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**Abstract**

This paper outlines some of the key changes in higher education participation in Northern Ireland from the mid-1980s onwards and places the discussion of participation in this evolving policy context of devolution in the United Kingdom. The paper draws upon research conducted on participation and the migration of students and graduates. Changes in student numbers by level and mode are complemented by a consideration of social class, religion, and gender. The analysis distinguishes between different reasons for migration or staying in Northern Ireland. The discussion highlights some of the early consequences of devolution in the UK for higher education participation and suggests that the UK system previously regarded as unified is set to become increasingly differentiated. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Osborne, R. D., E-Mail: rd.osborne@ulst.ac.uk