



## College Statistics 2021-22 Annex



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

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## College Statistics 2021-22 Annex

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Summary:	This document provides context and methodological information pertaining to the College Statistics 2021-22 publication and background tables.
FAO:	Principals and Directors of Scotland’s colleges, students, parents, guardians and the general public.
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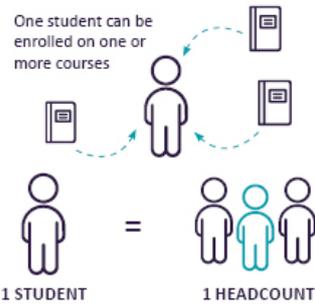
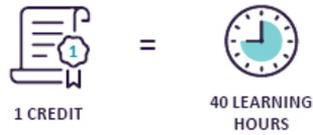
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### KEY DEFINITIONS

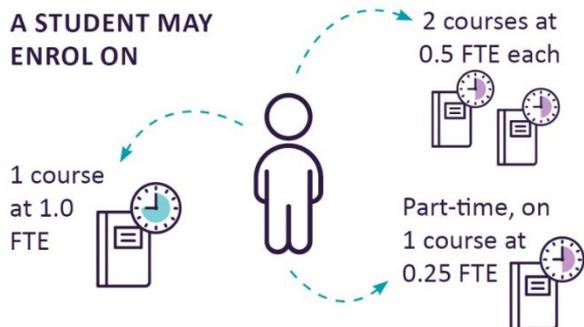


## WHY WE USE FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTEs)

FTEs are an indicator of the amount of learning activity



A STUDENT MAY ENROL ON



Headcounts are often a poor indication of the actual volume of activity in the college sector. FTEs allow for more accurate comparisons.

## Report Context and Definitions

1. The College Statistics Report is published annually by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and provides an overview of student activity in the college sector over the last ten years, from 2012-13 to 2021-22.<sup>1</sup> Except where noted otherwise, all data reported in this publication has been sourced from the SFC's Further Education Statistical (FES) return as provided by all Scottish colleges and has been collated and quality assured by SFC.<sup>2</sup> The publication reports on student numbers in the form of headcounts, course enrolments, credits and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) as measures of college student activity.<sup>3</sup>
2. Colleges offer a wide range of courses and study options across many levels of study to accommodate a diverse range of students. College students can study for Higher National Certificates (HNCs, which normally take one year to complete full-time) or Higher National Diplomas (HNDs, which normally take two years)<sup>4</sup>, Access Courses, Degree courses, Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes, National Qualifications, Professional Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications, among others. Colleges also award qualifications from awarding bodies outside the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) and City and Guilds. Courses vary from full-time programmes lasting a year or more to part-time courses lasting one hour, with a breadth of provision including day release courses as part of employment arrangements; day release courses for school pupils and school leavers; block release courses for apprentices; assessments of work-based learning; and distance learning opportunities.
3. In addition to the above, the college sector also delivers a substantial volume of introductory and pre-access courses that do not lead to qualifications recognised by assessors. These are designed to give a grounding in a vocational subject or act as a route back in to vocational learning for people with no or very few qualifications. They also provide bespoke training for employers, for example through the Flexible

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<sup>1</sup> SFC produces a range of other statistical reports in areas such as widening access, college staffing, and attainment. The full suite of SFC statistical publications can be found at <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistical-publications/statistics-schedule/statistical-publication-schedule.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Notes and guidance on how colleges submit data to SFC via the FES return can be found in the FES Guidance 2021-22 available at <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/guidance/2020/SFCGD032020.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> The Credit-based system of funding college activity was introduced in 2015-16. The change to the Credit-based model was discussed in detail in College Statistics 2016-17. More information can be found in Annex A of this report. This change should provide additional context and explanation around a possible break in trends.

<sup>4</sup> HNCs and HNDs are awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and are at level 7 and 8 respectively on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which can be viewed here: <https://scqf.org.uk/interactive-framework/>.

