

# College Region Outcome Agreements

## Summary of Progress and Ambitions



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Scottish Funding Council  
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# COLLEGE REGION OUTCOME AGREEMENTS

## SUMMARY OF PROGRESS & AMBITIONS



The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is incredibly proud of what our colleges do for hundreds of thousands of students each year, and for their contribution to strengthening communities and economies across Scotland.

SFC provides the funding that enables them to do this work, and which stimulates change and development. Our job is to optimise the potential of these local, regional and national assets so that they contribute fully and with purpose to Scotland's educational, social, cultural and economic life.

Throughout this report we identify examples of the great work our colleges do, and the impact it has. Working in partnership with colleges, universities and many others, SFC has made significant progress on developing the skills of young people, meeting the needs of employers, broadening and improving what is available to young people in the senior phase of school, opening up new routes to university, improving learner journeys, and creating an efficient regional system of colleges.

In their outcome agreements, Scotland's colleges have demonstrated what they will deliver, across 13 college regions, in return for the Scottish Government's investment, and detailed their contribution to delivering key Scottish Government priorities.

This paper sets out what the college sector has achieved in recent years (to 2015-16) and looks ahead at the commitments college regions have made in their 2017-18 outcome agreements<sup>1</sup>. In addition to highlighting the progress made at a sector level for all the *outcome agreement national measures*<sup>2</sup> (where data is available), we have also provided a breakdown for each college region for the *key priority national measures*<sup>2</sup> (where appropriate) and referred to further analysis in our other publications. We have also provided short case studies throughout to highlight good practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to finalisation in a small number of cases.

<sup>2</sup> A list of the 10 outcome agreement national measures (including 5 key priority national measures) is provided at Annex 1 of this report and full definitions are available in our outcome agreement guidance – [Annex D Technical Guidance](#).

## Key achievements and successes

- The college sector has exceeded its activity targets in each year between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
- Overall, there is good representation in colleges from students from deprived postcodes and by disability, ethnicity and gender - and a high proportion of students are under 25 years of age.
- The proportion of activity delivered to those in the 10% most deprived postcode areas increased from 16.3% in 2013-14 to 16.9% in 2015-16.
- There has been a steady increase in the number of learners articulating from college to university with advanced standing (full recognition for previous Higher National study).
- There is a strong trend for improved success rates for students achieving recognised qualifications.
- The proportion of students satisfied with their college experience is high.
- The vast majority of college leavers were in a positive destination six months after graduating. Overall, the percentage of leavers entering a positive destination is 95.8% for FE and 95.1% for HE.
- The number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges has increased and further growth is projected.

## Access to learning

In their outcome agreements, colleges have committed to providing education that best meets the changing social and economic needs of their regions. Their approaches include widening access; increasing vocational pathways in the senior phase; matching curriculum to regional skills needs; and collaborating with local authorities, schools, universities and employers.

### Overall volume of activity

The college sector has exceeded its activity targets in each year between 2005-06 and 2015-16. We asked colleges to deliver 1,689,431 Credits<sup>3</sup> in 2015-16 (excluding additional European Social Fund (ESF) activity); in the event, colleges delivered 1,692,805 Credits, exceeding the target by 0.2 percentage points.

Figure 1 below shows the progress college regions made towards activity targets in 2015-16. During 2015, Edinburgh College agreed with SFC a reduction in its 2015-16 activity target, to help it to align provision with regional need; these places were reallocated to other college regions.

**Figure 1**  
**Regional activity (Credits) delivered vs target, 2015-16**

OA measure 1 (a)

| Region (or small specialist institution) | Actual Credits delivered <sup>4</sup> , 2015-16 | Credits target, 2015-16 | % against target, 2015-16 |
|--|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire               | 137,897   | 136,514                 | 101.0%                    |
| Ayrshire                                 | 126,212   | 124,252                 | 101.6%                    |
| Borders                                  | 24,521  | 24,521                  | 100.0%                    |
| Dumfries & Galloway                      | 29,872  | 30,371                  | 98.4%                     |
| Dundee and Angus                         | 103,246   | 103,232                 | 100.0%                    |
| Edinburgh                                | 180,144   | 186,258                 | 96.7%                     |
| Fife                                     | 129,764   | 129,760                 | 100.0%                    |
| Forth Valley                             | 84,041  | 83,984                  | 100.1%                    |
| Glasgow                                  | 369,061   | 367,494                 | 100.4%                    |
| Highlands & Islands                      | 112,855   | 110,967                 | 101.7%                    |
| Lanarkshire                              | 171,418   | 170,967                 | 100.3%                    |
| West                                     | 159,174   | 159,025                 | 100.1%                    |
| West Lothian                             | 43,417  | 42,116                  | 103.1%                    |
| Land-based (SRUC)                        | 18,670  | 18,241                  | 102.4%                    |
| Newbattle Abbey College                  | 1,320   | 926                     | 142.5%                    |
| Sabhal Mòr Ostaig                        | 1,192   | 803                     | 148.4%                    |
| <b>SECTOR</b>                            | <b>1,692,805</b>                                | <b>1,689,431</b>        | <b>100.2%</b>             |

Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

<sup>3</sup> SFC provides grants to colleges who undertake to deliver a specified volume of activity measured in Credits (1 Credit is equivalent to 40 hours of learning). Enrolments, headcount, FTE targets and other measures of activity are reported in our [College Statistics 2015-16](#) publication.

<sup>4</sup> Excluding European Social Funding (ESF).

Patterns of demand vary and we are moving in manageable steps towards a needs-based distribution of activity so that regions with greatest demand have more places. As in previous years, we will use a combination of our outcome agreement discussions and demographic modelling to inform this.

In 2015-16, we introduced a simplified, credit-based, system through which to fund college activity; this report therefore presents college activity expressed in credits for the first time. Further information on the new system is in our newsletter “Simplified Approach to College Funding”<sup>5</sup>, and in our Credits guidance<sup>6</sup>, on the SFC website.

Consistent with Scottish Government guidance, we have kept the sector activity targets for AY 2017-18 at the same level as last year. A breakdown of final funding allocations for colleges in AY 2017-18 is available on our website<sup>7</sup>.

### ***European funding***

Since 2010-11, SFC has managed the college sector’s access to European Social Funding (ESF). In 2017-18, we are continuing to allocate additional activity to colleges through two ESF programmes: the ‘Youth Employment Initiative’ (YEI), focused on young people aged 16-29 not in employment, education or training (NEET) in South-West Scotland; and ‘Developing Scotland’s Workforce’ (DSW), focused on higher level skills to meet regional/national skills needs in growth sectors.

Through these two programmes, which began in 2015-16, we continue to invest around £8 million each year in ‘matched funding’ that levers-in an additional c£12 million of ESF monies each year.

Working as part of the annual outcome agreement process, colleges deliver ESF activity in addition to their core SFC activity shown in Figure 1. Activity targets and planned course provision is agreed on the basis of SFC’s demographic model and college regional skills plans. Using ESF and matched SFC funding, approximately 61,600 additional credits (equivalent to around 3,600 additional FTE student places) have been allocated across college regions in 2017-18<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Widening access***

SFC is a central partner in delivering the Scottish Government’s ambition for colleges and universities to contribute to a more equal society through learning that is accessible and diverse, attracting and providing more equal opportunities for people of all ages, and from all communities and backgrounds.

The Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013 sharpens the focus on meeting the needs of under-represented groups of learners, by placing statutory duties on regional

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<sup>5</sup> [A simplified approach to college funding](#).

<sup>6</sup> Credit Guidance: [Student Activity Data Guidance for Colleges in AY 2017-18](#).

<sup>7</sup> College Outcome Agreements [final funding decisions](#) for 2017-18.

<sup>8</sup> Excluding UHI colleges in the Highlands & Islands transitional region and SRUC, which are allocated ESF activity through university funding.

colleges, regional strategic bodies and SFC to widen access. The Act also requires us to conduct reviews of widening access every three years. We published our first Triennial Review<sup>9</sup> of progress in August 2017. Overall, we concluded there is good representation in colleges from those from a deprived community and by disability, ethnicity and gender; and that a high proportion of students are also younger students i.e. under 25 years of age. However, evidence also suggests a need for earlier interventions and a deeper understanding of withdrawal rates.

Through outcome agreements, we expect colleges to make a full assessment of under-representation and need and outline commitments to improvements, with a view to further improving access, participation and success among specific groups of learners, including those with care experience.

This section of the report outlines our progress in relation to:

- Growing provision for our most deprived communities.
- Encouraging greater equality, including reducing gender subject imbalances and improving opportunities for care experienced students.
- Supporting *Opportunities for All* and ensuring an appropriate level of provision for younger students.
- Improving progression to Higher Education and increasing the number of learners articulating with advanced standing.

### ***Growing provision for our most deprived communities***

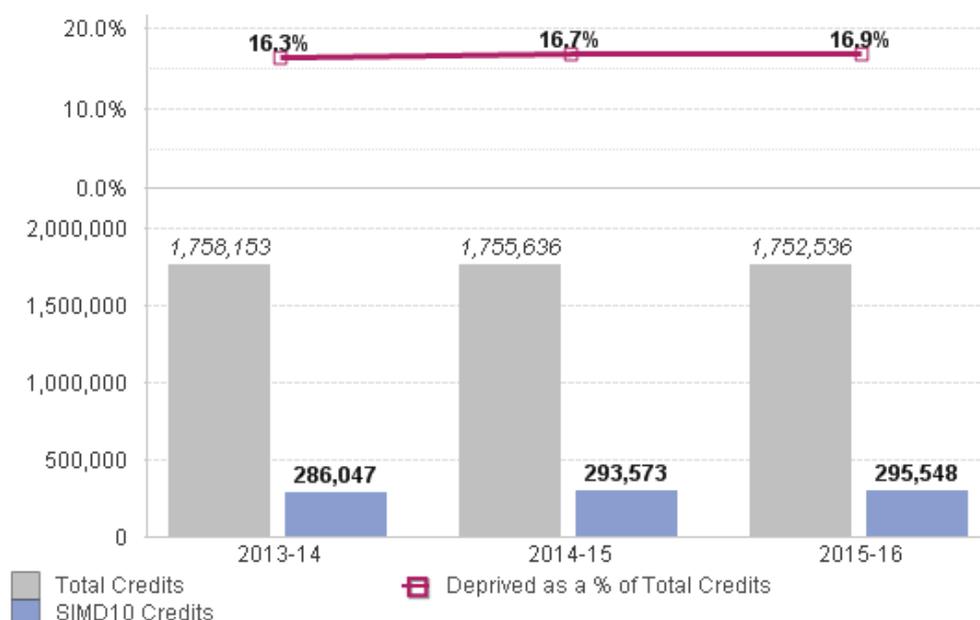
Figure 2 shows that colleges continue to devote significant resources to meeting the needs of learners from the most deprived areas. The proportion of activity delivered to those in the 10% most deprived postcode areas increased from 16.3% in 2013-14 to 16.9% in 2015-16. The volume of activity delivered to this group has also increased despite overall activity decreasing.

