



COLLEGE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020-21



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC STATISTICS
Issue Date: 26 April 2022
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College Performance Indicators 2020-21 Executive Summary

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Summary: Overview of college performance indicators from 2008-09 to 2020-21.

FAO: Principals and Chairs of Scotland's colleges, students, parents, guardians and the general public

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The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

1. The ongoing COVID pandemic and the requirement for public health control measures continued throughout 2020-21. The measures put in place to protect staff and students in 2020-21 were more strict and long-lasting than was experienced in 2019-20 and severely limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services on campus.
2. Students faced significant disruption as a consequence of the pandemic; for example, the academic year started with a mix of in-person and remote learning for most, then between the end of December to February 2021 college campuses were mostly closed and learning, teaching and support services were moved completely online. From February to April colleges operated under temporary lockdown restrictions with only 5% of students permitted on campus. It was only from April and for the last few months of term that students could be back in-person in greater numbers. Even then, the majority of learning remained hybrid/blended. For many students this high level of disruption to learning throughout the academic year limited their ability to complete their course and qualification as planned.
3. Furthermore, numerous issues impacted students' ability to complete their qualification:
 - Students may have been medically affected by the pandemic either directly or via their families and/or dependants.
 - Students with childcare or caring responsibilities may have found it more difficult to complete their course as originally intended.
 - Some students on courses containing a practical element or a work placement in subjects such as engineering, construction, hair, beauty, social care and childcare, were unable to complete their course as intended and therefore had to 'defer' completing their course and qualification to the following academic year.
 - The entire student population was also affected by the 'softer' impacts of the pandemic on their education, such as losing access to peer support and in-person lecturer support. While institutions continued to take steps to address digital poverty, supported by additional funding, not all students had readily-available access to the necessary broadband and/or equipment to facilitate effective digital learning and assessment.
4. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses external exams did not take place for the second year running and lecturer estimated grades were used as the core element for certification.

5. Throughout 2020-21 colleges continued to be responsive to developing digital platforms for learning and for innovative ways to engage with learners, together with the ongoing adaptation of assessment through the SQA and other awarding body alternative assessment arrangements.

Executive Summary

6. This report is an overview of college performance indicators from 2008-09 to 2020-21 with the main purpose to provide an overview of the latest year (2020-21) with contextual trends. The report provides a broad coverage of college teaching activity and presents an analysis of student outcomes for those students enrolled on courses leading to recognised qualifications.
7. The 2020-21 academic year (AY) was impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement for public health control measures that continued throughout 2020-21. The measures put in place to protect staff and students in 2020-21 were more strict and long-lasting than was experienced in 2019-20 and severely limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services in-person. This resulted in a reduction in overall enrolments and reported student outcomes in 2020-21.
8. Those challenges notwithstanding, colleges continued to adapt, taking swift action to protect staff and students' wellbeing and contribute to the national effort to tackle the virus and support vulnerable communities.
9. Although SFC has presented data for several years, full consideration should be given to these exceptional circumstances and direct comparisons between 2019-20 and 2020-21 and earlier years should not be made without due consideration of the context.
10. The pandemic has had an impact in recruitment although the college sector has delivered 117,914 SFC funded FTE thereby exceeding the 116,269 places target by 1,645 FTE in 2020-21.
11. In 2019-20 17, 898 students were unable to complete their studies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as a result of colleges' efforts to re-engage those students, 90.6% (16,218) had returned by 2021-22. In 2020-21, 13,074 students deferred their studies. By January 2022, 7,447 (57.0%) had returned. Work continues to re-engage the remaining students, although many may have entered into employment given the more buoyant labour market.
12. Those 13,074 students who deferred in 2020-21 and are yet still to complete their course are not included in these performance indicators. Their outcomes will be reported in next year's report.
13. The key points from this report for students who have a final result are:

The known results for 41,989 full-time further education (FE) students enrolled on recognised qualifications in 2020-21 are as follows:

- Withdrawals were around 3% higher than normal, impacted by a more buoyant labour market and continued COVID measures which limited physical attendance and impacted the student experience, particularly in practical and technical subjects such as construction and hairdressing.
- As a consequence of the higher dropout rate as a result of the pandemic, successful completion rates were slightly lower in 2020-21 at 61.3%, a 3.9 percentage point (pp) difference from 2018-19 (pre-pandemic).
- A further 11.0% completed their course but did not gain the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award at a later time.
- For large colleges,¹ success rates ranged from 52.7% to 73.6% in 2020-21 and for small colleges the success rates ranged from 59.7% up to 70.4%.

The known results for 31,925 full-time Higher Education (HE) students enrolled on recognised qualifications in 2020-21 are as follows:

- Success rates increased 2.3pp from 2018-19 to 72.1% and were marginally higher than success rates achieved in earlier years.
- A further 10.2% completed their course but did not achieve the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award at a later time.
- Student withdrawals in 2020-21 returned to pre-pandemic levels. The smaller increase in withdrawals seen for HE full-time over FE full-time in 2020-21 was likely in part a result of HE full-time students being more resilient to the increased digital and self-directed learning requirements in courses during the pandemic.
- Full-time HE success rates ranged from 65.2% to 81.9% in 2020-21.

¹ For the purposes of this publication the college categorisation of 'large' and 'small' is determined by the volume of credits delivered in the academic year. Colleges delivering above 25,000 credits are designated as 'large' and those below 'small'. For individual college categorisation refer to the separate Technical Annex.