Workforce Development Fund<sup>5</sup>. This initiative allows employers to access funding to address priority skills gaps and invest in their workforce through training and personal development. These programmes can be delivered in partnership with the local college, the Open University in Scotland or an independent training provider.

4. Additionally, the sector delivers non-vocational courses which are often self-funded by learners and typically delivered as weekend or evening courses. Many learners enrol on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) modules, bridging courses - i.e. courses which support transition/progression to a more substantive college course as part of the learner journey, or to an employment opportunity - or on personal or family care courses. Such students often come from disadvantaged backgrounds and participation in these courses will have a social benefit.
5. For more information on non-recognised qualifications and the cohorts of students benefitting from them, see Annex F.
6. SFC funds colleges for the delivery of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) based on the volume of activity delivered in credits, with one credit equivalent to 40 hours of learning. One FTE then is equivalent to 15 credits or 600 hours of learning. Definitions of the different measurements used throughout the report can be found in the 'Key Definitions' box and 'Why we use Full-time Equivalents' box on page 4 of this document.
7. Background tables containing data for all the charts, tables and annexes found in this release can be downloaded from the SFC website.
8. This report explores the trends relating to selected student characteristics such as age and gender, whilst others, such as ethnicity and disability, have been omitted. These will be included in the Report on Widening Access 2021-22, which is due to be published in Spring 2023. Previous Widening Access Reports are available on the [SFC website](#). Other college metrics are addressed in reports such as the College Performance Indicators and College Leaver Destinations (CLD). More information on SFC's statistics publication schedule can be found [online](#).
9. A publication detailing College Performance Indicators for 2021-22 is due to be published on the SFC website in spring 2022. Student numbers presented in this report may differ from those contained in other publications as the reports are prepared for different purposes. For example, the College Performance Indicators publication excludes students who begin courses in January and finish in December of the same year as results will not be available for these students until the course ends. However, in this report, activity relating to these students is counted.
10. The SFC Report on Widening Access presents further statistics on widening access in the

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<sup>5</sup> Flexible Workforce Development Fund: <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/college-funding/flexible-workforce-development/flexible-workforce-development-fund.aspx>

college and university sectors whilst SFC Higher Education Student and Qualifiers covers HE activity delivered in Scotland by universities and colleges.

11. The reporting period was impacted by the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic which presented a unique and significant external shock to the further and higher education system in Scotland. Colleges pivoted rapidly to move learning online from March 2020, but these unprecedented circumstances presented colleges with particular challenges, notably the ability to deliver practical and work-based learning. Those challenges notwithstanding, colleges adapted quickly, taking swift action to protect staff and students' wellbeing and contribute to the national effort to tackle the virus and support vulnerable communities. The measures put in place to protect staff and students in 2020-21 were stricter and longer lasting than was experienced in 2019-20 and severely limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services on campus.
12. The 2021-22 academic year, meanwhile, corresponded with a less acute phase of the pandemic and, although some restrictions remained in place and whilst some teaching remained online, the College sector saw a return to face-to-face teaching and in-person exams.
13. Demographics are a crucial factor to note when considering student headcount. In recent years there has been a significant drop in young people in the Scottish population and colleges will have a shrinking pool of 18-24 year olds from which to recruit until 2025. College participation rates fell in 2021-22 to a ten year low. There are multiple factors that may contribute to this data point. Firstly, disregarding COVID affected years, a record number of Scottish domiciled students were accepted to Scottish higher education institutions through the UCAS system<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, the labour market has shown vacancies at a high level which may also have affected college applications<sup>7</sup>.
14. A more standard teaching model was employed in 2021-22 versus the prior two sessions more heavily impacted by the pandemic. As a result trends in the data have reverted, in some areas, to pre pandemic patterns. Both enrolments and student headcount have reached levels not seen since 2018-19, which was the last year of reporting that was not influenced by the pandemic. FTE figures remained more consistent throughout the pandemic period and this has remained the case for 2021-22.
15. A driver for increased student headcount and enrolment figures in 2021-22 is the increase in provision of non recognized qualifications and courses under ten hours. These courses are clearly able to be provided much more readily in an environment less affected by the pandemic after falls in the last two reporting periods. NRQ provision in particular reached a ten year high in 2021-22.