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<sup>9</sup> [Triennial Review on Widening Access.](#)

**Figure 2**

National Measure 1(c)\* - Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners in the most deprived 10% postcode areas



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Figure 3 below highlights wide variation across the college regions in terms of provision for the most deprived areas. There is also variation across colleges within a region. For example in the Glasgow region - in 2015-16, 29.2% of all activity was delivered to students in the 10% most deprived postcodes with Glasgow Kelvin College delivering - 39.3%, Glasgow Clyde College - 29.4% and City of Glasgow College - 23.5%.

**Figure 3**

| Region                     | Proportion of Credits delivered to those in the 10% most deprived postcode areas: |         |         | Proportion of population from the 10% most deprived postcode areas <sup>10</sup> | 2017-18 OA Target <sup>11</sup> |
|----------------------------|---|---------|---------|--|---------------------------------|
|                            | 2013-14   | 2014-15 | 2015-16 |  |                                 |
| Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire | 5.9%  | 4.7%    | 4.6%    | 2.3%   | 5.7%                            |
| Ayrshire                   | 18.8%   | 20.3%   | 20.5%   | 13.4%  | 20.0%                           |
| Borders                    | 7.9%  | 6.3%    | 6.6%    | 2.9%   | 6.4%                            |
| Dumfries & Galloway        | 11.5%   | 11.8%   | 12.2%   | 5.1%   | 12.0%                           |
| Dundee and Angus           | 17.2%   | 16.0%   | 15.9%   | 11.8%  | 17.0%                           |
| Edinburgh                  | 10.8%   | 10.4%   | 10.4%   | 5.6%   | 12.1%                           |
| Fife                       | 7.6%  | 8.1%    | 8.4%    | 5.1%   | 9.0%                            |
| Forth Valley               | 9.9%  | 10.4%   | 11.4%   | 5.7%   | 12.0%                           |
| Glasgow                    | 27.5%   | 29.1%   | 29.2%   | 28.0%  | 28.7%                           |

<sup>10</sup> Figures based on NRS 2013 mid-year estimates.

<sup>11</sup> A small number of targets were extracted from draft outcome agreements before they were formally agreed and may be subject to change.

| Region                | Proportion of Credits delivered to those in the 10% most deprived postcode areas: |              |              | Proportion of population from the 10% most deprived postcode areas <sup>10</sup> | 2017-18 OA Target <sup>11</sup> |
|-----------------------|---|--------------|--------------|--|---------------------------------|
|                       | 2013-14   | 2014-15      | 2015-16      |  |                                 |
| Highlands & Islands   | 4.6%  | 3.5%         | 3.2%         | 1.7%   | 3.4%                            |
| Lanarkshire           | 18.3%   | 18.6%        | 19.0%        | 11.6%  | 18.9%                           |
| West                  | 25.2%   | 27.8%        | 27.6%        | 15.9%  | 28.5%                           |
| West Lothian          | 3.9%  | 4.8%         | 4.4%         | 2.5%   | 6.0%                            |
| <b>SECTOR AVERAGE</b> | <b>16.3%</b>  | <b>16.7%</b> | <b>16.9%</b> | -  | <b>17.4%</b>                    |

Source: Further Education Statistics (FES) & National Records of Scotland (NRS).

The variation in college provision for deprived areas reflects the differences in size of the regional population from the 10% most deprived postcode areas. Some regions have a very small proportion of the population from these areas (for example, Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire (2.3%)), while others see higher levels of deprivation (e.g. Glasgow, at 28.0%). But all regions currently deliver a disproportionately high level of activity to learners from their 10% most deprived postcode areas.

The outcome agreements for 2017-18 demonstrate that colleges continue to be committed to the needs of those in the 10% most deprived postcodes. We estimate that, collectively, the colleges will target over 17% of learning activity to this group in 2017-18.

*Dundee and Angus College recruits a significant proportion of learners from the 10% most deprived postcode areas (accounting for 15.9% of their total activity in 2015-16). Of greater significance, however, is the success of these students. The successful outcome performance for full-time FE D&A students from the 10% most deprived postcode areas in 2015-16 was 72.2%, significantly above the sector average for students from the 10% most deprived areas of 63.4% and above the sector average for all full-time FE learners of 65.5%.*

### **Greater equality**

SFC's ambition is to make Scotland the best place in the world to learn, to educate, to research and to innovate. To be competitive in a globalised world, our economy must draw on the talents and ability of everyone in society. Equality is a necessary goal if we want a society in which everyone is treated fairly, regardless of difference, and given the opportunity to fulfil their potential in life.

In April 2017, we published our Mainstreaming and Equality Outcome Report<sup>12</sup> highlighting our progress over the period 2015-17 on how we mainstream equality and diversity, as well as setting out our priorities for 2017-21.

Figure 4 below shows for 2015-16 a broad balance, reflecting the Scottish population<sup>13</sup>, of male (48.3%) and female (51.7%) learners in the college sector. But this equal distribution at a national level masks some significant imbalances at subject level, and there are also gaps for other protected groups (such as

<sup>12</sup> Mainstreaming and Equalities [Outcome Report](#).

<sup>13</sup> According to the population figures in the 2011 census: 51.5% of the population were female, and 48.5% male.

deprivation). Our Gender Action Plan addresses this point, and we discuss it in the next section.

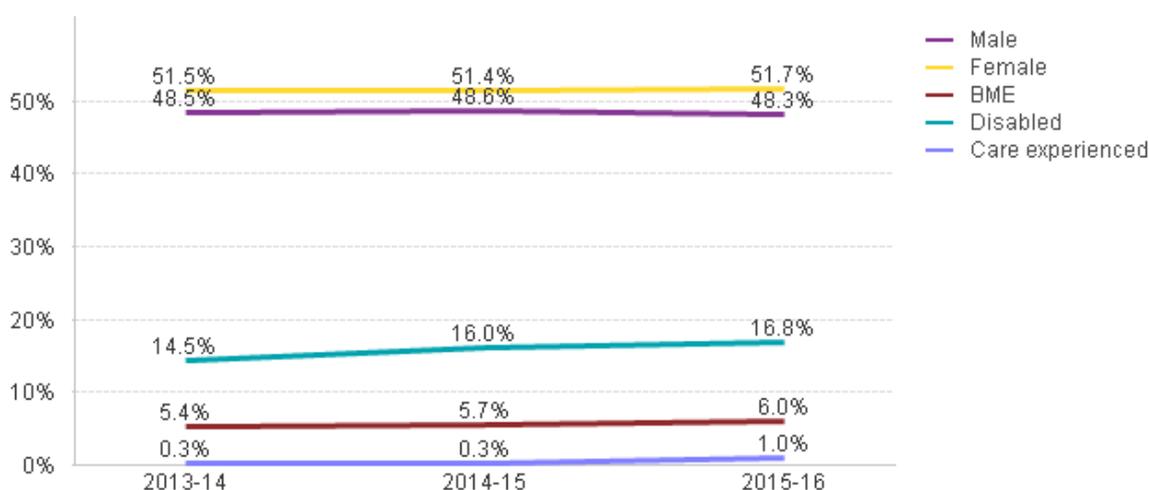
The chart also shows growing BME activity rates. Our recent Triennial Review indicated that students with BME background are currently well-represented at colleges in Scotland.

Figure 4 also shows increasing levels of activity delivered to those with declared disabilities: the recent Triennial Review indicates that, for those aged 15-34, people with disability are currently well-represented in Scottish FE. The analyses show that colleges have a greater proportion of students with disabilities than in the Scottish population for those in the 15-34 age groups.

OA measure 1 (d)

Figure 4

National Measure 1(d) - Proportion of Credits relating to learners from different protected characteristic groups and care experienced learners



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

The Children & Young People’s (Scotland) Act 2014 places duties on colleges and universities in relation to care experienced young people up to the age of 26. As Corporate Parents they must publish a corporate parenting plan by March 2018. Some colleges have already done this.

More generally though, students with care experience are under-represented in our colleges and universities, and those that are recruited have lower educational outcomes. Working with agencies such as Who Cares? Scotland, CELCIS, NUS Scotland and others we have developed national ambitions for care experienced students<sup>14</sup>; they focus on intake and successful completions over the period to 2018-19. They seek to achieve a consistency in success with non-care-experienced

<sup>14</sup> [National ambition](#) for care experienced students.

learners and to increase overall intake of care experienced students into colleges.

SFC has collected data on care experienced learners since 2013-14. We know that in 2015-16 there were 2,138 recorded students with care experience enrolling on college courses (1% of total activity). This was significantly more than levels recorded in previous years (which we believe were understated). SFC data teams have been working with colleges to improve data capture, which will in turn improve analysis (in particular to allow us to monitor progress towards our future ambitions on the number of students enrolling and successfully completing at college from a care experience background), and to improve support for those students. Despite these data challenges we have seen clear commitments in the outcome agreements for care experienced learners.