Course over 160 hours duration:

- Success rates for FE subject areas range from 58.5% for social subjects to 80.3% for nautical courses.
- For HE subject areas the success rates range from 65.5% for computing and ICT to 90.3% for nautical courses.
- Male students are 0.5pp more likely to successfully complete their FE programmes than female students, while the situation is reversed for HE programmes with a 5.9pp difference.

Deferrals from academic year 2019-20

14. The COVID pandemic has been an unprecedented situation for everyone, but especially for those in education. Learning benefits from momentum which is something which has been very difficult to maintain over the last two years for the reasons outlined above. In addition, many COVID measures prevented the undertaking of the practical elements which form part of many college courses. As such 7.0% of college students were forced to defer completion of their studies into the following academic year. Publication of our performance indicators for 2019-20 was delayed to enable us to include the outcomes of the proportion of deferred students who did manage to complete in the early part of 2020-21 (10,971) but the outcomes of the remaining 6,927 were not included.
15. In 2019-20, 17,898 students (covering 18,457 enrolments) had to defer. Following this group has been a key priority for SFC in our monitoring of the 2020-21 session in order to understand the impact on the deferred students' studies and to make sure any learner who had become derailed in their education could be re-engaged. We tracked the deferred students mid-way through their year in January 2021 and by this point 10,971 of the students had managed to finish their deferred course. As outlined above, we published the results of their studies in last year's Performance Indicators.
16. We continued to follow the remaining 6,927 deferred students and by the end of 2020-21 a further 5,116 had finished their course and are now included in our updated performance indicators for 2019-20.
17. A further 131 came back by January 2021-22 and therefore all but 1,680 had returned to college to continue study, representing only 0.7% of students from the 2019-20 academic year. We will continue to follow these students to ensure they have a chance to complete.
18. We do not show the deferred cohort separately in our main charts but our analysis shows that just over 60% completed successfully which is a slightly higher success rate than for other students and the overall impact is that the

full-time FE success rates in 2019-20 increased by 0.3pp and the full-time HE remained unchanged.

19. Overall, considering the pandemic situation was far greater in the 2020-21 academic year in terms of educational disruption, the colleges and students did extremely well in very trying circumstances caused by the pandemic and hopefully those who did not return can be re-engaged going forward.

Deferrals from academic year 2020-21

20. The 2020-21 session was disrupted almost entirely by the COVID pandemic. As in the previous year, deferral was the only option for some students and by the end of the academic session 13,074 individuals had deferred from at least one of their enrolments. As with deferrals from 2019-20, we tracked the progress of these students and by the mid-point of academic year 2021-22 we know 7,447 of these students have so far returned to college for further study.
21. This leaves 5,627 students who have not yet returned who we will monitor through to the end of this year and work with the colleges to re-engage as necessary. Every endeavour will be made to track student destinations, and where necessary, ensure learners are supported back into and through the college sector to meet their educational potential.
22. With the return to in-person teaching in spring 2022 and the efforts being made by colleges to re-engage students, it is expected that of the 13,074 students (46% full-time and 54% part-time) still to complete their 2020-21 courses, many will be able to complete by the end of summer 2022. The 'deferred' enrolments from 2020-21 are therefore not counted within this publication but will be updated for next year's.
23. Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of college students to complete their studies. However, SFC has worked closely with colleges to support as many students as possible to complete successfully and to ensure students do not lose out as a result of the difficult circumstances surrounding their studies. Nonetheless, as a result of these unprecedented circumstances it is difficult to compare 2019-20 and 2020-21 results directly or with previous years and in particular for some of the more practical subjects where technical skills were less able to be demonstrated off campus. SFC has presented data for several years but full consideration should be given to these exceptional circumstances when comparing results over time.



The known results for **41,989 FULL-TIME FURTHER EDUCATION (FE) STUDENTS** enrolled on recognised qualifications in 2020-21 are as follows:

61.3%

Successfully completed their course

11.0%

Completed their course but did not gain the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award at a later time.

27.7%

Withdrew from their course and are accounted for by: **7.5%** of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date* **20.2%** between this point and the end of the course.



The known results for **31,925 FULL-TIME HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENTS** enrolled on recognised qualifications in 2020-21 are as follows:

72.1%

Successfully completed their course

10.2%

Completed their course but did not gain the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award at a later time.

17.7%

Withdrew from their course and are accounted for by: **3.9%** of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date* **13.8%** between this point and the end of the course.



MALE STUDENTS are **0.5pp** more likely to successfully complete their **FE PROGRAMMES** than female students while the situation is **REVERSED FOR HE PROGRAMMES** with a **5.9pp** difference.



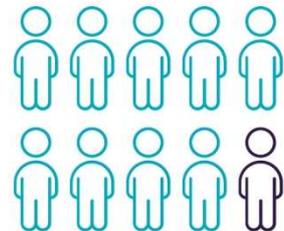
In 2020-21, out of 3,600 full-time permanent teaching staff, **3,124 HELD A RECOGNISED TEACHING QUALIFICATION** (86.8%).

This shows a 0.1pp increase in the proportion of teaching staff with a recognised qualification over the reported three academic years.



OVER 90%

of **DEFERRED STUDENTS FROM 2019-20** due to disruptive learning as a result of the Covid pandemic **HAVE RETURNED TO COLLEGE.**



*Colleges are not funded for these students