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<sup>6</sup> [UCAS Data Portal](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Vacancies and jobs in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#) – Report from the beginning of college academic year 2021-22 showing record numbers of job vacancies across the UK.

## Annex A: Notable Changes in External Factors Affecting the College Sector

Date	Change	Impact on the trends presented in this report
2008-09	Colleges directed to prioritise more substantial courses designed to improve employment prospects.	Reduction in number of students enrolled on very short programmes of study unlikely to lead to employment or higher level of study.
2011-12	Decision to focus school / college courses towards the senior phase of high school.	Reduction in college activity targets of 5%, but students affected continue to have a full-time place at school.
2012-13	Introduction of College Outcome Agreement. Transfer of funded learning hours from SFC to SDS.	Reduction in SFC funded learning hours delivered to those aged 16 to 24, with this activity being commissioned by the SDS Employability Fund (equivalent to 586 FTEs in 2016-17).
2015-16	WSUMs replaced with Credits and removal of full-time tariffs.	Hours of learning reduce under the Credits system as a result of improvements that removed funding considerations and created a purer measure of activity.
2015-16	Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) established.	This could impact the college sector's ability to recruit for HE courses from the most deprived areas as Scotland's universities have been asked to increase their own recruitment from that cohort.
2019-20 and 2020-21	COVID-19 pandemic	Enrolments to courses from March 2020 (i.e. academic year 2019-20) were impacted. This continued into the 2020-21 session. The 2021-22 session saw a return to face-to-face teaching in many places, although some online learning continued.

## Annex B: College Outcome Agreements

1. As part of the Outcome Agreement process, SFC introduced a basket of measures to be used to help measure and assess the impact of the Outcome Agreements across a range of key priority areas.
2. The table below shows the 2017-18 to 2021-22 figures for some measures.

### Selected National Performance Measures, 2017-18 to 2021-22

Measure	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Credits delivered	1,778,466	1,753,330	1,749,069	1,730,508	1,766,279
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners Under 16	3.3%	4.0%	3.9%	3.0%	4.2%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19	45.2%	43.4%	44.4%	44.1%	44.3%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 20-24	21.1%	21.1%	20.5%	21.7%	21.4%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 25 and over	30.4%	31.5%	31.1%	31.2%	30.2%
Proportion of Credits to Female learners	51.5%	51.5%	51.4%	52.3%	50.7%
Proportion of Credits to Male learners	48.5%	48.0%	48.1%	47.0%	47.9%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners from the 10% most deprived areas	16.5%	16.6%	16.5%	16.3%	16.0%
Proportion of Credits to learners from a care experienced background	2.0%	3.7%	5.9%	6.4%	6.4%
Proportion of Credits to minority ethnic learners	7.0%	7.3%	8.1%	8.0%	8.5%
Proportion of Credits to Disabled learners	18.8%	21.8%	22.1%	22.6%	24.6%

3. Further information on Outcome Agreements can be found on the [SFC website](#).

## Annex C: Methodology for calculating the count of and participation rate of 18-19 year olds in Scotland

1. The Scottish population of young adults (particularly of 18 and 19 year olds) is inflated due to the influx of non-Scottish domiciled students undertaking college and university education in Scotland. Therefore, in order to calculate a more representative participation rate of the proportion of 18 and 19 year-olds undertaking college courses who would be residing in Scotland regardless of their education path, population values for younger people have to be aged forward. This is demonstrated in the table below.
4. To calculate the population of 18 and 19 year-olds in Scotland in 2021-22, the population of 16 and 17 year-olds in 2019-20 has been aged forward by two years so that they are calculated as 17 and 18 year olds in 2020-21 and 18 and 19 year-olds in 2021-22. This ageing forward method is applied to 17, 18 and 19 year-olds so that they are based on previous 16 year-old populations aged forward appropriately. For example, the number of 18 year-olds in 2019-20 is the number of 16 year-olds in 2017-18 aged forward two years. The population of 16 year-olds is taken from National Record of Scotland's actual count of 16 year-olds in that year.