We have also been collecting data on student carers since 2013-14 of which, in 2015-16, there were 7,320 recorded students – as with care experienced learners, this is a significant increase from the previous year. We want to improve our evidence and so asked colleges to outline in the 2017-18 outcome agreements their current and future commitments to support students and staff with carer responsibilities.

We are working in partnership with the Carers Trust and use their definition of a carer<sup>15</sup>. We fully support their *Going Higher* campaign which supports students, and *Carer Positive*, operated by Carers Scotland, which is aimed at employers to demonstrate a commitment in providing a supportive working environment.

*Dumfries and Galloway College is committed to supporting staff and students who are carers. Students declare their caring responsibility at enrolment though they are also given opportunities through the personal tutor system to disclose this information at any point during the academic year. The College has a dedicated advisor to support students who are carers and they work closely with academic and support staff and the Students Association to raise awareness of the challenges that these students encounter. The advisor offers guidance and support on a wide range of issues from enrolling and settling into college life, to providing them with funding advice, to developing and encouraging them to achieve their goals. The College monitors retention and achievement of this group of students in order to continually improve their progress and achievement as well their services to support them. The College aims to follow the Carers Trust 'Going Higher' campaign and works with a number of stakeholders including Dumfries and Galloway Council to meet their student and staff carer duties.*

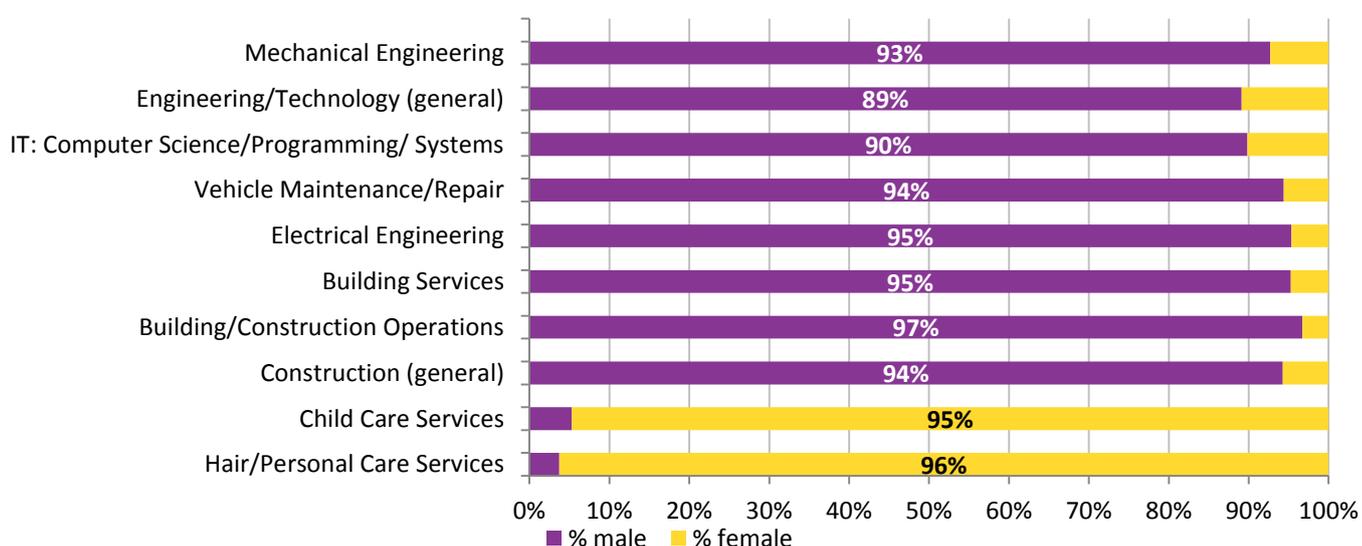
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<sup>15</sup> The Carers Trust defines a carer as anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family members who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

## Tackling gender imbalances

In August 2016 we published our Gender Action Plan<sup>16</sup>. This built on the expectations of the Scottish Government’s youth employment strategy, *Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce* - that is, across Scotland’s colleges we should seek to ‘increase by five percentage points the minority gender share in each of the 10 largest and most imbalanced superclasses by 2021’. Figure 5 below shows the extent of the gender imbalance in the subjects of focus within the Gender Action Plan looking at combined HE and FE levels. It shows the average of participation rates for five years of data: 2011-12 to 2015-16. Further analysis is presented in our Gender Action Plan Technical Report<sup>17</sup>.

**Figure 5**  
**Gender balance at all levels of study in the most gender imbalanced Superclasses<sup>18</sup>**



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

In Outcome Agreements for 2017-18, colleges have set out the subject areas in which they are focusing their efforts to tackle severe gender imbalances and their ambitions for improvement. Moreover, our Outcome Agreement guidance for 2017-18 asks all FE and HE institutions to publish institutional gender action plans (GAPs) by the end of July 2017.

We know progress will be made only by a coordinated effort across the education and early years system, but we think that, through this effort, severe gender imbalances of over 75% of students on a particular subject can be tackled by 2030.

<sup>16</sup> [Gender Action Plan](#).

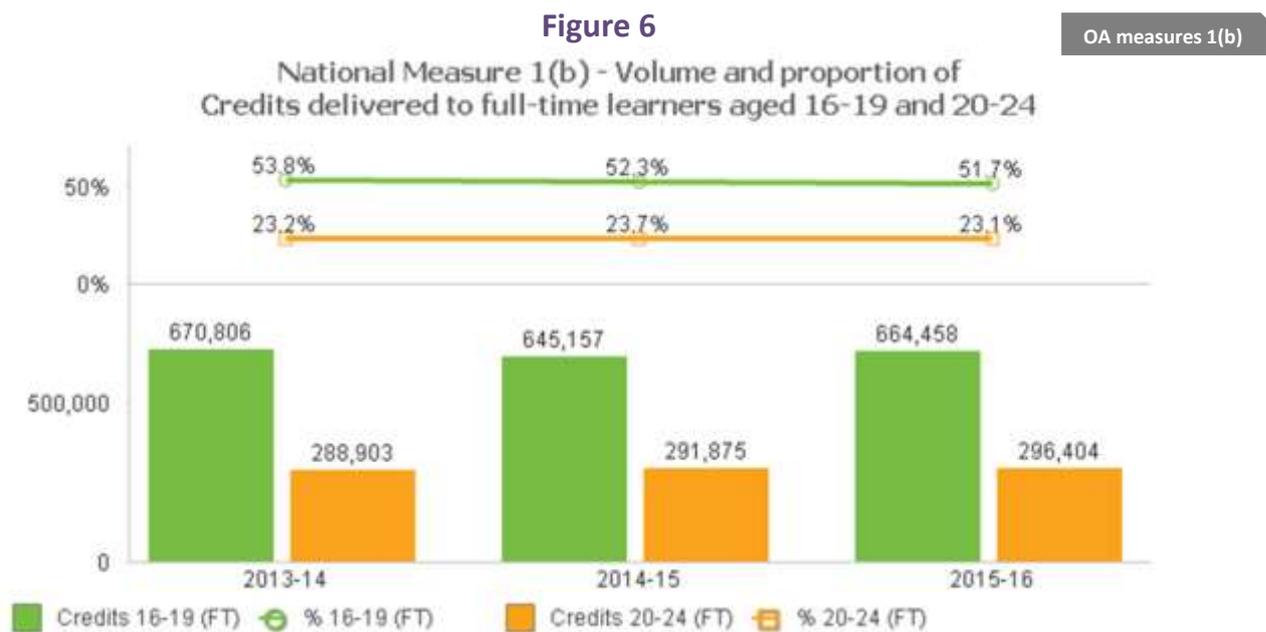
<sup>17</sup> [Gender Action Plan technical report](#).

<sup>18</sup> Brackets indicate number of students in the subject area.

*Dundee and Angus College has an ambitious aim to target an annual 10% increase in non-traditional applications and enrolments for those curriculum areas not currently showing a gender balance. To achieve this, they have prioritised the tackling of gender imbalances within their developing STEM strategy and within their DYW implementation plan. Through working with the Equality Challenge Unit in their Attracting Diversity project, they have identified a number of potential “pinch-points” and barriers to progression for the minority gender and are now working to understand and address these barriers.*

**Supporting ‘Opportunities for All’**

Colleges continued to play a full part in delivering Opportunities for All, the Scottish Government’s offer of a place in education or training for all 16-19 year olds (and, where possible, 20-24 year olds) currently not in education, employment or training: in 2015-16, for full-time learners, this represented some three quarters of learning activity. Figure 6 below shows the proportion of activity delivered to 16-19 and 20-24 year old students for full-time courses; compared with 2014-15 figures, the proportion of activity delivered to 16-24 year olds fell slightly in 2015-16.



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

2017-18 outcome agreements confirm that colleges are absolutely committed to ensuring that every young person can access learning that will provide them with the skills and qualifications to succeed in life. However, we note that the size of the 16-24 population in Scotland is declining, and, consistent with Scottish Government direction, we are working with colleges to ensure they strike an appropriate balance between provision for those over 25 and those under. In the meantime, college outcome agreements commit to monitor participation rates to ensure groups are not under-represented and that their curriculum offering is broad and accessible to all.

Meanwhile, we will ensure the outcome agreement process provides a focus on improving the outcomes and achievements for 16-24 year olds.

*Additional analysis of intake by age and protected characteristics is available in our College Statistics 2015-16 Report<sup>19</sup>.*

### **SHEP**

The Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) funded by SFC provides support, advice and guidance in schools which have traditionally low progression rates to Higher Education (HE). The programme also aims to help improve staying-on rates (past fourth year) at participating schools alongside progression to HE in college or university. Further information on the SHEP programme is on the SFC website<sup>20</sup>.

The four SHEP regional programmes have always worked with partners in both sectors; however, for the 2016-17 outcome agreements, we included the SHEP national measure for colleges as well as universities. While it is too early to gauge how the colleges have responded to this measure, we will continue to monitor progress made and consider it alongside reporting from the SHEP regional teams. And, anecdotally, we know that a significant proportion of pupils from SHEP schools choose to progress to HE courses in colleges.

