, London School of Economics and Political Science  
Professor Les Ebdon CBE DL, Office for Fair Access  
Dr Chris Wilson, The Brilliant Club
- 3.55pm**        **Panel discussion: Part 2 – Question and answer**
- 4.30pm**        **Close of meeting**