### Methodology for ageing the population as part of the participation rate calculation

Age	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
16	54,052	55,890	57,280
17	53,470	54,052	56,179
18	56,834	53,470	54,052
19	61,667	60,425	53,470

Source: National Records of Scotland, Mid-year population estimates.

## Annex D: The proportion of 18-19 year-olds in the Scottish population who attended college full-time, from 2011-2012 to 2021-22

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1. The number Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population is calculated by ageing forward the population values for younger people in previous years. This is explained and demonstrated in Annex C. The participation rate is the Aged 18-19 Full-Time Student Population divided by the number Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population.

## Annex E: Further Information on College Students

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1. Some aspects of the college sector have not been covered in this report, such as various student characteristics and trends surrounding learning hours. Student characteristics will be addressed, with more relevance and detail, in other reports such as the Report on Widening Access which is scheduled to be published in Spring 2023. Previous years' reports can be found on SFC's Statistics Publication Schedule.

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## Annex F: Further Information on Non-Recognised Qualifications in the College sector

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### What are non-recognised qualifications?

1. In Scotland's colleges in 2021-22, there were a total of 322,332 enrolments. 122,884 (38.1%) were to courses leading to 'non-recognised' qualifications.
5. Whilst non-recognised qualifications account for over a third of all college enrolments, they account for just 7.2% of hours of learning delivered by the college sector that year (measured in Full-time Equivalent places). This indicates that these courses are typically short part-time in nature, and they average less than 38 hours in duration. Many are shorter still, less than 10 hours in duration in many cases.
6. Non-recognised courses are an important part of the learner journey for many students. Non-vocational leisure courses which are often self-funded and typically delivered as weekend or evening courses; or Introductory and pre-access courses that do not lead to qualifications recognised by assessors.
7. These are designed to give a grounding in a vocational subject or act as a route back in to vocational learning for people with no or very few qualifications. Many Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) courses also fall under this category. This initiative allows employers to access funding to address priority skills gaps and invest in their workforce through training and personal development. These programmes can be delivered in partnership with the local college, the Open University in Scotland or an independent training provider.

### Characteristics of students enrolling on non-recognised qualifications

8. The students enrolled on courses leading to non-recognised qualifications can be broken down into five broad groups:

#### School Pupils

9. School pupils frequently enrol on non-recognised qualifications, in particular STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programmes - some examples are introduction to STEM courses for primary school pupils or those in the early phase of secondary school which are delivered by the local college in response to the aspirations of the Scottish Government STEM Strategy.
10. There are also introductory programmes to make early phase secondary pupils aware of the vocational opportunities available when they reach the senior phase of secondary school (S4 or later), again delivered by the college.

## Additional Support Needs (ASN) programmes

11. Students with Additional Support Needs (ASN) can include those with disabilities or health concerns, those with difficult family circumstances, e.g. looked after children; those who are enrolled on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) modules.
12. There is a sizeable widening participation element in this cohort - almost half of activity is delivered to those from the 20% most deprived areas. Around 6% of these students are care-experienced, and a third are aged 25 or over. Over half of activity was delivered to those with a declared disability with many of that cohort declaring multiple disabilities.
13. Many learners in this cohort enrol on ESOL modules, bridging courses - i.e. support transition/progression to a more substantive college course as part of the learner journey, or to an employment opportunity - or on personal or family care courses.
14. Such students often come from difficult backgrounds and it could be argued that their participation in such courses will have a social benefit, albeit the social return on investment is difficult to calculate quickly. In other words, there is an opportunity cost to these individuals and perhaps the community for these individuals not experiencing these opportunities provided by the college sector. Many such students are over 25, from the 20% most deprived areas and with multiple disabilities, so there is a real complexity of need in many cases.