OA measure 2 (d)

### ***Opportunities to “articulate” to degree level study***

As a direct result of close partnership working between colleges and universities there has been a steady increase in the number of learners articulating with advanced standing (i.e. getting full recognition for previous Higher National study). As shown in Figure 7 below, more than 4,000 learners articulated with advanced standing in 2014-15, an increase of 1,076 students from 2,932 in 2009-10.

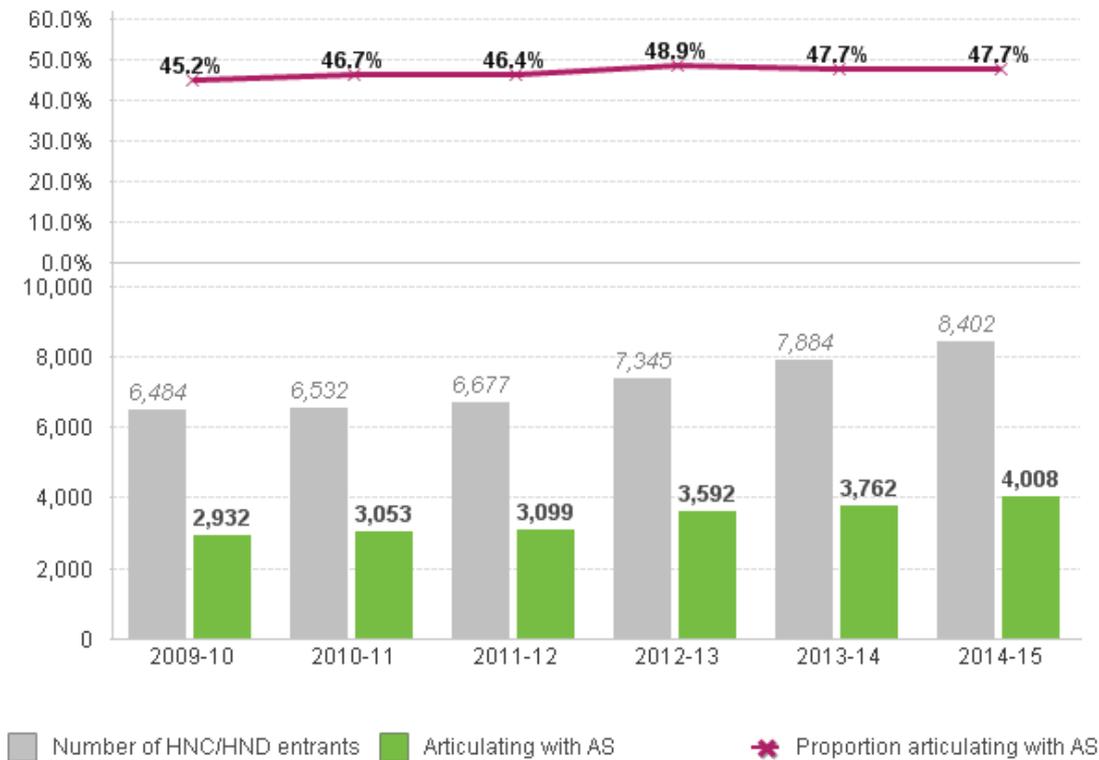
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<sup>19</sup> [College Statistics 2015-16](#).

<sup>20</sup> [Schools for Higher Education Programme](#).

Figure 7

National Measure 7\* - The number and proportion of Scottish-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing



Source: National Articulation Database (compiled from data supplied via FES, HESA and SQA)

We are currently re-building the National Articulation Database onto a more secure statistical platform to enable more analysis of this data. We expect this work to be completed over this summer. The latest data for 2015-16 will be reported later this year and we expect levels to be significantly higher than 2014-15. While we think we will meet our national aspiration of 4,100 by 2016-17, there is still room for growth in articulation with advanced standing, with an increased focus on student choice and improving curriculum links between college and university courses. We have been particularly impressed with some of the new approaches and blended curriculum methods adopted through associate student schemes.

As shown in Figure 8 below, the 2017-18 college outcome agreements project that the number of articulating students will grow to 4,642 by 2017-18.

**Figure 8**  
**The number of Scottish-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing, by college region**

| Region                     | Number of learners articulating with advanced standing |             |             |             | 2017-18 OA Target <sup>21</sup> |
|----------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
|                            | 2011-12  | 2012-13     | 2013-14     | 2014-15     |                                 |
| Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire | 344  | 355         | 418         | 464         | 484                             |
| Ayrshire                   | 361  | 410         | 383         | 366         | 390                             |
| Borders                    | 15   | 8           | 8           | 10          | 16                              |
| Dumfries & Galloway        | 20   | 48          | 44          | 50          | 55                              |
| Dundee and Angus           | 165  | 195         | 252         | 255         | 292                             |
| Edinburgh                  | 414  | 471         | 475         | 527         | 600                             |
| Fife                       | 100  | 126         | 143         | 160         | 102                             |
| Forth Valley               | 114  | 91          | 93          | 98          | 157                             |
| Glasgow                    | 1097   | 1325        | 1323        | 1327        | 1725                            |
| Lanarkshire                | 237  | 254         | 294         | 337         | 346                             |
| Land-based (SRUC)          | 27   | 22          | 22          | 32          | 40                              |
| West                       | 148  | 203         | 234         | 286         | 305                             |
| West Lothian               | 57   | 84          | 73          | 87          | 90                              |
| <b>SECTOR TOTAL</b>        | <b>3099</b>  | <b>3592</b> | <b>3762</b> | <b>3999</b> | <b>4642</b>                     |

Source: National Articulation Database (compiled from data supplied via FES, HESA and SQA) & 2017-18 outcome agreements.

### **Gaelic**

SFC's role in supporting the National Gaelic Language Plan (NGLP) includes encouraging the growth of opportunities within the Scottish college and university sectors to use and to learn Gaelic. We have asked all colleges to consider in their outcome agreements how they will contribute to the aims of the NGLP. Colleges have done so, commenting on their approach; the type of response varies with the local context. But colleges are continuing to encourage:

- Cross-sector and cross-institutional working.
- Exploration of responses on Gaelic with other local partners, including local authorities and community planning partnerships.
- Exploration of internal demand for opportunities to use Gaelic, including surveys of staff and students.
- Work to consider the role of Scotland's other languages.

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<sup>21</sup> A small number of targets were extracted from draft 2017-18 outcome agreements before they were formally agreed. Furthermore, the most recent articulation data for 2015-16 was not available to most colleges when setting 2017-18 targets. Targets may be subject to change.

## Success in learning

Our core ambition for the college sector is to improve opportunities and outcomes for learners: breaking down barriers to the achievement of qualifications; and equipping learners to progress successfully into employment, further learning or training.

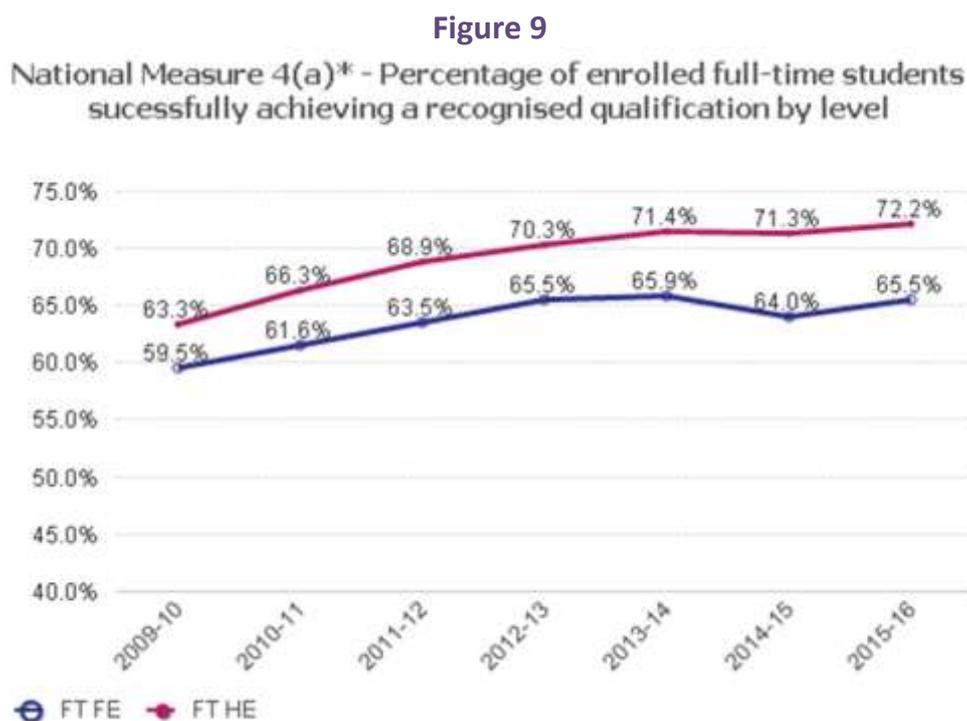
Two of the strongest indicators of success are:

- The proportion of learners who successfully complete their qualifications (noting that, for some, there are unavoidable reasons for not completing successfully).
- The proportion of those learners who go on into employment, further learning or training.

The importance of this ambition is recognised by the Scottish Government's first national improvement programme to raise attainment and improve retention in Scotland's colleges. Operating alongside mainstream quality improvement, Phase 1 of the project will see five colleges form an improvement team, testing, and gathering information about what works best to share across the sector.

### ***Students successfully achieving a recognised qualification***

Figure 9 below, provides an overview of success rates for full-time recognised Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) programmes from 2009-10 to 2015-16. In 2015-16, 65.5% of students on full-time FE, and 72.2% of students on full-time HE, programmes completed successfully. This displays across the years a strong trend for improved success rates of recognised qualifications.



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Figure 10 below shows that the increase in the FE full-time success rate in 2015-16 is not consistent across college regions. Most regions show continued improvement whilst two (Lanarkshire and Dumfries & Galloway) show a reduction in success rate of over 3 percentage points.

**Figure 10**

**% of enrolled (full-time) students successfully achieving a recognised qualification, by level and region**

| Region                     | Level            | 2012-13      | 2013-14      | 2014-15      | 2015-16      | 2017-18<br>OA<br>Target <sup>22</sup> |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire | HE               | 70.3%        | 72.2%        | 72.0%        | 77.1%        | 77.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 65.2%        | 66.0%        | 61.9%        | 67.4%        | 69.5%                                 |
| Ayrshire                   | HE               | 68.7%        | 66.5%        | 62.3%        | 63.1%        | 64.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 67.8%        | 65.8%        | 58.6%        | 61.2%        | 66.0%                                 |
| Borders                    | HE               | 71.2%        | 75.5%        | 75.1%        | 76.5%        | 76.5%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 70.5%        | 73.9%        | 69.1%        | 66.6%        | 69.0%                                 |
| Dumfries & Galloway        | HE               | 68.0%        | 72.7%        | 71.0%        | 71.2%        | 72.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 63.1%        | 62.3%        | 64.0%        | 60.8%        | 69.0%                                 |
| Dundee and Angus           | HE               | 75.9%        | 76.7%        | 72.1%        | 76.6%        | 77.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 72.9%        | 72.9%        | 74.3%        | 72.9%        | 74.0%                                 |
| Edinburgh                  | HE               | 72.8%        | 74.0%        | 73.7%        | 73.6%        | 74.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 66.5%        | 65.4%        | 59.5%        | 65.2%        | 69.0%                                 |
| Fife                       | HE               | 67.2%        | 68.7%        | 67.9%        | 69.8%        | 72.5%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 60.4%        | 62.2%        | 60.7%        | 62.0%        | 65.5%                                 |
| Forth Valley               | HE               | 71.0%        | 72.2%        | 78.5%        | 74.7%        | 75.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 68.8%        | 69.7%        | 70.4%        | 69.4%        | 71.0%                                 |
| Glasgow                    | HE               | 71.0%        | 72.7%        | 74.1%        | 74.7%        | 75.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 62.9%        | 65.6%        | 66.2%        | 67.2%        | 67.5%                                 |
| Highlands & Islands        | HE <sup>23</sup> | -            | -            | -            | -            | -                                     |
|                            | FE               | 63.1%        | 66.3%        | 67.6%        | 69.4%        | 70.0%                                 |
| Lanarkshire                | HE               | 69.3%        | 68.4%        | 68.2%        | 69.3%        | 71.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 66.9%        | 63.3%        | 64.2%        | 61.0%        | 64.1%                                 |
| West                       | HE               | 66.1%        | 68.9%        | 67.1%        | 65.4%        | 69.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 64.9%        | 65.3%        | 59.8%        | 63.7%        | 67.0%                                 |
| West Lothian               | HE               | 68.7%        | 67.8%        | 71.1%        | 69.7%        | 73.0%                                 |
|                            | FE               | 65.1%        | 63.3%        | 63.5%        | 64.1%        | 66.0%                                 |
| <b>SECTOR<sup>24</sup></b> | <b>HE</b>        | <b>70.3%</b> | <b>71.4%</b> | <b>71.3%</b> | <b>72.2%</b> | -                                     |
|                            | <b>FE</b>        | <b>65.5%</b> | <b>65.9%</b> | <b>64.0%</b> | <b>65.5%</b> | -                                     |

Source: Further Education Statistics (FES) and 2017-18 outcome agreements.

SFC has targeted a sector-wide FE success rate of 69% and HE rate of 72% by 2016-17 as part of our outcome agreement negotiations. Whilst the sector has already

<sup>22</sup> A small number of targets were extracted from draft outcome agreements before they were formally agreed and may be subject to change

<sup>23</sup> N/A - HE data returned through HESA

<sup>24</sup> Note that the sector FE figures also include data for Newbattle Abbey and SRUC

achieved our HE target, it will be challenging, based on the current sector trend, to realise the FE target within the next academic year. However, as shown in Figure 10 above, individual college regions are forecasting ambitious levels of improvement in their 2017-18 outcome agreements.

Figure 11 illustrates further variances by protected characteristic and the impact of deprivation. Addressing these imbalances will continue to be a vital element of our outcome agreement approach. For the next round of outcome agreements (2018-19), we will add new national measures covering success rates for care experience learners and the 16-24 age group.

**Figure 11**  
**% of enrolled (full-time) students successfully achieving a recognised qualification, variance by level and protected characteristic**

| Level | Year    | All          | SIMD10 | 16-19 | 20-24 | 25+   | Disabled | Male  | Female | BME   | Care Experience |
|-------|---------|--------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| FE    | 2013-14 | <b>65.9%</b> | -2.4%  | -1.6% | -0.7% | 5.5%  | 0.4%     | -0.7% | 0.6%   | 1.3%  | -12.6%          |
|       | 2014-15 | <b>64.0%</b> | -3.1%  | -2.2% | -0.5% | 6.3%  | -0.3%    | -0.8% | 0.6%   | 2.0%  | -11.5%          |
|       | 2015-16 | <b>65.5%</b> | -2.2%  | -2.3% | -0.3% | 6.0%  | -1.6%    | 0.0%  | 0.0%   | 3.2%  | -12.9%          |
| HE    | 2013-14 | <b>71.4%</b> | -2.7%  | 0.7%  | -0.5% | -0.7% | -4.1%    | -4.5% | 3.9%   | -3.1% | -18.5%          |
|       | 2014-15 | <b>71.3%</b> | -4.5%  | -0.2% | -0.5% | 1.1%  | -4.5%    | -4.1% | 3.4%   | 0.9%  | -5.4%           |
|       | 2015-16 | <b>72.2%</b> | -4.7%  | 0.0%  | -0.9% | 1.0%  | -4.6%    | -3.5% | 3.0%   | 0.5%  | -7.6%           |

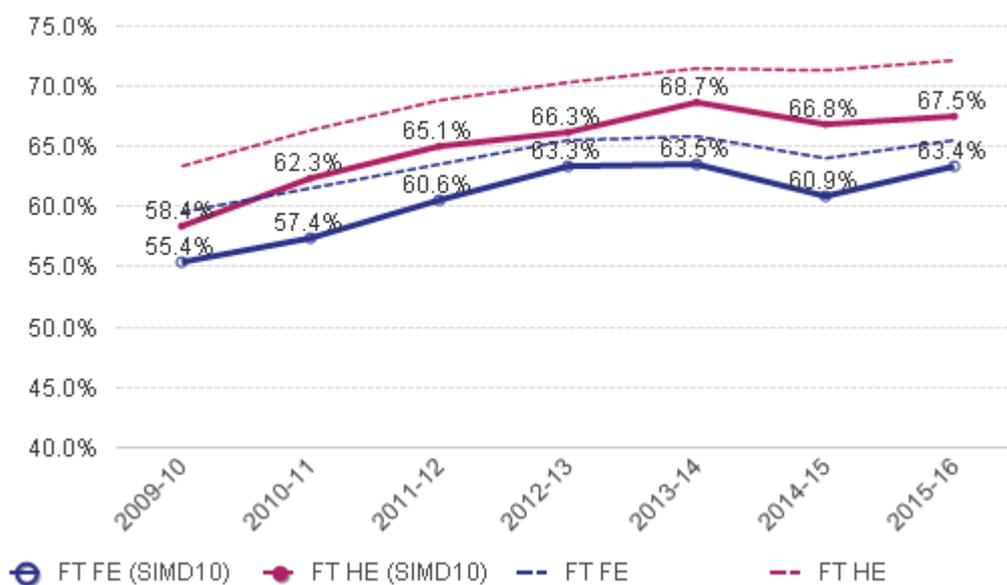
Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Negative variance  Positive variance

Figure 12 shows levels of success for full-time students from a SIMD10 postcode are lower than the average for all full-time students for both FE and HE. In 2015-16, 67.5% of full-time HE SIMD10 and 63.4% of full-time FE SIMD10 students successfully achieved a recognised qualification. This compared to 72.2% for all full-time HE and 65.5% for all full-time FE students.

Figure 12

National Measure 4(b)\* - Percentage of enrolled full-time MD10 students successfully achieving a recognised qualification by level



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Additional analysis of student outcomes for each individual college is published annually in our College Performance Indicators report<sup>25</sup>.

**College leaver destinations**

In 2013, SFC developed a national college leaver destination survey to collect and report on leaver destination data from colleges. The latest publication of College Leaver Destinations (CLD) for Scotland’s colleges<sup>26</sup> was in December 2016 and covers the 2014-15 academic year. The publication reports on the destinations of leavers, 3-6 months after qualifying.

The vast majority of leavers were in a positive destination six months after graduating. Overall, the percentage of leavers entering a positive destination is 95.8% for FE and 95.1% for HE (includes the figures for those only in a ‘known’ destination covering; a positive destination, which includes in employment and in further study). Figure 13 below, shows some variation across regions.