## UK Industry

15. These are programmes where the main source of finance is industry or commerce. Much of the funding will come from the employer, or via the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF). Via the FWDF, employers can access funding to address priority skills gaps. These courses are delivered to meet the needs of apprenticeship levy-payers that, whilst vocational, may not immediately lead to a recognised qualification.
16. Examples of provision here include first aid courses, managing difficult conversations for new line managers and mental health in the workplace programme, and there are many other diverse examples of employees taking a module to contribute towards their personal development in their career that does not lead to a recognised qualification.

## Employed

17. Those in employment often use college facilities for courses relating to their employment. For example, they might attend to sit an assessment in a vocational qualification they were undertaking in engineering or construction, and much of the enrolments to non-recognised qualifications by this cohort are of that nature. Around a third are STEM-related.

## Other

18. There is a large STEM element to the remaining students not in the above four groups,

with STEM subjects accounting for around a third delivered to this cohort. Much of the activity delivered to this cohort included introductory sessions of various types - for example, 'introduction to remote learning' courses an obvious pre-requisite for studying remotely on other courses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

19. Aside from that, there is also a wide range of 'enabling' courses, as learners studying other qualifications can receive help in preparing their university UCAS applications, applying for the armed forces, the emergency services, health & social care careers and many other routes - these courses are supporting learners by giving them a grounding in a vocational subject on the road into employment or further study (i.e. a recognised qualification) as part of the learner journey. They also act as a route back in to vocational learning for those with minimal or no qualifications.

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## Metadata

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	College Statistics 2021-22
Description	Reports on up to ten academic years of data on college student numbers in the form of headcounts, course enrolments, credits and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) as measures of college student activity in Scotland.
Theme	Further and Higher Education provision at Scotland's colleges.
Topic	Student information
Format	PDF and Excel Tables
Data Source(s)	The majority of data reported in this publication is collected and quality assured by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as part of the Further Education Statistical (FES) return. More information on the FES data collection process can be found on the <a href="#">SFC website</a> . Population data used to calculate the age 18-19 full-time college participation rate is sourced from National Records Scotland <a href="#">Mid-Year Population Estimates</a> . The population projections for people in Scotland aged 18-24 are taken from National Records of Scotland <a href="#">Projected Population of Scotland (2020-based)</a> .
Date that data are acquired	College statistics FES return: January 2023
Release date	28 February 2023
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data are presented as a time series continuation from the 2012-2013 academic year (AY) to the 2021-22 AY. Data is also presented for the 2012-2013 AY vs. the 2021-22 AY to allow for comparison between the two years. Data is also presented for the 2012-2013 AY vs. the 2016-17 AY vs. the 2021-22 AY to allow for comparison across the three years.
Continuity of data	Data from Scottish colleges continues to exclude those students who do not complete the first 25% of their course (the point at which they become eligible for funding).
Revisions statement	College headcount figures in Table 3 for 2012-13 to 2016-17 have been revised, reflecting the implementation of improved calculation methodology.
Relevance and key uses of these statistics	SFC collects data on provision at colleges in Scotland through the Further Education Statistics (FES) data collection.

Metadata Indicator	Description
Accuracy	The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the <a href="#">SFC website</a> .
Comparability	n/a
Accessibility	SFC has a style guideline which sets out options to make all publications as accessible to potential readers as possible. More information relating to <a href="#">accessibility of the website</a> .
Coherence and clarity	This statistical publication is pre-announced and then published on the SFC website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables available in Excel format on the website only which is a freely available resource.
Value type and unity of measurement	Number, percentage, percentage points.
Disclosure	Values less than 5 have been suppressed to prevent against the identification of individual students. Totals are summed from unrounded figures. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Figures and percentages in the charts are calculated using suppressed figures where the count is less than 5.
Official Statistics designation	Official Statistics
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	This publication has not been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. However other Scottish Funding Council publications were assessed as part of the <a href="#">Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics</a> undertaken in 2013 by UK Statistics Authority, as part of Assessment Report 255.
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