<sup>25</sup> [College Performance Indicators 2015-16.](#)

<sup>26</sup> [College Leaver Destinations 2014-15.](#)

Figure 13

The number and proportion of college leavers in a positive destination 3 to 6 months after qualifying, HE and FE, by region, 2014-15

| Region                 | Further Education –<br>Total Positive Destinations<br>(for those only in a 'known' destination) |              | Higher Education –<br>Total Positive Destinations<br>(for those only in a 'known' destination) |                   |
|------------------------|---|--------------|--|-------------------|
|                        | Number of Students  | %            | Number of Students   | %                 |
|                        | Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire  | 2042         | 90.0%  | 850               |
| Ayrshire               | 2861  | 97.4%        | 1052   | 97.0%             |
| Borders                | 587   | 95.4%        | 107  | 92.2%             |
| Forth Valley           | 1089  | 93.3%        | 490  | 94.4%             |
| Dumfries & Galloway    | 575   | 90.4%        | 333  | 96.0%             |
| Dundee and Angus       | 2198  | 93.6%        | 834  | 94.0%             |
| Edinburgh              | 2168  | 99.1%        | 911  | 97.9%             |
| Fife                   | 2122  | 97.4%        | 802  | 96.6%             |
| Glasgow                | 5307  | 98.0%        | 4296   | 96.8%             |
| Highlands & Islands    | 2583  | 94.4%        | n/a <sup>27</sup>  | n/a <sup>27</sup> |
| Lanarkshire            | 3107  | 95.6%        | 1941   | 96.0%             |
| Land-based (SRUC)      | 445   | 94.3%        | n/a <sup>27</sup>  | n/a <sup>27</sup> |
| Newbattle              | 41  | 97.6%        | 13   | 100%              |
| West                   | 2065  | 96.1%        | 1448   | 93.9%             |
| West Lothian           | 749   | 98.2%        | 454  | 97.4%             |
| <b>Scotland Totals</b> | <b>27,939</b>   | <b>95.8%</b> | <b>13,531</b>  | <b>95.1%</b>      |

Source: College Leaver Destinations (CLD) survey for Scotland's colleges

### Student satisfaction

In January 2017, we published our first Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey results<sup>28</sup> for Scotland's colleges covering the academic year 2015-16. Figure 14 below shows the proportion of students satisfied overall with their college experience in 2015-16 was 90.1% for full-time students, 93.2% for part-time students and 88.1% for distance / flexible students.

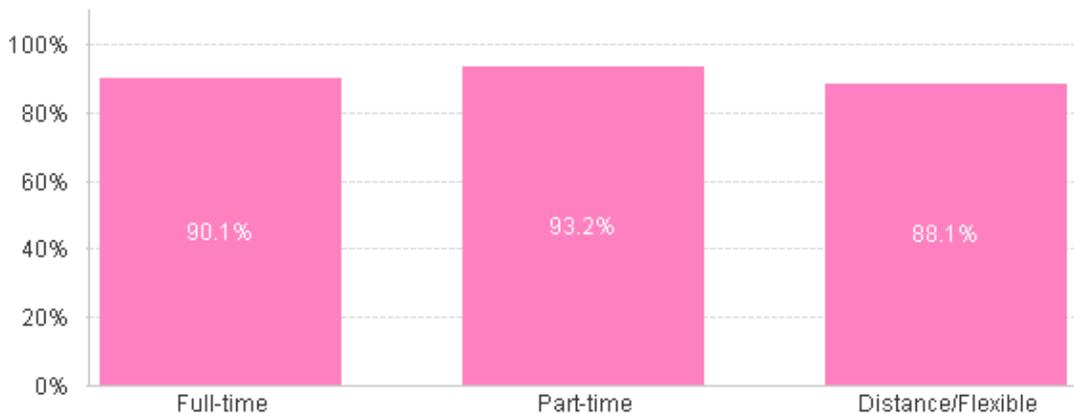
<sup>27</sup> No HE level destinations data is provided for UHI partner colleges (Highlands & Islands) and SRUC (Land based) as these are returned in the Higher Education Statistical Agency's annual Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey.

<sup>28</sup> [Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 2015-16](#).

Figure 14

OA measure 9

National Measure 9 - The percentage of students overall, satisfied with their college experience (SSES), 2015-16



Source: Student Satisfaction & Engagement Survey (SSES)

The satisfaction data gathered from the 2015-16 academic year has been used as a baseline for our outcome agreement targets for 2017-18 and beyond.

## Progression from learning

Building on progress made in recent years to increase employer engagement, and responding to the *Developing the Young Workforce* (DYW) ambitions, we have negotiated further commitments from college regions to ensure a system of learning that provides students with the skills that they need to succeed in life, and gives Scotland the skills necessary to grow in a global economy.

Outcome agreements set out how colleges will forge closer links with employers, better to align curriculum planning and employer demand, meeting skills shortages and creating more work placements for learners. This includes:

- Establishing employer / industry advisory boards to review and enhance curriculum quality, planning and outcomes. Advisory boards ensure that the curriculum addresses current needs as well as forecasted future skills demands and that provision is aligned with the employment priorities of local business.
- Engagement with local DYW Boards and the benefits of this engagement in providing structured vocational pathways that support young people into sustained and successful careers.
- Setting out ambitions to further develop vocational pathways, apprenticeships and workplace learning in partnership with employers.

In AY 2017-18 SFC will work with the sector and industry partners to develop an employer engagement framework that will capture the level and extent of collaborative working in the sector.

The majority of outcome agreements have evidenced the use of information contained in Regional Skills Assessments (RSAs) and Skills Investment Plans (SIPs) to inform their assessment of the regional economy. They have identified areas of growth and decline and, in most cases, how that evidence is reflected in curriculum planning. We expect to see further evidence of college use of RSAs and SIPs in their curriculum offering as these planning documents are reviewed and evolve.

### ***Developing Scotland's Young Workforce***

Published in December 2014, the Scottish Government's youth employment strategy<sup>29</sup> aims to ensure a work-relevant educational experience for our young people, valuing and developing a rich blend of learning, including vocational education.

Colleges are playing a central role in the introduction of new vocational pathways in the senior phase of secondary school. Figure 15, below, shows a growth in the number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications<sup>30</sup> delivered by colleges between 2013-14 and 2015-16 from 2,101 to 3,014.



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Figure 16, below, shows the growth in the number of pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by individual college regions. It also shows that the targets from 2017-18 outcome agreements demonstrate a clear intention from college

<sup>29</sup> [Developing the Young Workforce](#) - Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy.

<sup>30</sup> A list of vocational qualifications is available in our outcome agreement guidance – [Annex D Technical Guidance](#).

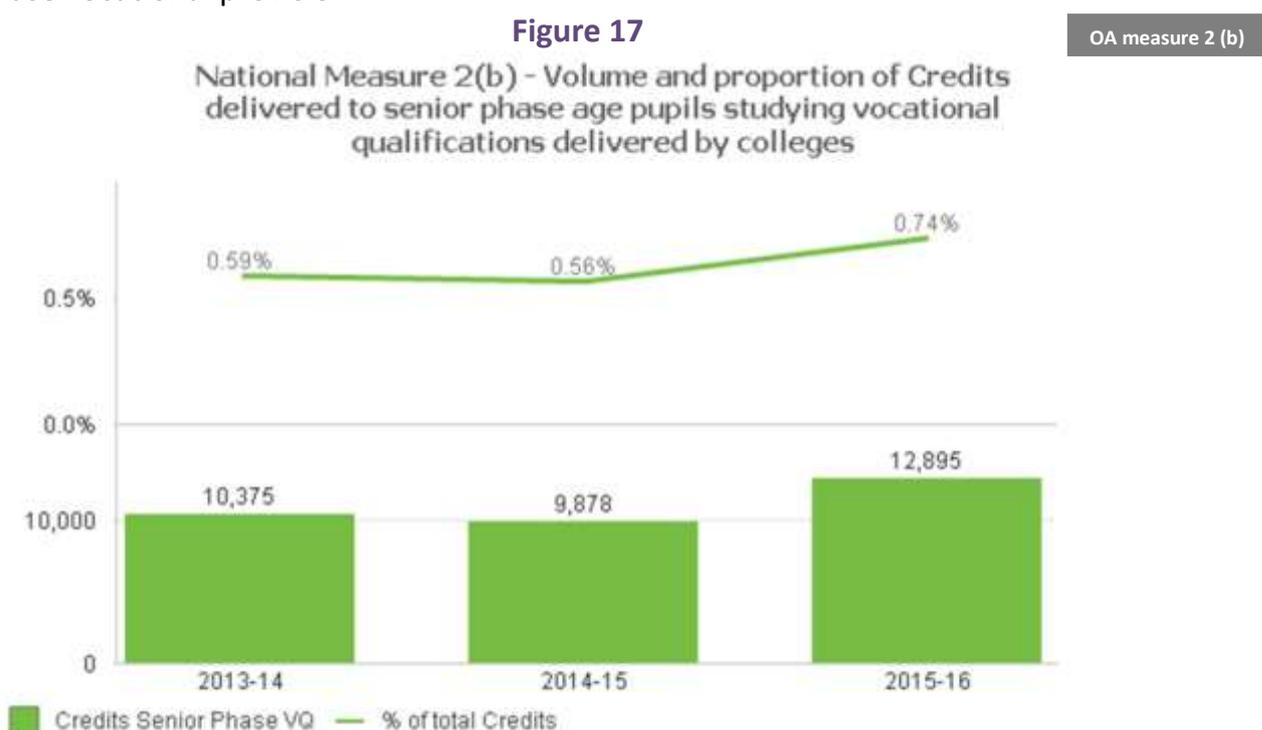
regions to increase their provision in this area. The sector is projecting a doubling of senior phase pupils on vocational pathways, with an increase in pupil numbers from 3,014 in AY 2015-16 to 6,330 in AY 2017-18.

**Figure 16**  
**Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges, by region**

| Region                     | 2013-14     | 2014-15     | 2015-16     | Target 2017-18 |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire | 78          | 154         | 277         | 325            |
| Ayrshire                   | 273         | 318         | 405         | 390            |
| Borders                    | -           | 49          | 27          | 106            |
| Dumfries & Galloway        | 88          | 67          | 108         | 224            |
| Edinburgh                  | 137         | 209         | 217         | 432            |
| Fife                       | 11          | 43          | 17          | 300            |
| Forth Valley               | 106         | 157         | 218         | 380            |
| Glasgow                    | 207         | 348         | 428         | 669            |
| Highlands & Islands        | 398         | 473         | 402         | 1675           |
| Lanarkshire                | 267         | 254         | 452         | 550            |
| Landbased                  | -           | 2           | 8           | 40             |
| Tayside                    | 255         | 66          | 206         | 400            |
| West                       | 217         | 178         | 115         | 500            |
| West Lothian               | 64          | 75          | 134         | 339            |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>2101</b> | <b>2393</b> | <b>3014</b> | <b>6330</b>    |

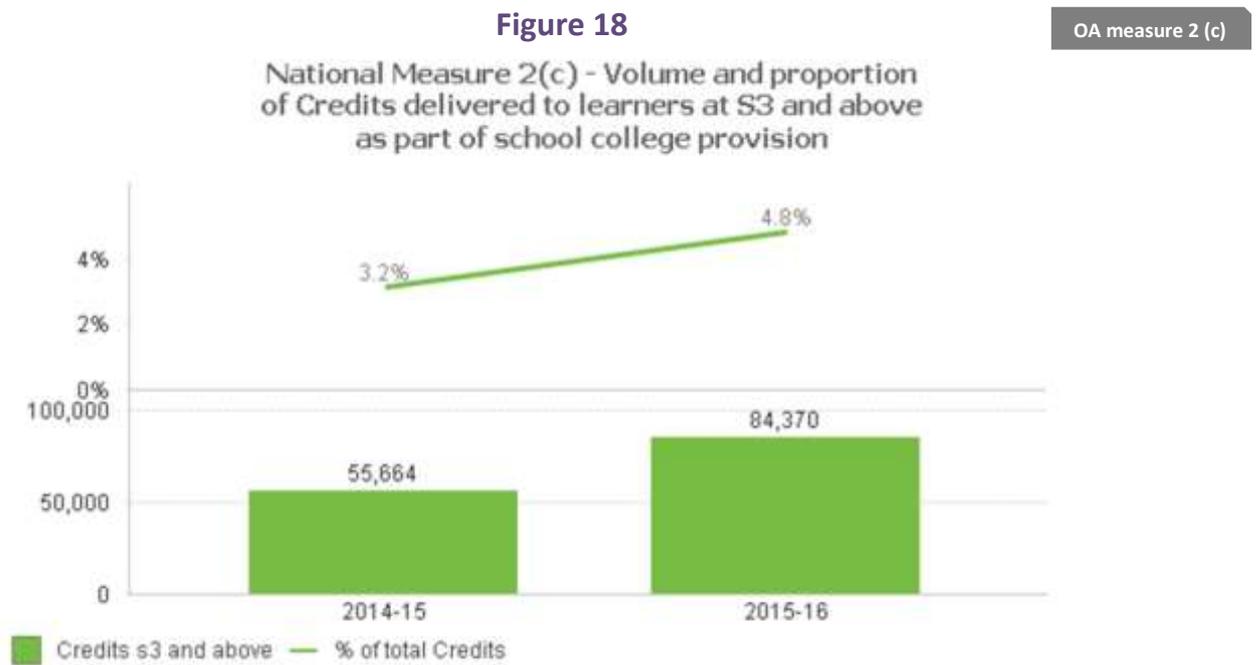
Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Figure 17, below, shows a growth in the volume (and proportion) of activity (credits) delivered to senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges between 2013-14 and 2015-16 from 10,375 (0.59%) to 12,895 (0.74%). By 2017-18 college regions are projecting that 1.69% of credits will be directed to senior phase vocational provision.



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Figure 18 below shows that at sector level the volume (and proportion) of activity delivered to learners at S3 and above as part of school-college provision has increased from 55,664 (3.2%) in 2014-15 to 84,370 (4.8%) in 2015-16. This includes work with younger learners from S3 upwards and a broader range of qualification types including some Highers and vocational introductory courses. We are reviewing the composition and regional variation in this provision to better understand the interrelation with senior phase vocational pathways. In 2015-16, just over 15% of the wider school college provision was delivered to senior phase pupils studying vocational qualifications.



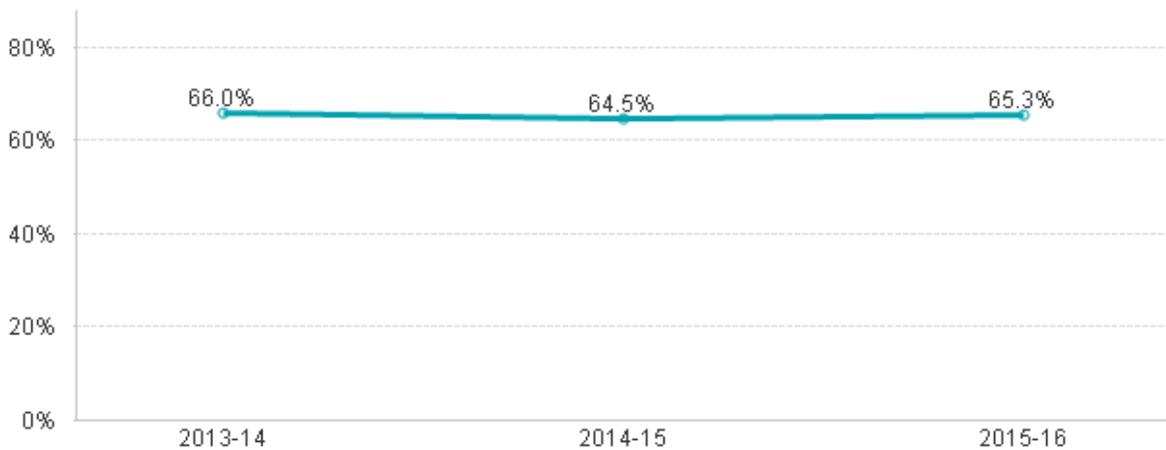
Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Regional data for 2015-16 shows that all college regions increased activity to learners at S3 and above compared to the previous year.

Figure 19 below shows the percentage of senior phase age pupils successfully completing a vocational qualification (including full-time, part-time, FE and HE) delivered by colleges over the past three years. Success rates for these pupils have remained fairly static during this time and were 65.3% in 2015-16.

**Figure 19**

National Measure 4(c)\* - Percentage of senior phase age pupils successfully completing a vocational qualification delivered by colleges



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

*North East Scotland College has developed a guide to education progression to show in a clear way the different pathways that are available to students in a wide range of employment areas. The pathways sometime involve study at College, sometimes at University and sometimes a combination of both. As well as full-time study routes there are pathways that involve work-based apprenticeship study. A copy of the guide is available on the [College's website](#).*

**Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)**

*Education Working for All!*, the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce final report, said that an adequate supply of STEM skills is critical to growing Scotland's key economic sectors and that to secure this supply the number of young people achieving STEM qualifications should be increased. As a primary provider of STEM courses, colleges have a significant role to play in delivering this objective.

Figure 20

National Measure 3 - Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners enrolled on STEM courses



Source: Further Education Statistics (FES)

Figure 20 above shows the proportion of activity (Credits) delivered to learners enrolled on STEM courses<sup>31</sup> being maintained at just over 24% over the past three years.

In our Outcome Agreement guidance we ask colleges, in assessing curricular need, to use Regional Skills Assessments (RSAs) alongside their own local labour market intelligence and engagement with local employers. On this basis, and where necessary, they should expand STEM courses in their general provision and in developing new senior phase vocational pathways with local authorities they should prioritise STEM subjects.

The Scottish Government is clear that STEM education and training within colleges has an important part to play in fulfilling the aspirations for a fair labour market, delivering excellence and equity in Scottish education by both raising and closing the attainment gap and preparing our young people for the world of work. A key challenge is to ensure that there is a coherent, robust and progressive approach to developing skills and knowledge in STEM subjects across all parts of the education and skills system. To support the sector to target and expand STEM provision in a way that is coordinated and purposeful, we are working with Scottish Government and other partners to develop a national STEM strategy. The strategy will ensure

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<sup>31</sup> A full definition and a list of STEM courses is available in our outcome agreement guidance – [Annex D Technical Guidance](#).

coherence between schools, colleges, universities and other partners to provide pathways that are aligned to the needs of employers. The strategy will be aligned with SFC's work to support the sector to tackle gender imbalances, with many of the subjects of focus within the gender action plan within STEM.

*West College Scotland achieved STEM Accreditation Standard in 2016 awarded by the Innovation Council of the national STEM Foundation. The validation report stated that the College has demonstrated a clear capability to stimulate and deliver innovative STEM provision to enable student development, increase employability and support business growth acceleration in the Region. The College was awarded 'best practice' for the three categories of Strategic and Business Planning, Collaboration and Consultation and the Impact of STEM on organisational performance. The College has committed to leading the work to progress a regional STEM strategy and will continue to promote STEM subject areas in partnership with local authorities, schools and employers across the region and to ensure the development of critical STEM skills for all students. The College has also published a [STEM manifesto](#)<sup>32</sup> with commitments to its students, employers and the region.*

*Ayrshire College received the prestigious UK Training Provider of the Year Award at the SEMTA Skills Awards 2017<sup>33</sup> for their work inspiring future engineers, and in February 2017 they achieved the STEM Assured accreditation from the STEM Foundation. Within the STEM Assured accreditation report Ayrshire College was commended for their concerted action in planning to address gender equality challenges in STEM related subjects through communication, engagement and influencing programmes such as the [#ThisAyrshireGirlCan](#) campaign<sup>34</sup> and the [Ayrshire Connects](#)<sup>35</sup> mentoring network.*

### **Work placements**

In September 2016, we published new Work Placement Standards for Colleges<sup>36</sup> to provide direction and highlight best practice in the sector. It makes clear that all college students will benefit from high quality work placements or other workplace experience - in line with the *Developing the Young Workforce*. We want the guidance to help significantly and consistently improve the future employment prospects of all students studying in colleges in Scotland.

College outcome agreements outlined commitments to increasing the volume of work placements and work place experience offered as part of their provision. The work placement national measure was re-defined in AY 2015-16

OA measures 6

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<sup>32</sup> [West College Scotland STEM manifesto.](#)

<sup>33</sup> [SEMTA Awards 2017.](#)

<sup>34</sup> [ThisAyrshireGirlCan campaign.](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Ayrshire Connects.](#)

<sup>36</sup> [Work Placement Standard for Colleges.](#)

to reflect a Unit equivalent of Work Experience (40hrs) for full-time learners. Colleges are now required to flag appropriate student activity which matches the definition. Further refinement of the measure is required to ensure that it is commensurate with the work placement standards which highlights the benefit of workplace experience within the curriculum as a means of preparing learners for the world of work.

*Examples of good practice are provided in our Work Placement Standards for Colleges.*

### **Apprenticeships**

In support of the SFC/SDS Joint Framework for Action, to deliver the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy, colleges have a key role in delivering the introduction and scaling of the Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) for senior phase pupils. There has been significant progress over the last two academic years to expand this provision across sectors and regions. Delivery for 2017-19 shows the most significant expansion yet: from August 2017, delivery will expand to all college regions, all local authority areas, and over 150 secondary schools with a target of 1,927 pupils expected to start a Foundation Apprenticeship. As well as expansion across regions, two new frameworks have been developed for delivery in 2017-2019: Creative and Digital Media and Scientific Technologies. Two further FA Frameworks – Accountancy and Food and Drink Operations, are currently being developed for delivery in 2018-2019.

OA measure 5

### **Expansion of Early Years and Childcare**

Since June 2015, SFC has been working closely with the colleges and the Scottish Government on the planned workforce expansion in the Early Years sector. Workforce planning has identified that in order to meet the targets set by Scottish Government Colleges are required to deliver an additional 650 successful completers on SCQF Level 7 HNC Childhood Practice and 80 PDA's in academic year 2017-18. SFC has worked closely with the college sector to ensure that they are prepared for the additional activity. Following this academic year, we anticipate a significantly larger increase in activity at SCQF Levels 6, 7 and 9 in academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20 and discussions continue with Scottish Government around activity levels and funding.

## Delivering a more efficient and effective college system

The Scottish college landscape has fundamentally changed over the past few years. 2014-15 was the first full academic year of the operation of the new regional structure of 10 single-college regions and 3 multi-college regions. The creation of larger colleges operating on a regional basis through merger has led to a reduction in the number of publicly funded colleges from 42 in September 2012 to 25 now.

Throughout this complex period of change and beyond the sector has continued to deliver on its key priorities, as discussed through this publication.

In August 2016, we published our report outlining the *Impact and success of the programme of college mergers in Scotland*<sup>37</sup>. The report provides an overarching view of the impact of the college merger programme and evaluates the success in delivering the intended benefits and outcomes for students and other key stakeholders. The report notes the challenging context within which the mergers were implemented, placing additional pressures on the college sector during the early post-merger period and beyond. However, the evidence reviewed, gathered at a point at least two years post-merger confirms that:

- The merger programme in Scotland created colleges with a focus on achieving efficient and effective business services while continuing to develop and support the staff who are central to this success.
- Through targeted changes to such a substantial proportion of the sector, the mergers have created a landscape better suited to the delivery of skills, engagement with employers and universities, better able to implement the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) initiative and further improve learner journeys.
- The larger colleges created are confident and ambitious with a clear focus on putting the learner at the centre, where the priority is the learning and teaching and the achievements of students in study and in work.

*One significant characteristic of the **North East Scotland** region is the highly effective and strengthening partnership between **North East Scotland College and Robert Gordon University (RGU)**. The success is rooted in a shared approach to curriculum planning and development that has streamlined pathways and allowed wider participation to degree level study, as well as more efficient use of resources by avoiding duplication and unnecessary competition. The inter-institutional collaboration has also strengthened activity around Developing the Young Workforce, and Regional Skills Strategy and apprenticeship routes. The two institutions, alongside the University of Aberdeen, are also exploring the development of shared services.*

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<sup>37</sup> [Impact and success of the programme of college mergers in Scotland](#).

### ***Stronger students' associations***

SFC actively supports the development of college Students' Associations with ring-fenced funding during the merger period and beyond. We also provided NUS Scotland with project funding to develop and implement the "*Framework for the Development of Strong and Effective College Student Associations in Scotland*<sup>38</sup>" (published in June 2015). Developed by NUS Scotland in partnership with key sector agencies including SFC, the Scottish Government and Colleges Scotland, the Framework provides a vision for students' associations and outlines the essential principles agreed across the sector that will underpin this development. NUS Scotland and Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) have worked with colleges, students' associations and sector stakeholders to deliver the aspirations within the Framework.

In December 2016, SFC offered further funding to NUS Scotland that supports this project to AY 2018-19 (continuing the good progress made during the first funded phase of the project) ensuring that college Students' Associations continue to receive support as they become fully embedded within the life and work of their colleges. Improvements as a result of the support and guidance provided through the project can be evidenced in all areas.

In November 2016, SFC surveyed all colleges who had received strategic funding to support the development of their Students' Associations. The overarching message was that strategic funding had been instrumental in supporting the development of Students' Associations across the sector. Responses to the survey showed that most colleges have made an ongoing resource commitment to their Students' Association and that there has been significant progress in terms of the development, function and visibility of Students' Associations across the sector.

The budget and number of sabbatical officers in most colleges have remained largely consistent. Looking forward, SFC are keen to ensure continued success in Students' Association development and will carry on working with NUS Scotland to promote the advantages of having dedicated Students' Association staff members. Over half of colleges have a partnership agreement either in place or in development and six colleges have strategic plans.

The profile of Students' Associations has been raised and colleges have a deeper understanding of what is required to develop and support Students' Associations and officers. Despite this progress, the sustainability of college Students' Association in terms of capacity building, appropriate staffing and resources remains a high priority.

*Fife College Students' Association (FCSA) has created an online engagement tracker allowing FCSA staff and Sabbatical Officers to directly input and update any student issues received – benefitting the student who does not have to wait to speak to the*

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<sup>38</sup> Framework for the Development of Strong and Effective [College Student Associations in Scotland](#).

person they initially engaged with. Access has also been provided to key stakeholders from the College. Using the new system, FCSA have resolved numerous individual issues which were affecting the learner experience and have been able to use their new evidence base to introduce cross campus changes, such as reviewing the layout of the Student Portal, changing the funding application process, improving induction activities, adjusting timetabling so every class doesn't finish at 12, and increasing the amount of social and exercise activities which the FCSA offer. As a comparison, by the end of January 2016 the 2015-16 FCSA team had recorded 35 individual items of Student Feedback; by the same point the following year the 2016-17 FCSA team recorded 174 individual items of Student Feedback. FCSA also produce regular reports to help to identify trends and recurrent issues across all campuses. Previously they would be reliant on the person receiving the issue discussing this with the rest of the Officers and Staff.

### **Sustainability**

As reported in 'Scotland's colleges 2017' report,<sup>39</sup> prepared by Audit Scotland, overall the financial health of the sector remains relatively stable but has deteriorated since 2014-15. The underlying deficit has increased to £8 million (representing 1% of total income) and colleges hold £11million less cash than in 2014-15. A small proportion of colleges face particular challenges to their financial sustainability. SFC is continuing to monitor closely the financial health of colleges using a combination of financial returns and regular interactions by the SFC Finance team and Outcome Agreement Managers. This will give us an earlier indication of any financial challenges facing particular colleges. A summary financial position of the college sector following analysis of 2015-16 annual accounts is available on our website<sup>40</sup>.

The Government introduced mandatory reporting on climate change for public bodies (including colleges) in 2016. SFC will play a role in making further progress to reduce the carbon footprint of both sectors through work to help college regions develop their own carbon management plans, setting projected targets, and through the College Capital Working Group. We will review regional targets for 2017-18 onwards and take a view on whether – at the regional and the sectoral level – these are sufficient. We are jointly running a College Energy Efficiency Pathfinder (CEEP) programme with the Scottish Government and 5 participating colleges, using monies provided by Scottish Government's Capital Stimulus Programme. The programme will allow colleges to retrofit Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs) which may not otherwise have been affordable into their estate. Work is on-going to develop CEEP with Scottish Government, with the launch of the Pathfinder anticipated in spring 2018. SFC hopes that sharing the learning across the sector will provide the incentives for colleges to capitalise on the benefits of the estate wide energy efficiency invest to save model.

OA measure 10

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<sup>39</sup> [Scotland's colleges 2017](#).

<sup>40</sup> [Summary financial position](#) of the college sector following analysis of 2015-16 annual accounts.

***Borders College** have implemented an innovative project that is contributing to the successful delivery of their 25% CO2 reduction target. The SHARC project, one of the first of its kind in the UK, involves the extraction of heat from waste water in the local public sewer. It is expected to provide over 95% of the Campus' heat requirement, saving 170 tonnes CO2 per annum and giving price certainty to the College over a period of 20 years, resulting in projected cash savings of £44,000 in the latter years. Project partners include Scottish Water and the Green Investment Bank with the system providing a low carbon alternative, providing most of the Campus' heat requirements. The system was commissioned fully in March 2016.*

## Annex 1 – Outcome Agreement Measures

### 1 (a) \* Credits delivered

1 (b)(i) Volume and Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19 and 20-24

1 (b)(ii) Volume and Proportion of Credits delivered to full-time learners aged 16-19 and 20-24

### 1 (c) \* Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners in the most deprived 10% postcode areas

1 (d) Volume and proportion of Credits relating to learners from different protected characteristic groups and care experienced learners

### 2 (a) \* Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges

2 (b) Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges

2 (c) Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners at S3 and above as part of 'school-college' provision

2 (d) Volume and proportion of Credits delivered at HE level to learners from SHEP schools (i.e. Secondary schools with consistently low rates of progression to higher education)

3 Volume and proportion of Credits delivered to learners enrolled on STEM courses

### 4 (a) \* Proportion of enrolled students successfully achieving a recognised qualification

### 4 (b) \* Proportion of enrolled SIMD10 students successfully achieving a recognised qualification

### 4 (c) \* Proportion of senior phase age pupils successfully achieving a vocational qualification delivered by colleges

5 The number of starts for direct contracted apprenticeships (including industry bodies such as CITB and SECTT)

6 Number of full-time learners with high quality work place 'experience' as part of their programme of study

### 7 \* The number and proportion of successful learners who have achieved HNC or HND qualifications articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing

### 8 \* The number and proportion of full-time college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying

9 SSES Survey – The percentage of students overall, satisfied with their college experience

10 Gross carbon footprint (3 year period)

\* Key Priority Measure